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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents 'good practice case studies' of exemplary approaches to *innovative* in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners in three countries: Denmark, Italy and Poland.

The report is part of the project *CARE* "Curriculum Quality Analyses and Impact Review of European Education and Care", a collaborative project funded by the European Union within the Seventh Framework Program, to address issues related to the quality, inclusiveness, and individual, social, and economic benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe.

The report reviews studies on innovative approaches to professional development, including the use of new technologies, peer learning, reflective practice and organizational learning, within the field of Early Childhood Education in Europe (T3.3, narrative literature review), and then presents the case study design, results and interpretations of findings from the three case studies on good practices of in-service PD conducted in three European countries. Discussions and implications from the three studies are described in the second chapter of this report. The three case studies are presented separately in the appendices section (A. Denmark: *The VIDA program. Innovative practices of PD on quality and child outcomes*; B. Italy: *ECECs as participatory city-laboratories*; C. Poland: *An innovative approach to the in-service PD of caregivers in the Łódź*), each including: a contextualization and description of the case, the research design and procedures, findings, limitations and discussion of results.

This multiple case study involved data collection on innovative approaches of in-service professional development in each of the three countries (Denmark, Italy, Poland) that were considered *good examples* of "innovative approaches to in-service PD" by local experts and researchers. Each case was identified on the basis of common criteria drawn from the literature review (T3.3) conducted in the first part of the study and presented in the first chapter of this report.

Data collected in each case include both existing and new data (interviews, focus groups and observations). Case studies were conducted within the "WP3, Professional Development: Impact and Innovation", with the aim to explore new effective approaches to professional development aimed at enhancing education and improving workforce training strategies for early practitioners.

This multiple case study aimed at identifying common and culturally different key elements of innovation within in-service professional development practices in contemporary ECEC settings (i.e. sustainability, creativity and flexibility, participation of coordinators, sustained shared practices of learning within a group, reflexivity, etc.) and discussing them in a cross-cultural perspective. In each site, overlapping and connections with the WP2 multiple case study (D 2.3, Slot et al., 2016), are acknowledged and further described in the final part of each national case study report (see Appendices).

Findings revealed that there is a largely shared interpretation of *innovation* in the ECE field, despite the cultural, geographical, political differences that characterized these three different countries. We found this agreement within each case study, among stakeholders and practitioners, and between the three cases, and this is an interesting and partially unexpected result. The main findings regard the process of innovation and its impact on professional consciousness and motivation in terms of networking, participatory practices and the improvement of ECEC quality.

In depth and comprehensive insight in "good practice" models of continuous professional development and quality improvement based on the three case studies reveals the effects of dynamic factors (e.g. frequent feedback and regular team-based reflection sessions based on observation), the importance of time for reflection in job contract, the critical role of pedagogical leaders (coordinators, directors, managers, supervisors), the importance of inter-organizational networking within the locality and the facilitating role of collaboration with research institutes. All three studies provide evidence of the mutual benefit of collaboration between practitioners and researchers/experts, and underline the need to improve the practitioners' network and possibility for working with communities of practices developed at the micro, meso, macro level.

Findings in brief:

- We found a widespread interpretation of innovation in PD connected to social participation, networking, exchange, collaboration, reciprocal learning from all professionals at different levels.

- Sustainability in PD, i.e. regularity, stability and PD choices which incorporate peer-to-peer strategies in training and a wide dissemination, implemented by regular and affordable resources, are considered to have a strong impact and have been effectively exemplified in various forms according to local traditions and ECEC organization.

- The interplay between research, education and practice, as already stated in the D3.1 (Jensen, et.al.2015) emerges as a main finding from the three cases.

- Many and different ways of connecting the micro-meso-macro levels and combining top-down and bottom-up approaches (or vice versa) emerge from the three cases.

- Experiential learning, workshops, knowledge-based and change-oriented pedagogical practices are emphasized as fundamental.

- The role of the coordinator or manager emerges as a key element.

- PD can have an impact on educational policies at local and national levels (VIDA, MIBA project, Reggio Emilia, Łódź).

- Involvement of practitioners when designing PD is important.

- The three cases point out the need to connect reflection to practice/actions, to foster critical reflection processes and practice analysis, and to translate knowledge into practice.

- Time, stability of the group of professionals and creativity are key components in promoting change in practices.

- Outcomes regarding children exist and can be measured (Denmark).

- ICT are important for documentation and to create virtual community of learners (Italy).

All described cases seem to have acted as "engines of innovation".

More research is necessary within a qualitative/ethnographic framework in more EU contexts in order to shed more light on the specific forms and effects of PD practices and approaches and on how to transfer them within each country from one institution to another and, with the necessary precautions, cross culturally. The results from these three case studies could encourage new studies on how reflective practices and dynamic processes of reciprocal learning can promote and support educators

in developing an attitude of learning by doing, team work, discovering new opportunities and being more aware of the possible effects of their educational actions.

There is a need for further research on how innovation is effectively translated into renewed practices to promote children's well-being and learning. There is also a need for contact and exchange in the field and at the managers' level, to single out possible paths for innovation, so as to understand how they work and how they can be adapted culturally in order to inspire and contribute to the development of effective and culturally sensitive PD practices all over Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continuous professional development should be considered an essential component of the structural quality and the development of any good quality ECEC system. Pre-service, staff qualification progressively developing to a post secondary level, should be a common goal and a necessary premise for continuous professional development, to face the increasing diversity in children, family, organizations.

Innovation is situated and related to contexts and balance is needed between local practices, traditions, values and goals and a broader perspective. Innovative practices, to be effective, need to be culturally sensitive.

1. Include paid hours for PD in ECEC staff contracts.

2. Promote *glocal strategies*.

3. Establish and support networks, contacts, exchanges between professionals involved in PD projects in different cities/countries. New (real and virtual) communities of learners[1] are needed.

4. Promote strategic PD projects negotiated in goals and practices with professionals, experimented and evaluated in specific groups or sites with a clear perspective of dissemination.

5. Promote collaboration between policy makers, practitioners, researchers, parents to ensure common intents and meanings in PD.

6. Reduce the gap between research and PD by introducing in the ECE field new processes of action research, participatory research and knowledge-based PD.

7. Define goals, impact and outcomes through a participatory process involving professionals and

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[1] The basic/core assumption of the wording "community of learners" (Brown, Ash, Rutherford, Nakagawa, Gordon, & Campione, 1993) is the enhancement of a "situated learning", a learning process based on social exchanges of experiences, skills and competences. The underlying idea is that all the practitioners are engaged in a self-reflective learning and in a critical inquiry in which each one becomes responsible in front of the community, for the definition of their own knowledge, practice and expertise.

parents.

8. Define local and general criteria for evaluating professional development's impact according to goals.

9. Transform evaluation projects/processes into formative and constructive PD opportunities.

10. Clearly define an agent (s) (city, Municipalities, Ministry, Research centres etc.) who is responsible for promoting and monitoring investment in and quality of PD.

11. Connect pre-service with in-service learning provision and experiences.

12. Invest in PD for key figures and multipliers: coordinators, *pedagogisti*, tutors, heads, managers, directors, supervisors, expert teachers.

13. Promote peer-to-peer PD practices and mentoring.

14. Encourage a balance between knowledge-based and experiential-based PD to reduce the gap between newcomers and experienced ECEC-professionals and promote shared goals and meanings.

15. Promote the use and capacity to use ICT for documentation, reflective practices, contacts and work at distance.

16. Promote reflective PD processes anchored to the analysis of daily practices.

17. Sustain PD projects focused on attitudes and competences to promote inclusion.

18. Invest in professionals creativity, talents and motivation to enhance pleasure of learning.

19. Involve parents and children in PD projects to innovate curriculum.

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PREVIEW OF ITS STRUCTURE

This report is structured as follows: firstly, an introductory chapter highlights objectives and aims of the study, a brief introduction to the three selected cases (Denmark, Italy, Poland), the literature base for the study and the design and research questions. Secondly an integrative chapter illustrates and discusses the key-results, implications, recommendations from the three cases presented as separate appendices at the end of this report. The three case studies are presented separately in the appendices section (A. Denmark, B. Italy, C. Poland), each including: a contextualization and description of the case, the research design and procedures, findings, discussion of results.

Key terms

As the D 3.1 (Jensen et al., 2015) makes clear (p.23), there are different terms to name those working within the ECEC system, depending on each country tradition and pedagogical orientation. In this report we use different terms (according to the type of service chosen within each country: ie. Denmark preschool, daycare; Italy infant-toddler centers and preschools; Poland: crèche; and to the terms conventionally used in each country and translated in English). More specifically, in the Danish case, the term "educators" has been used to refer to those working in the 3-6 institutions involved in the VIDA program; in the Italian case, we used the Italian term "educators" to refer to professionals working in nursery schools (0-3) and "teachers" to refer to professionals working in preschools (3-6). In the Polish case, the term "caregivers" has been used to refer to professionals working in the 0-3 services object of the study. In this first two chapters of this report, we use the general term "practitioners" to refer to professionals working in the ECEC services (0-3 or 3-6) and "pedagogical coordinators" to refer to those who have a role of sustain in the professional in-service training of ECEC's personnel, to ensure continuity and improvement of pedagogical experiences.

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I.

OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY WORK IN THREE COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this report is on a multiple case study of exemplary approaches to PD (Professional Development) conducted in three EU countries within the CARE project: Denmark, Italy and Poland. The report reviews studies on innovative approaches to professional in-service development, including the use of new technologies, peer-learning, reflective practices and organizational learning, within the field of Early Childhood Education in Europe (T3.3, narrative literature review), and then presents results and interpretations of findings from the three case studies on good practices of in-service PD conducted in these three European countries (Denmark, Italy and Poland).

The study was conducted in cases selected in the three European countries involved in the WP3 (T3.3) considered to constitute three relevant examples according to national criteria, criteria drawn from the literature on innovation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and experts' opinions within the three countries (Denmark, Italy, Poland). The three selected are:

Case 1. Demark: "*The VIDA programme. Innovative practices of PD on quality and child outcomes*" (knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in daycare), an innovative professional development experience for professionals working with 3-6 year old children. The VIDA was developed and evaluated in four Municipalities (a total of 127 daycare centers) between 2010-2013. Then, in 2015, the programme was adopted in an additional Municipality, and, several more daycare centers adopted the programme with funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior as a part of a larger initiative. In 2015, VIDA was combined with the Abecedarian approach for ECEC and further developed (Abecedarian Approach within an Innovation Implementation Framework, known as APIIF) and tested in a pilot study.

Case 2. Italy: The Italian case study examines two cases of *ECEC participated city-laboratories* with innovative PD systems: the well-known case of Reggio Emilia as "*A model of diffused pedagogy*" and the case of Milan as an example of "*Fostering innovation in a big city: continuity and change*". Reggio Emilia is a medium-sized city which has benefitted from long-lasting political and administrative continuity within the city and in the Emilia Romagna Region, and has worked not only locally but also by networking within the region, throughout Italy, and it is internationally known as the best Italian experience in the world. It represents continuity in the effort to implement high quality ECECs, although it is known mainly for its offer to children and families, rather than for its professional development model. Milan is a large city characterized by innovation and strong connections to Europe, impacted by the problems and complexities of a metropolitan area. In the last 40 years, it has been characterized by several changes in its administrations, but it has developed a constant effort in PD investment and innovation in ECECs. Both cities are considered exemplary in Italy because they have not only contributed substantially to the most advanced systems/programs than many now associate with Italian early childhood care and education (OECD, 2012), but they have created an articulate long-term plan of in-service professional development through a massive, systematic investment in enhancing ECEC professionalism and competences within a socio-constructivist approach to learning based on the active involvement of practitioners, participatory learning, the sharing of ideas and practice analysis and documentation.

Case 3. Poland: *"An innovative approach to the in-service PD of caregivers in the Łódź*

Public Creche Network". The *Łódź Public Creche Network* (established in 1991), an innovative approach to the in-service professional development of caregivers. The Network developed new professional development methods, including cooperative efforts between the public crèche network and the University. This collaboration aimed to improve ECEC practitioners' critical thinking, in relation to practice.

The three cases were selected by following a set of *common criteria* drawn from the literature review conducted in the first part of the study. Criteria for site selection were: non-episodic, systemic, sustainable, networking, transferability/dissemination, creativity/flexibility, focusing on key-figures (coordinators, managers, supervisors), involving technologies, top-down/bottom-up approaches, active involvement/participatory processes, connections with research, experiential learning/engagement of individuals/groups. Within these common criteria, some additional local/national criteria were considered in each case study in order to provide in-depth/situated descriptions. The three cases have many points in common and some differences: the Danish case is an example of how to create innovation in ECEC institutions through organization-wide professional development, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches (see also Jensen & Brandi, 2013). It has a specific focus on socially disadvantaged children and spans from the municipal to the national level. The Italian study includes two examples of participatory ECEC city laboratories, in which innovation spreads out from being local to the involvement of other cities and with different partners (Reggio Emilia), and from parts of the city to the entire city (Milan). The Polish case is local, a network of ECEC institutions and it is just beginning to influence the national level. ECEC contexts and phases are different from case to case: Denmark and Italy are updating existing and extensive PD practices into a consolidated system, finding new and sustainable practices. Poland is in an earlier phase of creating and implementing new PD practices. The three cases are also different in terms of scale, systems, numbers: the Polish case refers to a network of 30 (0-3) institutions; the programme presented by Denmark involved 127 institutions for children aged 3-6; the Reggio's case involves a number of the 84 (0-6) ECEC institutions, out of which 66 are directly run by the municipality; the Milan case involves more or less 330 ECEC settings directly run by the municipality and focuses on the 54 ECEC services involved in the MIBA project, further described below.

Role of CARE partners

Each CARE partner involved in the WP3 conducted its own case. Data collection and data analysis of each case were under the responsibilities of each WP3 partner. The Italian team has conducted a narrative literature reviews on "new approaches to professional development, including the use of new technologies, peer learning, reflective practice and organizational learning" (T3.3). All partners have contributed to interpreting and integrating the findings from the review, identifying common criteria and procedures for data collection and data analyses. Research design, data collection and data analysis procedures were designed and developed in collaboration by all the WP3 partners involved in this deliverable.

The role of the Italian team was to prepare and finalize the case-study methodology, to propose the interview guide, to provide partners with guidelines for fieldwork. Each CARE partner was responsible for selecting the site at a national level, contextualizing the chosen case and justifying

reasons for the choice, collecting data within its case, analyzing data and interpreting findings and writing a report to illustrate the case. Each case study report is included in the present report in the final section (Appendices section).

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The original objective of the study reported here - as stated in the Description of the Work (DOW, 3.3, *objectives*, pp.12-13) - was the following:

- to identify innovative technologies and dynamic learning approaches to professional development based on a literature review, focusing on peer-education, supervision and team-professionalism, reflective practice, organizational learning and leadership, technology in professional development (ICT, web-based learning environments), and intercultural issues;

- to carry out 'good practice' case studies of professional development in 3 countries: (Jensen et al., 2015, Report D 3.1) based on studies and a specific focus on innovative and exemplary approaches to in-service professional development for ECEC practitioners across Europe, including examples of best (or "good") practices.

The general questions addressed within the three case studies were the following:

– What do we mean by "good and innovative PD practices" in contemporary ECEC services? and how can we represent them within the ECEC field?

– How can we fill the gap in the literature regarding how innovation occurs in practice?

– How do practitioners perceive innovation in PD?

Within these general questions, each study (1-3) addressed the following set of research-questions:

Case study 1. Denmark

– How is the innovative approach to ECEC practitioner PD conceptualized and translated into practice in the VIDA programme (2010-2013) and beyond?

– What is the impact of the VIDA approach to PD on educators' practices, regarding (1) high quality ECEC (output), (2) children's outcomes, (3) improved practice at the Municipal level (impact in a broader sense)?

– Which factors (mechanism/aspects) affect the implementation of the innovative programme for practice change within ECEC?

Case Study 2. Italy (Reggio Emilia and Milan)

- What have been the most relevant opportunities of in-service professional training offered to practitioners in the Reggio Emilia and the Milan Municipalities in recent years? What are their main *innovative* features?

- How can a PD project framework developed on the city level (Reggio Emilia and Milan) be interpreted and renewed at a micro level?

- What types of professional development are effective in improving professionals' practices, daily work, relationships with children and family participation? And how do ECEC practitioners view their PD experiences and their impact on day-to-day practices?

Case study 3. Poland

– What are the practical in-service PD actions undertaken by practitioners in Łódź on the macro, meso, micro levels?
– How have these practices changed in the past years?

In each national case, the authors present their results and interpret the findings by describing how innovation operates in practice in the three different contexts and how it is implemented and renewed at the macro/meso/micro levels. Examples of types of professional development effective in improving professional practices and ECEC quality in a time of an increasing lack of financial resources are described, bridging multiple voices and perspectives. Issues of impact, sustainability and transferability are discussed using qualitative data collected in each selected case.

Although we are aware that evidence from multiple cases is considered more compelling (Yin, 1994, p.45), we consider each case a *specific case* embedded in its local and cultural context. The three case studies are therefore treated individually and within a culturally situated perspective. Discussions of similarities and differences from the three cases and implications for further research are presented in the second chapter of the present report. Each study has contributed to situate these approaches within each context, while creating opportunities for exchange and mutual understanding in a cross-cultural perspective.

Our study aimed at identifying common and culturally different key elements of innovation within in-service professional development practices in contemporary ECEC settings (i.e. sustainability, creativity and flexibility, participation of coordinators, sustained shared practices of learning within a group, reflexivity, etc.) and discussing them in a cross-cultural perspective. In each site, overlapping and connections with the WP2 multiple case study (D 2.3, Slot et al., 2016), are acknowledged and further described in the final part of each national report.

HOW THE PROJECT BUILDS ON THE PREVIOUS REPORTS AND RESEARCH

Our multiple case study is well connected to previous work and research. The following already completed studies belong to the T3.3: a comparative review of approaches to ECEC staff professionalization in Europe, described in the D 3.1 (Jensen et al., 2015). Our study is connected to the previous literature review on effective professional development (Jensen et al., 2013) and the comparative analysis of the PD system in the countries involved in the CARE project (Jensen, et.al. 2015).

According to these works, there are no national definitions of innovative approaches to PD. In the Report D 3.1 (Jensen et al., 2015), *innovation* is defined as a "social innovation" aspect, a process that goes beyond the traditional understanding of innovation seen as the commercialization of new ideas/products, by suggesting that "innovation is the process of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges" (Dawson & Daniel 2010, p. 16). What differentiates social innovation from the traditional view as the commercialization of new products is "the scope".

Innovation was therefore defined (based on the narrative literature review on PD regarding child outcomes conducted by the Danish team for WP3) by differentiating it on "three levels: 1) a macro-level (i.e. form, content, delivery modes, e.g. in the reforms of pre-service education); 2) an inter-organizational or meso-level, also through inter- sectorial innovative approaches (i.e. staff working together with research, universities, Municipal sectors), consisting of new and creative ways to collaborate for change (i.e. living conditions and educational opportunities for all children and young people starting in ECEC); and 3) a micro-level or individual and organizational learning approach (i.e. in-service professional development programs focusing on innovative competences, through short- or long-term courses and training, perhaps though staff working in communities of practice" (Jensen el.al. 2015, p. 141).

The comparative review on innovative approaches to professional development shows the variety of PD approaches and specifically regards innovative approaches that are widespread in the EU countries involved in our study, highlighting the need to understand innovation in greater depth within a culturally situated perspective (and this is what we aimed to do in our case study, as already suggested in the conclusions of the D 3.1 [Jensen et al., 2015]). We already know, from economic studies, OECD and other EU documents (ET 2020, CoRe, 2012, Eurofound, 2014), how innovation has become a key word in the current debate on education, school and professional development. Innovation is acknowledged as central in maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and school/educational settings. There is no doubt that innovation is an essential component of successful professional development, because it aims to renew, update and improve professional competences, skills, knowledge, and practices. Literature demonstrates that innovation occurs when appropriate professional development provisions that address particular professional needs are made. These conditions create a greater potential for enhancing the process quality of school settings (Zaslow, 2010).

With this preliminary conceptualization in mind, in the next paragraphs we will present the main findings from the narrative literature review on "innovative/new approaches to professional development, including the use of new technologies, peer learning, reflective practice and organizational learning" (WP3 Objective 3.3, DOW, p. 12), conducted in the first part of this study (Mantovani, Bove, Cescato, 2015)[1].

Goal of this review was to propose a broader theoretical overview on the means and goals of *innovation* related to the professional development of ECEC practitioners to be used as a framework for designing our study[2]. In particular, we will describe the most prominent forms and approaches to PD currently in use in many ECEC settings across the EU and at an International level.

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[1] The theoretical framework presented in this chapter is based on results from the Narrative Literature Review looking into *innovative approaches* to Professional Development of ECEC staff. Data sources were: (1) recent, reviews on professional development and practices of in- service PD for ECEC practitioners (i.e. Zaslow et al., 2010); (2) relevant European Documents/Reports (ie. CoRe, 2011) provided by the International Associations for Economic Cooperation and Development and Early Childhood Education and Care, (3) relevant works suggested by CARE Partners.

[2] In addition to the previously cited sources, our review was based on a selection of recent articles (published between 2000 and 2015 in peer-reviewed journals), consisting of EU and International studies focused at least on one of the two key topics of the review: *innovation, in-service professional development, innovative practices for professional training*. A total of 37 English-language articles (15 empirical studies and 22 theoretical ones) undertaken in European and extra-European contexts, plus other national sources (articles and books in Italian language), were considered in our literature review. We included various combinations of key words to query the largest database of peer-reviewed literature.

EFFECTIVE INNOVATIVE PD APPROACHES

The recent Eurofound Report (2014) on the Impact of CPD on ECEC quality, child-staff interactions and children's outcomes states that effective and successful CPD interventions need to be "embedded in a coherent, pedagogical framework or curriculum, that builds upon research and addresses local needs" (Id., p. II). When Professional Development activities are *poorly conceptualized* and unable to provide teachers with innovative CPD approaches in order to overcome the increasing obstacles and difficulties in contemporary ECEC services, they make little impact upon teachers or children.

Effective CPD approaches, therefore, require the capacity to meet the local needs of professionals and provide them with experiences that are deeply rooted in their specific/local contexts.
The fit between the needs of the teachers and the selected activities proposed within the PD provisions is critical in ensuring that innovative approaches have a positive impact at the school/service and classroom level. There is increasing consensus that efforts should be made to develop innovative PD approaches that support "a model of learning as an experience deeply rooted in the context" (Hirsch, 2011, p.28) (according to Dewey's theory on *learning by doing*).

We also know (OECD, 2012; Oberhuemer, Schreyer & Neuman, 2010; Zaslow et al. 2010) that the idea of innovation offers an important departure from "traditional" forms of professional development, by giving teachers a *range* of new opportunities for relevant approaches to PD. The most recent literature in the field of adult learning and PD (based on the pioneering works by Knowles, 1973 and Mezirow, 1991) suggests there is a need for a broader, diverse set of professional development opportunities. This aspect signals a change from the "traditional" idea of professional development (and a traditional idea of the process of learning and teaching) as a transmission or course-led model of how teachers learn. The need for change in pre-service and in- service teacher education is strictly related to the new (socio-economic) conditions of our society (in the 21st Century). As indicated by several authors (eg. Lim et al., 2009), teachers' training both in theory and practice is experiencing a shift towards a new paradigm, with an emphasis on globalization, localization, the importance of recognizing multiple intelligences and lifelong professional learning in the process of teacher development.

The socio-economic challenges require for new roles for teachers and trainers involved in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of parents, students, governments and employers, policy makers and the community at large. In the current global, competitive market "the purpose of teacher education is to equip prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for provision of quality services to satisfy stakeholders' needs" (Lim et al., 2009, p. 8).
On the other hand, policy makers and educators "have had to think of ways to reform the curriculum, pedagogy and teacher education in order to prepare young people to more effectively cope with the fast-changing environments of the future" (Id., p. 9). "In recent years, school innovation has become increasingly important for worldwide reforms in an attempt to improve education and switch from traditional teaching practices to more creative, student-centered approaches" (Gorozidis, Papaioannou, 2014, p. 1).

SOME KEY-CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATION

The literature review highlights some characteristics of innovation that seem particularly interesting for our case study: each characteristic gave us hints and suggestions for choosing criteria for selecting the three cases included in our work.

1. A culturally situated process

The first CoRe (2011) idea is an interpretation of innovation as a culturally situated concept and process. What is new or innovative for one context might not be new for another. New does not necessary mean "original or never used before". It means "innovative for that context", never used before in *that* particular situation. Innovation is not an *invention* (Fagerberg, 2003). It is the process of applying new ideas and new knowledge and translating them into practice (Dawson, 2010, pp. 16-17), for increasing the efficiency in the production of goods and services (Lucas, 2009, cit. in Vila et al., 2014). It implies a new combination of "existing ideas, capabilities, skills and resources" (Fagerberg, 2003, p.7; Fagerberg, 2009; Dawson & Daniel, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015).

With regards to ECEC and our case study work, we decided to move beyond this idea by involving our participants (educators, teachers, pedagogical coordinators, policy makers, parents, children) in the process of selecting, defining and describing innovative approaches within their contexts. The need for a systemic perspective and approach in the design and delivery of PD is well known in our field: innovation produces a process of practice renewal, that simultaneously introduces new competences (the second level already suggested in our Report D 3.1, Jensen et al., 2015) (Margiotta, 2006; De la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007). In Early Childhood Education, innovation is often thought of as introducing something new and different, improving the quality of the system, developing innovative tools for research and professional development (Galliani, 2000, 2006; Margiotta, 2005, 2010; Lazzari, Picchio, Musatti, 2013; CoRe, 2011).

2. A creative process

The second key-feature of innovation is the link between innovation and creativity. Innovation can be seen as the process of combining existing ideas, practices, resources and perspectives in a new or renewed way. Research conducted in the commercial sector supports the idea that innovation is often connected to six main sub-criteria: creativity, sustainability, dissemination, flexibility, engagement of individuals, networking.

Creativity means the idea of interpreting innovation as a creative process. This is particularly interesting for our work because it reinforces the idea of reinterpreting something existing rather than introducing something new.

Sustainability means that if a new idea or project is not achievable, it is not innovative. The whole idea of innovation in contemporary educational settings has to do with achievability. If it is not realistic or possible, it cannot be innovative. For this reason, for example, the *Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET 2020') affirms that European Member States must ensure "sustainable economic prosperity and employability".

Replication, dissemination, distribution. These concepts are related to the need to achieve efficient

and sustainable use of the existing resource to involve as many settings and as many professionals as possible. *The Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET 2020) clearly say that high quality will only be achieved through the efficient and sustainable use of resources — both public and private, as appropriate — and through the promotion of evidence-based policy and practice in education and training.

Flexibility and openness means that innovation cannot be rigid. Innovation requires flexibility, both at an individual level (micro) and at an organizational level (macro). The complexity of the idea of innovation is the interplay between different dimensions/levels: for example, the development and promotion of individual competences/skills and the incorporation of new knowledge within the firm or organization requires flexibility and openness on the part of the organization (Vila, Pérez & Coll-Serrano, 2014).

Individual involvement: individuals have better reasons to be innovative if the organization and work group welcomes and promotes new ideas and their expression (in a democratic way). Individual propensity to innovate also depends on the position within the organization (Vila et al., 2014) "Working in organization with a clear orientation toward innovation increases the probability of acting as an innovator […]. The freedom to choose how to do the job also increases the probability of becoming an innovator" (Vila et al., 2014, p. 757). At the individual level, innovative competences are "abilities that allow individuals to perceive *opportunities for change*" (Vila et al., 2014, p. 753). Individual propensity to innovate also depends on the position within the organization (Vila et al., 2014).

Networking/Group involvement (staff at ECECs): this point varies greatly among member countries, but the CoRe idea is that communities of learners, networks, practices of sharing among groups of practitioners, exchanges, on-line communities, the involvement of practitioners as a group of professionals, impact on professionals' motivation in learning. And "motivation positively predicts a teacher's willingness to participate in relevant training and to implement innovation" (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014, p. 9). As highlighted at European/cross-national level, "teachers' powerful learning is enhanced by teacher networks" (Caena, 2011, p. 20).

3. Translating ideas into practices
The third feature of innovation is the need to connect innovation with the process of translating *new* ideas into [new or renewed] practices: innovation in professional development requires intentions, goals, strategies and the implementations of *new*, *renewed* or *different* practices or behaviors. It is a systemic process on many levels and involves different participants. It therefore requires networking.

The whole idea of translating new ideas into *new or renewed* educational practices is particularly interesting and, at the same time, challenging. In our field the ultimate goal of innovation has to do with making *significant* changes, improving educational practices and spreading new competences. Innovative processes necessarily go beyond resistance to new ways or inertia, the tendency to maintain existing knowledge, habits, behaviors, conceptualizations and it forces the development and implementation of new competences (Margiotta, 2006; De la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007). We already know that CPD, in order to be effective, needs to include some crucial aspects,

such as the capacity to satisfy local needs, the active involvement/activation of participants, the link with research, and so on. But we know little regarding how to *evaluate* the impact of these efforts (within the short-term and the long-term) and its translation into *new* or renewed practices.

4. Developing innovative competences
In the CoRe report (2012), as in other recent works, authors highlight the importance of sustaining the development of innovative competences among practitioners. The CoRe-report suggests how different levels of competence generate different levels of innovation at work. For example, alertness to new opportunities and the ability to present products/reports/ideas increases the probability of innovation in services and products. The ability to mobilize others or to promote new ideas/solutions increases the probability for innovation in terms of knowledge. Finally, the ability to use computers, the internet and new communication technologies increases the probability of playing a role in technological innovation (Vila et al., 2014, p. 757). Innovation is almost always connected to the idea of professionalism and competence and is often thought of as something that goes far beyond its methods, structures, or delivery approaches. Innovation is a process, not an instantaneous act, which requires time and a series of actions and decisions (Isabirye & Moloi, 2014).

With regard to ECECs, our review suggests that there is an increasing consensus regarding the need to support practitioners so that they "stay updated on scientifically based method and curriculum subject knowledge, so as to be able to apply this knowledge to their work" (OECD, 2012, p.4). To this end, many authors agree on fostering innovation as a tool to meet the need to update professional competence on specific issues, such as for example "Good understanding of child development and learning [see also Cocever, 2014], Ability to develop children's perspectives, Ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children, Leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans, Good vocabulary and ability to elicit children's ideas (OECD, 2012, p. 2), strategies to improve [children's] Language, Literacy and Mathematics (Zaslow, 2010, pp. 29-30).

Increasing attention among the EU countries seems to be paid to the need to update professional competences on developmental issues (children's needs at different stages of their development and the capacity to observe, recognize and satisfy them), language issues, literacy and mathematics, scientific and outdoor education, technological education, intercultural competence, inclusion, relational competence (in working with children and especially with families). The literature review highlights how teachers and educators can enhance and renew their competences, in particular in the field of "cognitive, language and socio-emotional development of children" (Eurofound, Working Paper 2014, p. 11).
The CoRe report explored the ideas of 'competence' and professionalism in early childhood practice and identified systemic conditions for developing, supporting and maintaining competence at all levels of the early childhood system" (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Van Laere, Lazzari & Peeter, 2012, p. 508). The CoRe document (2011) says that "a key feature of a competent system is its support for individual to realize their capability to develop responsible and responsive practices. [...] A competent system develops in reciprocal relationships between individuals, teams, institutions and the wider social – political context. [...] A competent system requires possibilities for all staff to engage in joint learning and critical reflection" (CoRe, 2011, p. 21).

The Report D 3.1 (Jensen et al., 2015) also highlights this aspect, stressing the necessity to take different (interrelated) aspects at the macro, meso and micro-levels in PD into account.

5. Improvement

The introduction of something new, radical, different when compared to the existing models can take place either through significant chances in the use of a particular educational practice, or the emergence of a "new practice" in an educational system. In this time of globalization, transformation and rapid change, innovation is more often connected with well-known aspects like "human-capital" (since 1990), "life-long learning" (OECD, 1996, OECD, 1996b; European Commission, 2013), "new skills for professionals" (European Commission 1995, 2006, 2013; Pro- Inno Europe, 2012; European Commission, 2013b), "heritage" (Mantovani, 2014), "technologies" (European Commission, 1995; Avalos, 2011). The increasing need for change and innovation in both pre-service and in-service teacher education is related to the new socio-economic conditions of our society. The current socio-economic challenges require teachers to develop new competences and identities to meet the diverse needs and expectations of parents, students, governments and employers, policy makers and the community at large.

The idea of innovation is studied and presented in the relevant literature in different ways. But at the core of international articles and EU documents, there is always the understanding that "innovation" in ECEC professional development is about teachers' learning: learning how to learn, transforming learning/knowledge into practice for the benefit of the growth of children-students, use of technologies and developing new forms of professional development such as communities of learners, on-line courses, networking, tutoring, coaching, motivation, positively predicts a teacher's willingness to participate in relevant training and to implement innovation, (Gorozidis, Papaioannou, 2014), school-university partnerships (Avalos, 2011).

The promotion of innovative approaches therefore requires all of the above mentioned factors. The thematic workgroup developed a European Quality Framework on ECECs (2014): it consists of 8 statements, two of which focus on the role played by the ECEC workforce in enhancing the pedagogical quality of services for young children and in improving children's outcomes. Developing comprehensive training programs for all staff employed in these services (preschool teachers, assistants, educators, family day careers and so on) is one of the statements reported in the

EU quality framework (ET.2020); providing opportunities and supportive conditions which create opportunities for observation, reflections, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents (Eurofound, 2014, p. 2).

An interesting point of view concerning innovation in the history of PD in the West is offered by Pirard and Barbier (2012). These scholars present three main "cultures of education and training that have successively appeared in the Western world": firstly the 'culture de l'enseignement' ('culture of teaching'), secondly the 'culture de la formation' (culture of training'), and thirdly, the 'culture de la professionnalisation' ('culture of professionalization')" (Pirard and Barbier, 2012, p. 173). The authors suggest that the real/new challenge for professional development should be "to refrain from holding these cultures in contrast to one another" (Ibid.) "but rather to use them to bring together traditionally separate frameworks" (Id., p. 180). This can help us avoid the standardization of training systems.

THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION: A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IN THE ECE FIELD

Innovation in Education and PD could produce "expected or unexpected outcomes". This implies the implementation of "new ideas and practices" that succeed in resolving educational problems and "improve the quality" (Viganò & Cattaneo, 2010). There is an increasing consensus regarding the need to adopt "new forms of training" (methods, structures, as described above (Zaslow, 2009), but so far few studies have described "the mechanisms responsible for or influencing change" within these innovative processes (Sheridan et al., 2009, p.378). "There is a concomitant need [to develop the research in direction of] empirical effort to examine [...] not only forms [of PD], [...] but also processes and proximal and distance outcomes" (Id., p. 378). In other words, we need to study and understand "how or why certain professional development efforts promote or impede growth" (Id., p. 381).

Sheridan et.al. argue for the need to study the nature of innovative approaches, addressing questions of "how and why certain Professional Development Efforts promote or impede growth" (Ibid.) and understanding "how professionals move from awareness to actions" (Id.p.385).

Evidence from the literature review conducted within 28 EU state members (see Eurofound Report, 2014) gives indications of what might be critical success factors that determine the effect of Continuing Professional Development Provisions on practitioners. The Eurofound report highlights 4 factors:

- first, CPD intervention has to be embedded in a coherent pedagogical framework or curriculum that builds upon research and addresses local needs (p. II);
- secondly, there has to be active involvement by practitioners in the transformative process for the improvement of educational practices within ECEC settings [in our case studies we need to describe, document, observe the role of practitioners during and after the PD experience];
- thirdly, CPD needs to be focused on practitioners learning in practice and in dialogue with colleagues and parents, and therefore a mentor or coach has to be available during ECEC staff non-contact hours.
- fourthly, CPD interventions also require changes in working conditions, especially the availability of non-contact time (p. II)

This report includes a review of qualitative studies on the opinions and experiences of practitioners themselves regarding the factors that characterize their CPD experience or working conditions (Eurofound 2014, p.3). Among them:
- Intensive CPD programs with a video-feedback component proved to be effective for the achievement of short-term outcomes; long-term CPD initiatives accompanied by pedagogical guidance and coaching in reflection groups proved to be effective for enhancing and sustaining ECEC quality over long periods of time;
  - Different combinations of CPD delivery modes is a positive point.
- The link between CPD and children's outcomes is rarely the direct focus of EU studies and thus the report does not draw conclusions about the nature of the link. The focus of most studies is the quality of the practice.

Little is known, however, about how various forms of PD operate and interact to improve the quality

of ECEC programs (Zaslow, 2009) [Eurofound 2014, p.3]. While on the one hand we already know that ECEC professional development and staff working conditions have been "increasingly recognized as important determinants of quality by international policy organizations such as the OECD" (Eurofound, 2014, p.2), we are aware that there is no simple or direct relationship between staff training and children's outcomes, but rather positive effects are the results of multiple factors such as, for example, the design, content and delivery of training.

ECEC quality improvements might "require undertaking simultaneous actions across multiple structural characteristics, with an understanding of how each structural characteristic has an impact on quality within each system" (thematic Group on ECEC quality 2014, cit in Eurofound 2014, p.2). EU and OECD (2011, 2012 a,b,) "highlight that improving the working conditions and enhancing the PD of the ECEC workforce are critical measures to meet the dual challenge of providing an equitable access to services while also promoting improvement in the quality of provision. However, while there is agreement about the ambition to improve ECEC staff working conditions and investing in their PD, there is *no consensus on how to achieve these goals*" (Eurofound, 2014, p.2). The ways that CPD impacts on children is less understood. But it is not Professional Development *per se* that has an impact on children's outcomes (Id., p.3).

MOST PROMISING FORMS OF INNOVATION IN PD

Evidence from the literature indicates the most promising forms of innovation. There is a large consensus regarding which forms of innovation are particularly interesting for improving the process quality of ECEC settings. As already described in the D 3.1 Report (Jensen et al., 2015), the literature review on PD in ECECs identifies some common forms of in-service professional development programs with different objectives: 1) specialized on-the-job in-service training, aimed at strengthening the educators' competence regarding the curriculum; 2) coaching and mentoring, aimed at reinforcing the sense of self-efficacy/confidence in teachers-in-training and heightening their skills and competence; and 3) communities of practice (Buysse & Wesley, 2005; Sheridan et al., 2009). Among the forms of PD that produce positive effects and therefore are largely used in the field of ECE are: specialized training, coaching and consultation, community of

practices, research related to forms of PD and multidimensional methods of training that produce positive effects (Sheridan et al., 2009).

The thematic emphases in the past years mainly concerned: a) on-going professional development as a way to produce innovation in educational contexts, b) learning by doing as a way to sustain professionals in their actions, c) reflexive practices as tools for innovation in education and in professional development, d) new technologies as tools for introducing innovative practices in PD, e) the combination of different methods/tools in order to enhance teacher competence by providing them with a variety of learning-situations (Sheridan et.al. 2009, p.391, OECD, 2012).

In recent years, there has been greater agreement in describing innovation within the field of PD as a research-process (participatory research experiments [Balduzzi, Lazzari, 2015], praxeological research). "Professional development plays a crucial role in shaping teacher quality through ensuring that teachers are able to create an environment that best facilitates learning and have adequate knowledge of content and how to present this material" (Isabirye & Moloi, 2014, p. 103).

As recognized by teachers involved in qualitative and participatory research (see Isabirye & Moloi, 2014), participants indicate that opportunities for PD influence teaching activities positively, BUT it is necessary that PD opportunities stimulate personal initiative and attitude changes and training experiences do not always guarantee these opportunities. "Professional development programs should be continuous and provide follow-up for further learning" (Id., p. 106). "Teacher learning is [in fact] an imperative strategic goal for personal growth and development as well as for students learning" (Id., p. 101).

Results from our literature review on the forms of innovation with regard to ECEC settings show wide consensus regarding the following forms of innovation:

- ICTs. The use of technologies. This type of professional development includes the use of blended PD approaches PD, online forums, video-clubs, web-based learning and teaching, video-conferences, the use of interactive and multimedia materials (Lim, et al. 2009; Goldman, 2007). Many efforts over the past two decades have focused on the role of new communication technologies, like on-line courses, communities and web-based applications (Carter Ching & Hursh, 2014). "Educational and training innovation has clearly been influenced by ICTs (information communication technologies). Technologies have played a fundamental role as an educational tool in many experiences documented in the current scientific literature" (Suarex, 2010, cit. in Gòmez et al., 2014, p.51). However today, research reveals that "general technological skills alone are not sufficient to ensure a real process of innovation" (Carter Ching & Hursh, 2014, p. 72). "Teachers need educational opportunities and communities that pedagogically sound technology use" (Ibid). In other words, "simply applying such technologies as tool is no guarantee that they will improve or offer anything new to the teaching learning process" (Gòmez et al., 2014, p.51)

- Coaching, mentoring, and forms of counseling and supervision. We already know – from various sources in different disciplines – commercial, sports, education - the potential of mentoring and coaching for PD and the innovative nature of these forms as opposed to traditional approaches to PD. Various aspects related to mentoring are highlighted in the literature, induction as well as comparisons between novice and experienced. (See the extensive review on mentoring: Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). Mentoring – similar to working with colleagues – means the presence of someone working with a student teacher or a novice teacher to improve his/her professionalism (NAYEC, 2011). Mentoring, however, is not an automatic practice. It requires specific ability and competence, for example the capacity to explain, justify and reason about learning processes. Using peer learning, tutoring, coaching and other forms of sustained professional learning has been shown to have positive effects on teaching and learning. "The critically reflective component of tutoring practices combines theoretical and experiential learning" (Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2015, p.1). A researcher, a tutor, a mentor, a supervisor or the same teaching team can encourage teachers to reflect on teaching processes (Postholm, 2008).

- Team work, collegiality, co-learning: The value of teachers learning in a group is featured in articles that look at teacher networks and teams, communities of practice and communities of learning, as well as peer coaching, collegiality (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013; Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2015). In Italy, for example, there is strong emphasis on the role that peers play in teachers' learning and training. Data collected from documentary sources in Municipal Italian

early childhood services (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013) show relevant initiatives based on practitioners' active engagement in PD processes and peer exchanges. The focus on collegiality and the relational/systemic dimension seems to be a peculiarity of the Italian system. While in Europe (and the CoRe survey, 2011 is an example) the main approaches to professionalization are aimed mostly at individual practitioners, the case of Italy focuses on the role of collegiality and the group in raising the quality level of services. The underlying philosophy is that "practitioners' reflexivity and collegial work allow for a deeper understanding of children's needs and foster responsive interactions" (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013, p. 2). In Italy, teacher PD "considers professionalism in ECECs to be a complex construction in which relationships among colleagues play an important role […] and the need for a shared approach to care and education is strongly felt by teachers" (Balduzzi, 2011, pp. 843, 845).

In in-service training in Italy, pedagogical coordinators have a crucial role, recognized as an essential component of a high quality educational experience (Catarsi, 2010), together with the promotion of a "collegial work" between teachers and between teachers and coordinators.

- School-University partnership: Several articles examined how school–university (or teacher–researcher) partnerships bridge the gap between theory and practice, as well as their different perspectives on professional development. There is wide consensus on the importance of connecting research with practice: "the link between training institutions and ECEC services is required in order to ensure an equal and reciprocal relationship between theorizing and hands-on activities" (Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2015, p.2). School-University partnerships, however, cannot be considered a formal collaboration mechanism: they require interdisciplinary team teaching, seminars, teaching-research, approaches combining workshops or training with on-site visits, training with on-site coaching (Zaslow et al., 2010, pp. 53-54). In this perspective "educational innovation is pursued to the promotion of practitioners' critical reflection on everyday practices […] and PD programs are sustained by a culture of mutual learning, participation, shared understandings" (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013, p. 4). The core of this approach is the idea that responsibility for early childhood education is a community matter (Catarsi, 2004).

- Reflexivity is another key word in professional preparation and development at the European/international level of the debate: the need for critical reflection and the ability to develop a critical way of thinking in practice is largely shared in the debate on professional development and professionals' competences (Schön, 1983; Argyris & Schön, 1996). In recent years many scholars highlight the potentials of video-feedback and video-based approaches to promote critical reflective practices and disposition of inquiry (Goldman, et.al. 2007; Tobin, Mantovani, Bove, 2010). "A key characteristic of successful systemic approaches to professionalization is their ability to recognize and build on practitioners' prior and every-day experience (i.e. *analyse de pratique*, critical reflection) (Paquay, Altet, Charlier & Perrenoud, 1996; Falcinelli, 2011) and to support peer learning and "intergenerational learning" (Urban et al., 2012, p. 515). Several studies included in the recent Eurofound (2014) report identify reflexivity as a key aspect in high quality, strong impact CPD, that usually includes observation, documentation, action-research, reviews, video-based experiences (Peeters et al., 2014, p.68).

- On the job coaching. The general consensus from research reviews and summaries is that teachers implement new skills primarily when specific training is combined with on-the-job coaching (Sheridan et al., 2009).

The above mentioned innovative approaches to PD can be provided both face-to-face or using distance, technology-based or hybrid methods (NAYEC, 2011, p.9). In all cases, innovation occurs when particular CPD tools are used, addressing the specific needs and characteristics of learners. These tools feature flexibility and actively involve professionals (through action-research, case studies, micro-teaching, video-based experiences…).

INNOVATIVE COMPETENCES

In the European debate, innovation with regard to PD in most cases implies the use of strategies to sustain the development of "high-skilled and well-educated professionals" and the development of "technological skills" (European Commission 2013b; Galliani, 2006; Midoro, 2013) as well as "teaching strategies" (Eurofound, 2014, p.14). It often addresses the idea of "skills" and the need to sustain the development of "new skills" in order to face the cultural, social challenges of educational settings in contemporary societies (soft skills). These aspects are important, because "not only the level of education, but also the content of the staff educational or training curriculum is important for the level of quality in ECEC" (OECD, 2012, p. 3). Innovation could be also seen in the content of PD.

Research highlights that "when trained on matters of early development and care, staff can better develop a child's perspective" (Sommer et al., 2010, cited in OECD, 2012, p. 4). Using current educational theories, Fukkink & Lont (2007) divided caregiver competence into three separate and complementary learning domains: professional knowledge, attitudes and skills. In the light of these aspects, the review carried out by Fukkink & Lont shows that: (1) effective caregiver training has effects on caregiver competences (Eurofound, Working Paper, 2014, p. 10); (2) training experiences are more effective when they involve a fixed curriculum (see Eurofound, Working Paper, 2014, p. 10); (3) caregiver skills are amenable to instruction (Ibid.).

There is wide large consensus regarding the need to broaden competence related to methodological aspects, such as: reflexivity and the capacity to observe, recognize and discuss practices, ideas and behaviors (those of children, their own and those of colleagues); the exchange of experiences (in particular between older and younger teachers, but also between institutions and coordinators-educators/teachers, between different cultural contexts and so on…); peer-learning; the use of new technologies (ICT) and virtual distant learning and communication. Among the innovative competences required of professionals, Zaslow (2009, p. 533) mentions communication skills, problem solving abilities and a collaborative attitude as crucial (Gòmez et al., 2014, p. 58). In synthesis – as highlighted by Sheridan et al. (2009, p. 379) – PD in early childhood education settings takes place *innovatively* when it accomplishes 2 primary objectives:

(1) to advance the knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices of early childhood providers in their efforts to educate children and support families;

(2) to promote the culture for on-going professional growth, on the part of individuals and systems (according to the logic of sustainability, globalization and "glocalization", which characterizes current society [Lim et al., 2009]). This second goal implies - for practitioners - competence in "self-sustaining, self-regulation, self-evaluation, […] [the capacity to create] self-sustaining networks (Sheridan et al., 2009, pp. 380-383), the capacity to "differentiation of roles that teachers must assume in different positions" (Id., p. 386). It means acquiring flexibility in line with the philosophy of "sustainability […] a topic of great interest among the research, practice and policy communities" (Id., p. 394).

SUMMING UP

Our literature review gives evidence to the need to further explore the concept of *innovation* within the ECEC field, where there is little empirical research on innovative PD practices/approaches (i.e. Sheridan et al., 2009). Rather, in the ECEC fields there are local definitions and local experiences of innovative approaches, not always documented within an evidence-based framework, in connection to specific projects which are of interest for our study (i.e. Country Reports in D 3.1, Jensen et al., 2015).

Our review also suggests that there is a gap in the literature on how innovation occurs in practice (the actual level of innovation: its forms, contents, approaches etc.) in ECEC settings and on what innovation means at a local level (the *process* of innovation: how it works, in what circumstances, how and why). At the same time, we need more research regarding the multiple variables (starting from cultural variables) that may relate to the efficacy of various forms PD (Joyce & Shower, 2002). It is important to consider some aspects on which research has not dwelled until now, like the *sustainability* of PD efforts, the *intensity and duration* required to make PD effective, the role of *contextual variables* that affect training practices (i.e. opportunities for teacher collaboration offered in the workplace, the individual and systemic characteristics of a particular training site and the level of openness to change), the qualities/traits of "trainers"/mentors, supervisors or coaches that can help to develop effective approaches in teacher PD.

We need to know more about the practitioners' perceptions of their change and improvement. We also need to discern what particular forms of PD *impact* practice (a question of efficacy). It is important to understand the process by which practitioners develop skills over time and how they achieve deep understanding, and what we can do in order to create/sustain/promote "productive"/effective learning.

Existing contributions agree upon the importance and impact of PD on quality and outcomes of ECEC. Innovation in professional development, as argued above, needs to be non-episodic and systemic and it appears obvious that the continuous and rapid changes in society, family life, contexts of child development, school and societal challenges require a continuous and lifelong investment in consolidating and updating workforce competences. WP2 and WP3 Country-Reports within the CARE project highlight both the major efforts various countries have done in extending pre-service and in service PD, but also the cuts in resources and the difficulties in qualifying and supporting non episodic PD also face to the changes in the services (e.g. new curricula or guidelines, integration 0-6, etc), in children attending (e.g. multilingual diversity or inclusion of children with disabilities). The possibility to extend and implement PD beyond the centers or cities where good practices have been first developed and to put it (bring) to scale are key factors of good practices which can then also inspire other contexts/countries where resources are limited. These reasons make it necessary to *put a special focus on sustainability* within innovation criteria and to look for example of innovative practices. Peer to peer training, twinning practices, blended approaches using technologies and also the indirect PD stemming from participation in research projects, documentation and group project work in their potential to enhance reflectivity and group work and to be linked with practice, together with new, creative ways to find resources should therefore be considered always including in the perspective of *sustainability*. We need to review local sources (i.e. documents, publications in local languages) to highlight how innovation has been developed at the local level (we need to include *local* literature relevant for innovation addressed to professionals.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD: DENMARK, ITALY, POLAND

Our study is conceived as a multiple case study and follows the definition of Yin (1994): "the logic underlined the use of multiple case studies is: each case must be selected so that it either predicts similar results, or produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons" (Id., p. 45). Each case is therefore treated individually "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Researchers use case study method when they want to cover "contextual conditions" believing that they might be highly pertinent to their phenomenon-study" (Yin, 2002, p. 13).

The case study method is aimed at addressing either a *descriptive question (*what happened) or an *explanatory question* (how or why did something happen). The goal is "seeking the particular, more than the ordinary" (Stake, 2005, p.447): case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end product of the research regularly portrays more of the *uncommon* drawing at once from: the nature of the case, particularly its activity, functioning; its historical background; its physical and cultural setting.

The ultimate goal is to provide the scientific community with an analytic report of the case (telling the story), describing it in sufficient detail (comparative description is the opposite of what Geertz called "thick description", 1973). Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine – get a close (in depth) understanding of it – a 'case' within its real-life context.

Case study "illuminates a particular situation, to get a close/in depth understanding of it" (Yin, 2004, p. 2) by making direct observations and data collection in natural settings. Observing each case within its contexts therefore require the capacity to adapt each method to the specific treats of each local case. Compare to other methods, the strength of the case study method is "its ability to examine in depth a 'case' within its real-life context" (Id., p. 1). A case is a "phenomenon specific to

time and space" (Id., p. 5).

In our work, each national team has adopted this method within a culturally situated perspective and each case study illuminates a particular programme/approach/system within a culturally situated perspective. The Italian team first provided the WP3 team some guidelines for conducting the case study, and then each team has developed its own data collection procedure. In depth descriptions of each-case methodology will be provided in the national chapters (See Appendices).

Data collection procedure

Good cases benefit from having multiple sources of data. According to this premise, various data sources were combined to gain as many convergent or divergent but well situated and well described information as possible: existing and documentary data (such as projects, evaluation documents, graduate or Master thesis/dissertations, observations, videotapes) and new data (such as semi-structured interviews with ECEC practitioners, focus groups, observations of in-service training practices).

Each local team have collected and analyzed all the documents they considered important to contextualize and analyze in depth each case (macro/meso) and its embedded subcases (micro- level).

Among the new data, a total number of 50 semi-structured interviews with professionals with different roles in ECEC field have been collected in the three cases as follows:

   a) a total of 11 interviews were conducted in the Danish case (2 stakeholders; 2 Municipal heads of ECEC administration; 3 ECEC consultants; 1 manager; 2 educators; 1 University college teacher) and a focus group interview was conducted with an assistant manager and 2 ECEC educators;

   b) a total of 30 interviews were conducted in the Italian case, among which: 11 semi- structured interviews in the case of Reggio Emilia (2 stakeholders, 2 *pedagogisti,* 2 teachers, 3 educators, 1 teacher-trainer, 1 *atelierista*); a total of 19 interviews were conducted in the Milan case (12 educators, 3 pedagogical coordinators, 2 stakeholders, 2 representatives of the Universities Milano-Bicocca and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore). In addition, 3 focus groups were conducted in the Milan case with educators involved in the subcases.

   c) in the Polish case 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted, as follows: 5 caregivers, the head of a selected crèche, the pedagogical supervisor, the nutrition supervisor, the Director of the network, academics cooperating with the network (n=2); in addition, data (video recordings) were included:13 video clips lasting between 2 and 20 minutes registered over two days in one selected crèche.

In depth description of data collection procedures and method will be provided in each national chapter (see Appendices).

EXPECTED RESULTS

We expect our multiple case study will contribute:

   - to broadening the conceptualization of innovation in the field of education, by in-depth exploration of some *innovative ways* of conceptualizing, translating into practice and processing innovation in PD in ECEC settings;
   - to understand innovation in PD, of what is "traditional" and what is "new" in this field.
   - to better understand the main components and cultural-social-economic conditions or circumstances that sustain innovative PD processes by exploring practitioners perspectives.

How is innovation linked to tradition? Is it *renewal, updating* or the introduction of totally new elements/practices? How does this balance vary in different contexts? This seems to be a very important question in order to maintain the balance between universally recognizable and realistically effective local practices/innovations.
This study could through some light on well rooted and long-term PD systems which are unknown internationally. Literature on local innovation in PD (local in that it regards member countries) is likely to appear in local languages before it is studied/translated into English and published in International Journals, often years later.
The three studies presented in this report are expected to give a contribution in this sense.

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II.

IMPLICATIONS FROM THE THREE CASE STUDIES: DENMARK, ITALY, POLAND

Introduction

In this section we provide insights and reflections on the case studies included in the present report (see Appendices) and some cross-country observations from the analyses. Many points in common emerged from such three different cases. There seems to be a high level of agreement among researchers and practitioners on what constitutes *innovation* in PD. We found this agreement within each case study, among stakeholders and practitioners, and between the three cases, and this is an interesting and partially unexpected result. The main findings regard the process of innovation and its impact on professional consciousness and motivation in terms of networking, participatory practices and the improvement of ECEC quality.

Findings in brief

- Findings revealed that there is a largely shared interpretation of *innovation* in the ECE field, despite the cultural, geographical, political differences that characterized these three different countries.

- We found a widespread interpretation of innovation in PD connected to social participation, networking, exchange, collaboration, reciprocal learning from all professionals at different levels.

- Sustainability in PD, i.e. regularity, stability and PD choices which incorporate peer-to-peer strategies in training and a wide dissemination, implemented by regular and affordable resources, are considered to have a strong impact and have been effectively exemplified in various forms according to local traditions and ECEC organization and have been effectively exemplified in various forms according to local traditions and ECEC organization.

- The interplay between research, education and practice, as already stated in the D 3.1 (Jensen, et.al.2015), emerges as a main finding from the three cases.

- Many ways of connecting the micro-meso-macro levels and combining top-down and bottom-up approaches (or vice versa) emerge from the three cases, but in all cases the need to provide practitioners with extensive, stable, systemic experiences of wide professional development combining and involving learning at different levels (educators, coordinators, children, parents) is clear.

- Experiential learning, workshops, knowledge-based and change-oriented pedagogical practices are meant to reduce the gap between learning/incorporating new knowledge and transferring them into new actions.

- The role of the coordinator and/or manager emerges as a key elements in sustaining processes of transferring theory to practice at all levels and in implementing innovation in the ECEC, thorough organization-wide professional development and the *training of trainers*.

- PD can have an impact on educational policies at local, regional and national levels.

- Involvement of practitioners when designing PD and finding new ways to balance the need to address new issues with the need for situated PD within the ECEC context emerges from our study.

- The need to connect reflection to practice/actions, to foster critical reflection processes and practice analysis, and to translate knowledge into practice emerges from the three cases.

- Time, stability of the group of professionals and creativity are key components in promoting change in practices.

- Involvement of children and parents in professional growth processes is important to create a common way of thinking about education in the early years.

- Outcomes of the PD effectiveness on child development have been measured and included in one case.

- ICT are important for documentation and to create virtual community of learners.

- All described cases acted as "*engines of innovation*".

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS

In presenting our results we will highlight some cross-cultural observations on the following three themes, reflecting our initial research questions: interpreting innovation, implementing innovation, impact and transferability.

a)   Interpreting innovation

Among the common criteria of innovation in professional development explicitly met by all three countries are: systemic (macro, meso, micro) (DN, PL, IT), sustainability (DN, PL, IT), transferability/dissemination (DN, PL, IT), networking (PL, IT, DN), focusing on key figures (DN, IT, PL), experiential learning/active engagement of practitioners (DN, PL, IT), connection with research (DN, IT, PL). Some criteria are mentioned by all three countries, with some differences: i.e. top-down/bottom-up practices: in the Danish case, the PD programme exemplified the interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes of oriented innovation (which means that participants transform their practice based knowledge and evidence-based knowledge to local practices; Italy and Poland provide examples of bottom-up processes closely connected to daily practices: observing and analysing practices).

"Creativity" and "flexibility" are partially shared criteria. In the case of Italy, "creativity" is referred to a creative use of local resources and funds to stay updated and find new sustainable ways to provide ECEC practitioners with stable PD training; in the Danish case, "creativity" is mentioned as an intrinsic part of the PD example selected for the study. Involving "technologies" (ICT) is a criterion explicitly mentioned only in the Italian case, where there is a long tradition of documentation and video-observation through ICT.

Not surprisingly, some additional criteria considered in each case study provide in-depth/situated discussion of findings: for example, Denmark refers to "local evaluation"; "change oriented" and "knowledge based" as criteria for innovation; Italy refers to "observation", documentation", "reciprocal learning", "pedagogical continuity"; Poland considers the role of "supervisors" and some specific themes such as "nutrition". In selecting the three cases, all teams combined external criteria with those considered by the insiders (stakeholders, practitioners). The assumption is that professional development practices themselves are complex, situated phenomena embedded in social, cultural,

organizational and pedagogical environments that influence the definition, impact and effectiveness of these practices.

The social dimension of innovation

In all three cases the social dimension of innovation emerged clearly, following the definition of social innovation as "the process of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges" (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 16) already stated in the D 3.1 (Jensen, et. al. 2015, p. 19), although *social* is interpreted with some differences in each study. "Social innovation is defined as positive practices change in ECEC settings with a view to countering social inequalities" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 49) and interpreted as "social dynamic processes" (*ibid.*). The in- service PD programme presented in the Danish case "can be understood as preconditions for creating social innovation in ECEC" (Ibid.). In the Italian case, "social" refers to bottom-up community experiences of civic engagement and participation, coherent with the tradition of democracy and civic participation that has characterized the history of the two Italian Municipal systems considered in our case (Putnam et al. 1994); Denmark considers the need to promote "genuine exchange throughout the whole system: all staff members must work with the same theme" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 59), and underlines how "positive effects are higher if the PD programme is defined as actual social innovation". In the Polish case, "social" refers to the areas of cooperation between the caregivers themselves and the caregiver and the supervisors organized at the micro and meso levels in terms of systemic exchange: interplay between innovation and collegiality is evident in the case of the Łódź Public Creche. "A pedagogical project – states the Polish report – is the creation of the social life of a setting, and it reflects collective beliefs" (Appendix C: Polish Chapter, p. 219). Poland considers both *pedagogical processes* of innovation in the curriculum – innovative curriculum, novel organizations, methodological solutions (Appendix C: Polish Chapter, p. 213) and "social innovative processes". Caregivers interviewed during the Polish study used the word "innovation" when talking about the curriculum and structural solutions implemented in the network or in particular settings, although the term innovation in the context of professional development of ECEC practitioners is not defined in Polish law or literature. Italian educators use the term *participation*, reflecting a tradition of civic engagement and bottom- up community experiences that characterize Italian ECECs as "catalysts for democracy and civic engagement".

Benefit of collaboration

All three studies provided evidence of the mutual benefit of collaboration between practitioners and researchers/experts, and underlined the need to improve the educators' network and possibility for working within communities of practices developed at the micro, meso, macro level. The need for PD practices based on sharing and collaboration, especially among educators but also with all professionals at different levels- peers, student teachers, experts, managers, coordinators, mentors, researchers, educators from other settings- equips professionals through constant exchange and observation supported by critical reflection, knowledge sharing, experimentation and evaluation, leading to the possibility for growth according to all cases. There is widespread agreement in conceptualizing PD innovation as a culturally situated process that accompanies change in educational practices. This requires the following structure characteristics: time, stability as well as flexibility, networking and the frequent exchange of information concerning teacher values and practices, shared

planning and the active engagement of all professionals at many levels. Differences emerge on how this conceptualization is translated into sustainable practices in each country.

In the case of Italy, sharing and exchange are key issues of Italian ECEC pedagogy and therefore assumed as key component when designing PD practices. Participatory research is conceptualized as a professional development practice in contemporary Italy, considering the need to create support contexts for deeply-rooted sharing in the ECE contexts. It could be said that ECEC in Italy are contexts for encounter, debate, *discussion* (conversation) – as Corsaro observed in his study in the *scuola dell'infanzia* – and place/or "catalyst for adults to meet" (New, Mallory, Mantovani, 2001) Families and children are considered key voices in these exchanges: involvement of children and parents in professional growth processes is therefore considered important to create a common way of thinking about education in the early years. As it is stated in the Italian chapter "the idea that children have the right to be cared for in neat and esthetically pleasing environments prepared by experts and well-trained professionals reached a peak in Reggio, but is also tangible in Milano and in many other cities where all municipal ECEC centers have their *piazzas,* places to meet with others, coordinators or *pedagogisti* and a deep commitment to engage with families. The ideas that ECEC centers are so-called *experienced neighborhood* places to meet and work together, that caregivers and teachers are models for children and families, that they function based on team work and shared responsibility are common" (Appendix B: Italian Chapter, p. 202).

In the Polish case, although within a different tradition and culture, children and parents are involved as active *participants* in these exchange too: children are considered critical *observers* and "provide practitioners with feedback expressed by behavior" (Appendix C: Polish Chapter, p. 231). In the Danish case, the focus in on the organizational levels, thereby establishing management facilitation and tools to nurture a culture of working as a system (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 84).

We consider these different interpretations of innovation as a multivocal/multilevel process of involving many actors in participatory situated learning (Wenger & Lave, 1991). This would be an important theme to develop in order to extend, consolidate and update PD practices in a time of crisis and limitation, as is also attested to by the increasing body of literature produced in the field.

b)   Implementing innovation

The degree to which *innovation* is connected with dynamic learning approaches to PD (focusing on peer education, supervision, team-work, reflective practice, organizational learning, technologies) is worth considering in the three studies, thus reflecting what emerge from literature.

The ECEC personnel involved in our study, working on the field, often underlined their need for sharing and exchanges with others in order to implement and transfer new knowledge, develop new attitudes and competences and design and re-design new practices to enhance children's learning, well-being and ECEC quality. Among the key-words of innovative professional development emerging from the qualitative analyses of the interviews conducted in the three cases are: an active approach in learning; learning by doing; organizational learning; learning workshops; team-work and collegiality; workshop experiences; reflexivity and reflection in action; collaboration; observation followed by informative feedback; analysis of the experiences/analysis of practices; dynamicity and dynamic learning processes within a multi-method approach; reciprocal learning.

The expectations of professionals concerning effective forms and content often mention PD

experiences deeply rooted in their work contexts, PD extended over time, shared with peers/experts and connected to research: the design of innovative PD processes in all three countries was based on research on the potential of collaboration and dialogue for enhancing learning and on educators' professionalism and competences. When PD is based on active engagement, shared learning, collaboration, *new actions,* then practices or processes of renewing existing practices are expected.

The three cases explored in this study are examples of an "active concept of learning and professional growth", indicated by educators as the most effective form of innovative PD, with some similarities. In the Danish case, learning laboratories were designed and implemented as "learning spaces removed from practice where participants acquired and shared evidence-based knowledge, while the experiments involved aimed to develop new context-sensitive practices within the institution" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 84; Brandi & Jensen, 2014, p 113). Informants involved in the Danish case, indicated the benefit of experimenting integrated top-down/bottom-up approaches. In the Italian case (Milan) and in the Polish case, educators recalled the effectiveness of their participation in "workshops", where they were involved both as "observers" and "as actors". Observing the behavior of the trainer/expert was a significant experience of indirect professional development that turned out to be effective in terms of promoting change in their actions. As stated in the Polish report some caregivers have an experience of participating in the PD workshops where "caregivers observed the model behavior of the adult –trainer – from the children's perspective, and they provided and got feedback immediately […] that allowed for more in-depth understanding of their own relationships with children" (Appendix C: Polish Chapter, p. 237). Similarly, in the Italian case participants underlined the effectiveness of observing others in action (e.g. observing researchers/experts facilitating a group of parents or conducting a workshop with children) so as to be able to replicate and implement the model in their daily practices. As stated in the Italian case "A constant effort to train professionals to encourage family participation is common, although interpreted differently in the two cases. Reggio creates opportunities for PD and resources though the Malaguzzi International Center - Milan finds new sources for supporting PD in the folds of a financing source which requires the implementation of workshops involving children and parents in centers" (Appendix B: Italian Chapter, p. 203).

Findings from the three cases show a common interpretation of innovation as being closely connected to professional participation, active engagement and reflectivity. Informants indicated that innovation in PD was something that had to do with extending ideas to others, changing, working with others, connecting reflection to practice, changing practices. The active engagement of ECEC practitioners, both on individual and collective levels, was a key component for determining innovation in practices, interwoven with issues of time, duration, numbers/stability of the groups.

In the Danish Case, for example, a result was that "professional practices became knowledge-based, reflective, and creative as they worked with experimental learning in practice" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 89). In the Italian case, educators involved in the MIBA project in Milan reported that they learned by "being actively involved and engaged in workshops with both parents and children" based on video-observation and video-feedback in connection with specific issues/themese pedagogical contents.

In Reggio, reflexivity is connected with planning and designing new practices, documenting, questioning practices, re-designing, sharing. In Poland, creating a trusting climate where learning is encouraged is what allows the "the staff to engage in a critical and reflective exchange" (Appendix

C: Polish Chapter, p. 232) together with periodical exchanges, also involving researchers, supervisors, educators and teachers from different sites in the network.

Links with research

Links with research emerge cross culturally, but they have different origins, local traditions and translations in practices. Italy has a long tradition of collaboration between the ECEC services and local Universities, and Milan exemplifies a tradition of investigation regarding regular and recurrent PD practices in connection with research (since the early 70s); Reggio Children is a "research institution" and great value has always been given to research as "a permanent attitude or way of thinking": connection with research is embedded in the Reggio philosophy and their conceptualization of professionalism (See Appendix B: Italian Chapter, p. 111). In the Reggio Emilia experience of education, a great deal of attention has always been given to research, seen as a permanent *attitude of thinking* in all the subjects involved in the educational project and as a primary strategy for formative professional growth. "Research and professional growth are constituent parts of the educational project" (*Ibid*.).

Denmark presents a programme that exemplifies the need to expand-extend the link with research: Danish informants indicated that they have not experienced any connection between research and PD in previous experiences (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 65). The VIDA is innovative because of its connection with research. Poland indicated the Łódź Public Creche Network as a unique- innovative example because it encourages action-research processes in collaboration with the University, and conceptualizes training as a process in accompanying educators and the whole team to ensure modifications of work/practice.

Key figures

The role of director/manager/pedagogical coordinator/head/supervisor (etc.) emerge cross culturally as a key-component for improving educator professionalism and promoting/ensuring change and high quality practices.

This finding is relatively new and more emphasized if compared to the themes that emerged from the literature review. It deserves further exploration. Italy considers the role of *pedagogisti* in Reggio Emilia, *coordinators or PO* (Organizational Positions) in Milan, a main feature of ECEC quality within a perspective of continuity. The role of the pedagogical coordinator as guarantor for transferring new knowledge in new practices emerges from the Italian case; Denmark describes how *managers* were trained as key figures within the VIDA project and stated that "management and support by consultants in municipalities is crucial for the implementation of innovative programs that transform practices" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 90); Poland interprets the role of *supervisors* as an interesting result.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the three studies on this issue is the need to invest in equipping managers, coordinators, heads, directors with "tools for facilitating the learning processes" of educators (*Id*., p. 69): providing them with specific training emerged as a key finding from the three cases, as clearly stated in the Danish report "the manager is the missing link in professional development" (Ibid.). Still to be discussed is to what extent the innovative methods and approaches experimented in the training processes could be implemented and transferred to other groups of educators– within the same institutions, across different institutions, cities, countries –

even when there is a lack of financial support and an increasing reduction of time and resources in

terms of key figures *or multipliers* (such as directors, pedagogical coordinators, *pedagogisti*, managers).

c)   Impact, transferability and sustainability

A premise – already anticipated in D 3.1 (Jensen, et.al.2015) - and at the same time a conclusion that can be drawn from the three studies is the need to connect innovation and its impact by gradually accompanying the process of transferring knowledge activated by the PD experiences into new practices at many levels: the institutional level (micro); the municipal level (meso), the ministerial level (macro). There is large consensus on interpreting innovation in PD has a process that has to do with extending ideas and practices to others and transferability: if innovation is not shared, it reduces its impact.

But transferability and dissemination are not taken for granted and depend on available financial and human resources. In the ECE field, high turn-over and change in the groups of teachers and educators often reduces the possibility to naturally-transfer knowledge and competences from one to another and "change – at many levels - is a key/crucial component of the ECEC nature. Transferability has to do with issue of sustainability and economic- financial resources, stability, continuity, network, motivation. Each country involved in the study is in fact in the process of rethinking and renewing professional development by looking for sustainable and innovative practices. The goal is to provide the ECE field with extensive, continuous, long-term and stable experiences of PD training that promote professionalism and enhance ECEC quality.

Within this common discourse, all countries struggle with the need to design PD approaches that go beyond their initial scope and targeted group: effective and innovative PD must be further explored, developed and implemented in order to meet the challenge of providing as many professionals as possible with adequate and stimulating PD opportunities, supporting concrete and long-term processes of transferring knowledge, circulating competences, exchanging skills from teacher-mentors/experts/trainers to experienced educators working in the field and to newly enrolled personnel. Issues of *sustainability* at the three levels (micro, meso, macro) are addressed in all cases as crucial for extending innovation and for generating *innovation from the field* (ECEC are contexts for activating innovation at many levels).

The results from the three studies showed that specific interpretations of change in PD are considered in each case:
- change has to do with "a global change of the practitioners' thinking about their practice, the transformation of their ideas about their actions" (Telka, 2007, p. 16 – see Appendix C: Polish Chapter);
- change has to do with "translating and transforming knowledge into practice" (Appendix A. Danish Chapter);
- change has to do with learning and putting learning into action through change;
- change has to do with comparing different perspectives and points of view;
- change has to do with time, stable policies and regular (but affordable/available) resources.

Several hints on how to improve and evaluate change emerged from the three studies. In the Danish case, for example, the impact of the training phase is clear and visible. The selected VIDA Programme had an impact on the organization as a whole and the intervention phase was evaluated before and

after its actualization. The VIDA is an example of "integrating the implementation phase in the programme itself in the five step model" (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 87) – the transition from learning to change appeared to be less challenging in the case of the VIDA by involving the administrative level (municipal consultant) – situated organizational learning resulting from experimentation. In the Polish case, the process is bottom-up and based on shared planning, designing, observing and connecting reflection to daily practices. Its impact is evident in the change in the educators' way of thinking, as stated in the report.

In the Italian case, change is conceptualized as long-term result of PD and, educators say, it requires time: in the case of Reggio Emilia, in particular, change is often conceptualized as a *long-term gradual process of re-design and re-interpreting what happens*. A sort of process of making meaning within educational practices. The Polish case provides examples of change connected to learning by being involved in experiences of learning with others, sharing, exchanging information, perspectives, experiences. Caregiver interactions, meetings, exchanges are the premise for improving change in practice. The Italian case led us to some considerations on the link between innovative PD programs and impact, also by creating virtual communities of learners that involved many actors and the whole city. Interviewees reported examples of change, mostly related to new approaches in involving parents by enhancing their active participation within the ECEC daily life. The *Linee Guida Pedagogiche* issued in Milan after a lengthy participated process finally addressed the curriculum as a situated and shared focus for the well-being of all children are an example of PD within a community-based process of engagement, civic participation and learning on the part of many actors: policy makers, stakeholders, educators, coordinators, researchers, families.

Outcomes

The outcome issue, meant as measurable effects of PD on children's learning, appears only in the Danish report. Denmark addressed questions and provided data on the impact of VIDA on child outcomes and effects for socially disadvantaged children, using published findings (Jensen, 2014) and considered results from measurements of the effect of VIDA 2010-2013 based on a RCT design (Appendix A: Danish Chapter, p. 55). Poland and Italy, well representing the present national ideas and values on this current issue, do not discuss outcomes. Rather, they analyse the effect of PD in the attitudes and ways thinking of professionals and parents and in developing practices that involve children and families in a given site or system and have impact on a wider scale (Milan MIBA). Reggio Emilia considers work with families as a strategy to enhance children's learning and well-being and describes a process of *reciprocity of learning* at many levels within a situated- participatory process of learning with the others.

These overlapping/overarching/different findings should be interpreted while considering the ECEC systems and policy contexts in the respective countries.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The need to provide the ECEC workforce with permanent opportunities for continuing professional development based on active engagement and participation is a shared idea and a priority for the construction of a good quality ECECs, which emerged from our case study. There is general agreement that sustainable innovation in PD is conceived of as a productive investment on human resources and an important cultural effort to provide *all children* and their families with good quality ECEC.

ECEC professionals are under great pressure, due to high expectations of parents and stakeholders and the increasing awareness of the link between professionalism and ECEC quality. Parents expects ECECs to promote their children's well-being and learning; policy makers have come to consider professionalism a key factor in ECECs to promote quality and inclusion and are looking for effective and sustainable ways to provide PD.

As anticipated in the present chapter, many points in common emerged from such three different cases: Denmark, Italy, Poland. Despite of the local differences and traditions, there seems to be a high level of agreement among researchers and practitioners on what constitutes *innovation* in PD. We found this agreement within each case study, among stakeholders and practitioners, and between the three cases, and this is an interesting and partially unexpected result. The main findings regard the process of innovation and its impact on professional consciousness and motivation in terms of networking, participatory practices and the improvement of ECEC quality. We found a widespread interpretation of innovation in PD connected to social participation, networking, exchange, collaboration, reciprocal learning from all professionals at different levels.

The idea of innovation is widely shared and coherent with what has emerged in recent literature (Zazlow, 2010; Sheridan; 2009) and, considering the points in common and the consensus on priorities we found in three countries, we hope our study to provide insights that might be translated into useful hints for their own context by readers of different sociocultural contexts. In all three cases the social dimension of innovation emerged clearly, following the definition of social innovation as "the process of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges" (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 16) already stated in the DEL3.1 (Jensen, et. al. 2015, p. 19). All three studies provided evidence of the mutual benefit of collaboration between practitioners and researchers/experts, and underlined the need to improve the educators' network and possibility for working within communities of practices developed at the micro, meso, macro level. There is a degree, in the three studies, to which *innovation* is connected with dynamic learning approaches to PD (focusing on peer education, supervision, team-work, reflective practice, organizational learning, technologies).

Research is necessary within a qualitative/ethnographic framework in more EU contexts in order to shed more light on the specific forms, approaches and effects of PD practices, and on how to transfer them within each country from one institution to another and, with the necessary precautions, cross culturally. The results from these three case studies could encourage new studies on how reflective practices and dynamic processes of reciprocal learning can promote and support educators in developing an attitude of learning by doing, team work, discovering new opportunities and being more aware of the possible effects of their educational actions.

Further investigation on how innovation is effectively translated into renewed practices to strengthen children's well-being and learning is required.

There is also a need for contact and exchange at the key figures, but also practitioners (educators/teachers/caregivers etc.) level, to create the climate and provide inspiration for innovation so that professionals could understand how the innovations work and how they can contribute to the

development of effective and culturally sensitive PD practices all over Europe. Innovations must also be adapted culturally in order to inspire and contribute to the development of effective and culturally sensitive PD practices all over Europe.

The authors of the report hope to encourage international researchers to continue the in-depth exploration of how innovation occurs in practice by involving the voices of the ECEC workforce as main actors of their learning processes and key/crucial actors also in designing their PD processes.

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III.

APPENDICES:

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY CASES

A.

THE DANISH CASE

The VIDA Programme – Innovative Practices of Professional Development on Quality and Child Outcomes

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Acknowledgments

SUMMARY

This case study describes the VIDA programme (knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in daycare), an innovative professional development programme for those working with 3-6-year-old children in Denmark. The case study is part of WP3's work on 'Professional Development: Impact and Innovation' within the project 'Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Education and Care' (CARE).

The programme at the centre of this case builds on theory drawn from research on child development, social disadvantage related to issues of social inequality, and research on organisational learning and innovation. The latter field has tended to focus primarily on technological innovation, leaving socially-driven innovation in the shade (Dawson & Daniel, 2010). Here, in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC), we draw on Dawson and Daniel's (ibid., p. 10) definition of innovation as "the development of new concepts, strategies and tools that support groups in achieving the objective of improved well-being".

Three research questions are explored: 1) How is the innovative approach to ECEC professional development conceptualised and translated into practice in the VIDA programme period (2010-2013) and beyond?; 2) What is the impact of the VIDA approach to professional development on i) educators' practices regarding high quality ECEC (output), ii) child outcomes (outcome), and iii) improved practice at the municipal level (impact in a broader sense)?; and 3) Which factors (mechanisms/aspects) affect the implementation of the innovative programme for practice change within ECEC?

Methods used include a combination of qualitative data collected through interviews with ECEC educators, managers, consultants, a university college teachers, municipal directors and existing quantitative and qualitative data based on interviews and observations through: 1) a randomisedcontrolled trial (RCT); and 2) a survey (127 centres).

The results showed that the VIDA programme had a significant overall positive effect on child outcomes and on educators' innovative practices. We did not find higher effects on socially disadvantaged children except in the strengths and difficulties dimension. However, we found that the innovative approach to professional development that VIDA represents influenced the municipalities, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior and stakeholders beyond the initial scope of VIDA. Based on the findings, we conclude that the VIDA programme met among other criteria of innovation, especially the criteria of sustainability at three levels: micro (institutional level), meso (municipal level) and macro (ministerial and societal levels).

There is a need for further research following-up on VIDA and it is worth considering if whether such an innovative approach to professional development should be implemented for those working with the youngest of children, aged 0-3 years.

SECTION I:

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

Introduction

This study examines the VIDA programme as a Danish case of innovative practices of professional development. Section I begins by providing an introductory snapshot of the VIDA programme; secondly, we describe how it meets the criteria for innovative approaches to professional development; and thirdly, some contextual background regarding ECEC in Denmark is presented. We then present the research design, data material, analytical approach and methods for this case study. In Section II the VIDA programme is described in greater detail as a foundation for the analyses of the case. Section III presents the findings of our analyses in order to determine how VIDA can contribute as an innovative approach to professional development within ECEC, and we also consider possible future avenues to explore. In the fourth and final section, the implications of our findings are discussed and a conclusion is presented. In the Appendix, the concepts and definitions used in this study are presented.

THE VIDA PROGRAMME: AN INTRODUCTORY SNAPSHOT

The VIDA programme, which will be described in more detail in Section II, was developed and evaluated in four Danish municipalities during the period 2010-2013 (a total of 127 daycare centres) (Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen, 2015). In 2013-2015, VIDA's principles were adopted in three of the four participating municipalities through the "Broadening VIDA" programme. Then, in 2015, the programme was adopted in an additional municipality, and, several more daycare centres adopted the programme with funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior as a part of a larger initiative. In 2015, VIDA was combined with the Abecedarian approach for ECEC and further developed (Abecedarian Approach within an Innovation Implementation Framework, known as APIIF) and tested in a pilot study. The following figure briefly depicts VIDA's launch and development:
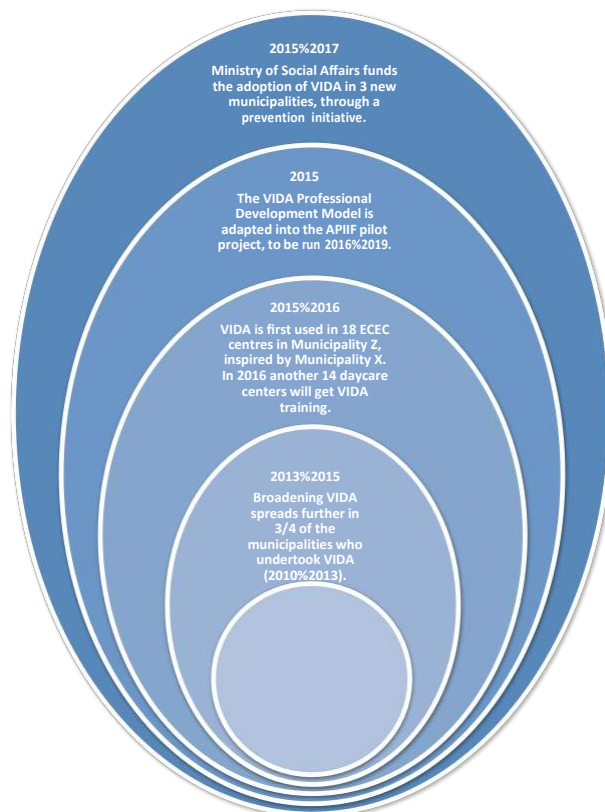

Figure 1. VIDA 2010-2013 and beyond

The following objectives lie at the core of the VIDA approach to professional development:

- Implementing evidence-based knowledge within everyday practice inECEC;
- Attention and specific training with regards to socially disadvantaged children in daycare;
- Critical reflection on setting goals and working on best practices within staff groups;
- Developing staff competences to work innovatively with learning and organisational change processes.

An in-service professional development programme for social innovation in ECEC settings was developed in order to explore and seek answers to the question of if/how professional development can contribute to enhancing high- quality ECEC, learning outcomes, and the well-being of all children, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged; e.g., children who are affected by socio-economic deprivation (poverty, families without work, etc.) and the consequences of social inequality. Here, social innovation is defined as positive practice change in ECEC settings with a view to countering social inequality.

The in-service professional development programmes and experiments which were developed in the context of VIDA can be understood as preconditions for creating social innovation in ECEC. On the basis of the VIDA programme, findings showed that an innovative approach to in-service professional development programmes might lead to permanent changes in the way ECEC institutions deal with the challenges of negative social inheritance. This was especially evidenced by how VIDA's professional development programme incorporated critical reflection, pedagogical planning and experimental approaches to change in ECEC institutions. Furthermore, analysis showed how the interaction between the educational elements of the programme and experiments conducted in practice helped create social innovation in practice (Brandi & Jensen, 2014; Jensen & Brandi, 2013). The programme was also shown to have had positive effects on children's socio-emotional development and learning, as measured by the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) (Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen,2015).

VIDA was found to be promising in terms of innovation in in-service professional development. It provided in- service professional development to ECEC professionals, qualifying them to implement evidence-based knowledge within their everyday practice, particularly concerning socially disadvantaged children. The VIDA programme was built on a previous programme, the ASP programme, which was deployed and evaluated during the period 2005- 2009 (Jensen *et al*., 2013). Both programmes were financed by the Danish Ministry of Children, Gender Equality. Integration and Social Affairs, now known as the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior.

SITE SELECTION AND CRITERIA

Why has this case been chosen?
The case was chosen as it offers a broad insight into a new programme qualifying ECEC educators and managers to develop innovative practices. The assumption behind the VIDA programme is that an innovative approach to professional development might have sustainable effects on:
1) the professional development process manifested in professional and organisational learning; and child outcomes. The case represents, as such, an example of how to create innovation in ECEC institutions through organisation-wide professional development, combining top-down and 2)

bottom-up approaches (see also Jensen & Brandi, 2013). This combination of approaches (top-down and bottom-up) and levels (micro, meso and macro) was intended to result in ownership, curiosity and professional learning at all levels, as reflected in the organisation of the VIDA programme where participants were trained in translating evidence-based, practical and theoretical knowledge into practice. The idea was to train participants to reflect upon the knowledge they acquired in VIDA's educational sessions (referred to in VIDA as 'Learning Laboratories') and, based on critical reflection and analyses of current practice, to implement new knowledge-based practices (referred to in VIDA as 'experiments'). The learning laboratories comprised learning spaces removed from practice where participants acquired and shared evidence-based knowledge, while the experiments involved working to develop new context-sensitive practices within the institution, incorporating, translating and transforming into practice the knowledge from the learning laboratories (Brandi & Jensen, 2014, p. 113).

Which criteria does the VIDA programme meet and why?
The criteria for inclusion are met as the programme resulted in change at different levels, involving innovative practices.

In relation to ECEC, we have in our earlier report D 3.1 (Jensen *et al*., 2015) suggested differentiating between innovation on three levels: 1) a system level innovation (changing the form, content, delivery modes of professional development; e.g., through reforms of teacher education) whereby innovative approaches are introduced in a top- down process via legislation, centralised guidelines, etc. (macro-level); 2) an inter-organisational level of innovation where innovative approaches relate to the interplay which is needed between sectors in a modern society (e.g., the educational, the research and the municipal sectors) and innovation that consists of new, creative ways of collaborating to change, for example, educational opportunities for young people starting in ECEC (meso-level); and 3) an individual and organisational learning level of innovation where professional development is focused on developing innovative competences among individual ECEC professionals and in communities of practice (CoP); i.e., seeking to ensure practice change beyond the scope of the original course of professional development by teaching practitioners to innovate, themselves, by incorporating new knowledge/ideas and reflecting upon practice (micro-level).

VIDA's approach to innovation is analogous with the definition of social innovation, but also with the definition based on creativity which Mantovani, Bove and Cescato (2015) identified in their review of innovative approaches to ECEC. The VIDA programme meets the following criteria, as will be documented in this case study:

- *Sustainability*: if a new idea or project is not achievable, it is not innovative.
- *Replication, dissemination, distribution*: these concepts are related to the need to achieve efficient and sustainable use of the existing resource so as to involve as many settings and as many professionals as possible.
- *Flexibility and openness*, both at an individual level and at an organisational level. The complexity of innovation depends greatly on the interplay between different dimensions/levels: for example, the development and promotion of individual competences/skills and the incorporation of new knowledge within the organisation. *Individual involvement*: individuals are more motivated to be innovative if the organisation

and staff groups welcome and promote new ideas and their realisation (in a democratic manner). An individual's propensity to innovate also depends on position within the organisation (Vila *et al.*, 2014), "Working in an organization with a clear orientation toward innovation increases the probability of acting as an innovator […]. The freedom to choose how to do the job also increases the probability of becoming an innovator" (ibid., p. 757). At the individual level, innovative competences are "abilities that allow individuals to perceive opportunities for change" (ibid., p. 753).

- *Group involvement* (staff at ECEC institutions).
- *A creative process*.

The degree to which VIDA meets the final criterion, that a *creative process is a process of reinterpreting something existing rather than introducing something new,* is worth considering. VIDA makes use of something existing, by using the National Curriculum of Daycare as its programme content, and by drawing upon well-known theoretical concepts such as Vygotsky's (1935/1978) approach to child development and learning and Bourdieu's (1989) ideas of social inequality and the reproduction of inequality in the education system. However, the whole idea of a professional development programme, a five-step model (see Section II) to improve the processes of ECEC professionals' knowledge acquisition by way of using reflection and actions and to work systematically with implementing evidence and theories of child development and learning, is new in the field of ECEC. As shown in existing reviews (e.g., Zaslow *et al.*, 2010), we know that professional development affects quality and child outcomes, but we still need to know more about the processes that lead to such outputs (e.g., professional learning, quality) and outcomes (e.g., child development and well-being as well as the special issues of creating learning opportunities for all children, and socially disadvantaged children in particular). VIDA contributes with new ways to develop a professional development programme that emphasises such aims, and to study its effectiveness on several levels.

Why is this a good example of innovative practices in professional development, in the national context?

In the Danish context, the concept of innovation is included in the recent reform of bachelor-level ECEC educator qualifications (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014). The entire reform is defined as innovative in the pre-service professional development system, as it aims to improve ECEC educators' competences to meet new challenges in a modern society (a macro-level); e.g., issues of social inequality and exclusion. ECEC educators are supposed to meet such challenges by making changes in practice based on theoretical, evidence-based knowledge and by applying critical reflection systematically in a way that qualifies ECEC practice and ensures high quality ECEC. They also learn to meet new demands in order to collaborate between sectors (a meso-level). For the third level (micro-level), the focus is both on educators' individual competence development (reflective practitioner, lifelong learning approaches, organisational learning approaches) and/or professionals' collaborative innovative competences that enable change in everyday ECEC practices and organisations.

The focus on quality within Danish ECEC policy is also reflected in the work of the Task Force on Future Daycare (Task Force om Fremtidens Dagtilbud, 2012), which identified four key quality indicators:

- Reflective and structured pedagogical practice focused on learning and inclusion;
- Focused cooperation with parents;
- A robust evaluation culture focused on quality development;
- Clear and professional management at all levels.

These indicators form the core of current ECEC policy development in Denmark. Again, there are tendencies at the policy level to focus on setting high demands and standards for ECEC professionals, who are not just required to implement a programme, but must also meet the challenges of being reflective professionals, able to organise and develop quality in pedagogical practice while working with learning and inclusion. Likewise, professional ECEC management is explicitly targeted in the Danish policy context.

Which professional develolment practices included in VIDA meet the innovative criteria?

- Training in reflection and analysis of current and actual practices compared to evidence-
- based knowledge on improving children's well-being and learning;
- Experiments centred on high-quality interactive practices and inclusion;
- Changes in the shared sense of meaning within a/several CoP. This we define as organisational learning throughout the entire organisation;
- A local evaluation culture focused on quality development in relation to improving outcomes for individual children, as well as the inclusion of all children into peer groups;
- Clear and professional management at three levels: macro, meso and micro.

In this case study, the VIDA professional development practices that were emphasised the most were knowledge- based, reflective and change-oriented pedagogical practices; critical thinking; knowledge sharing; organisational learning; a local, child-centred and robust evaluation practice focused on quality and child well-being; and the development of clear and professional management at all levels.

THE CONTEXT

There are more public than non-public ECEC providers whether catering to younger children (up to 2 years old) or older children (3-5 years old). The balance of public and non-public institutions for children in both age ranges is similar: 64% (183 settings) of settings cater to the younger children and 67% (1052 settings) cater to the older ones. All are governed by public authorities. The total number of institutions for 0-2-year-olds (284 settings) is significantly lower than for the older children (1578 settings).

In terms of the youngest children (>1 year), less than 20% attend ECEC settings (19%). Regarding children 1-2 years of age, the situation is significantly different, as over 90% of children are enrolled in the ECEC system. For 3- 5-year-olds, the attendance rate is slightly higher (97%). In total, in 2013 almost all children ages 1-5 were enrolled in some type of ECEC setting (94%).

The legal framework in Denmark makes no stipulations in terms of mandatory qualification requirements for those working in ECEC settings. Municipalities are required to ensure ECEC staff have the "necessary" qualifications regarding ECEC provisions as part of the task of quality

assurance and monitoring, but these requirements are not further stipulated and are the responsibility of each municipality. ECEC institutions receive funding based on the number of enrolled children, and they are then responsible for ensuring that expenditure, including the total salary bill, does not exceed the allotted amount. There can therefore be considerable local variation. Salaries are tied to collective agreements based on qualification levels and experience; hence, in basic terms, providers must choose between employing fewer, but higher-educated staff, or a greater number of less-educated staff.

Despite these differences, ECEC institutions in Denmark – whether settings specifically for younger children (*vuggestuer* for 0-2-year-olds), older children (*børnehaver* for 3-6-year-olds) or age-integrated settings (*aldersintegrerede institutioner* for children 0-6 years old) – are likely to employ a mixture of qualified ECEC educators (*pædagog*), with a pre-service qualification at a bachelor's degree level, and assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*). There are no qualification requirements for assistants, although those with specific vocational childcare qualification as a pedagogical assistant (*pædagogisk assistentuddannelse*) are placed at a higher pay grade.

Regarding resources for in-service training and further professional development, there are no formal frameworks, but in practice there are standards set by local authorities. The amount of resources differs between municipalities with a tendency for municipalities to spend more on specific politically-determined initiatives, such as prioritising language development. However, most municipalities focus professional development funding on similar areas reflecting national legislation and reforms (see also Jensen *et al*., 2015). The VIDA programme is an example of such further education, or in-service professional development.

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD, PROCEDURES

The case study design is similar to what Yin (2002) refers to as a holistic case with embedded subcases. Hence, there is an overall focus on how an innovative approach to professional development in ECEC translates into innovative practice within VIDA. The case is seen both as representative and unique, depending on the perspective: from an organisational learning perspective, the case is representative of innovative approaches to the process of practice change; however, such an approach is unique within the field of professional development in ECEC.

The component analyses contribute additional insight at the micro, meso and macro levels. As such, the component analyses enable a more comprehensive understanding of VIDA's model for innovative professional development and the meanings which VIDA has taken on within the ECEC sector.

According to, for instance, Winter and Nielsen's (2008) integrated implementation model, effects and impact are dependent on the way a programme is implemented. Implementation takes place in the interplay between contexts and processes and we therefore investigate the dynamics of implementation by linking the three levels mentioned above.

Data collection, participants and recruitment of participants
Data have been compiled so as to ensure the various organisational levels are represented by key stakeholders. Relevant concepts include intra-organisational sense-making processes, linkages,

binding actions, ownership, sustainability, and the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches in the development of professional practice. Furthermore, consideration is given to the conditions, meanings and motivations for implementing a professional development programme like VIDA.

Semi-structured interview guides were conceived based on the three research questions and the overall design is, as mentioned, a holistic case with embedded subcases (Yin, 2002). A total of eleven interviews were conducted, of which four were conducted via telephone. The interviewees, who participated in VIDA at different points of the programme (see Figure 1) were as follows:

- Two stakeholders from the VIDA programme (2010-2013):
  One representing the ministerial level;
  One from BUPL, representing the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (www.bupl.dk);
- Two municipal heads of ECEC administration who participated in the VIDA programme (2010-2013):
  One municipal head from municipality X;
  One municipal head from municipality Y;
- Three ECEC consultants who are responsible for facilitating processes between staff and managers of ECEC centres in terms of reflection, organisational learning and knowledge transfer into practice:
  One from municipality X who participated in VIDA (2010-2013);
  One from municipality Y who participated in VIDA (2010-2013);
  One from municipality Z who implemented VIDA's principles (2015-), beyond the VIDA programme (2010-2013);
- One ECEC manager from municipality X who participated in the VIDA programme (2010-2013);
- Two ECEC educators:
  One ECEC educators from municipality X who participated in the VIDA programme (2010-2013) and continued to participate in Broadening VIDA (2013-2015) (see Figure 1);
  One ECEC educator from municipality X who only participated in Broadening VIDA (2013- 2015), as a new employee of the municipality (2014-);
- One university college teacher who participated in VIDA (2010-2013) as a teacher of ECEC educators, who also participated in extending VIDA in municipality X (2014-2015) and in municipality Z (2015-) (see Figure 1).

In addition, a focus group interview was conducted with an assistant manager and two ECEC educators from municipality X. This focus group interview made use of a semi-structured interview guide, similar to that used in the individual interviews, and video logs compiled by participants. Video logging is a method inspired by Bramming's (2009) SnapLog method which she describes as combining photographic snapshots and logbook entries; i.e., a qualitative, visual method which involves practitioners in the research process by getting them to take photographs of their work. The method used here replaced photographs with short video clips of up to two minutes' duration so as to capture the relational interaction between ECEC educators and children, and to trace the VIDA

principles in their practice. Theses clips were used in the interview.

Additional sources of data consisted of existing data in VIDA (2010-2013): both quantitative outcome analysis based on a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design (Jensen, 2013, 2014), a case study of implementation processes and organisational learning, as well as examples of "VIDA in practice" in the form of descriptions by ECEC professionals of experiments they had conducted within VIDA (Jensen & Haahr-Pedersen, 2013). Furthermore, publicly available ECEC quality reports from the participating municipalities of their ongoing work to implement the programme beyond the initial period were used.

As such, the data consisted of:

- Transcriptions of interviews;
- Outcome analysis and case studies from the VIDA programme (2010-2013);
- Municipal documents from municipality X on Broadening VIDA and sustaining VIDA practices;
- Quality reports from municipality X;
- Research from surveys and interviews on implementing VIDA in municipality Z;
- Website materials of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior;
- Video logs of children in a nursery participating in the Broadening VIDA programme (ages 0-2).

Contact and consent

Initial contact was made via emails with attached letters and consent forms sent to all participants and parents of participating children. The letters informed participants both about the overall CARE project and the specific case study and research questions on VIDA. Later, follow-up telephone calls were made in order to agree on dates for data collection. Prior to the interviews, the signed and scanned consent forms were received. Those documents were stored on a secure drive to which access was restricted to the lead researcher on the project. Informants were sent a copy of the semi-structured interview guide before the date of their interviews.

In conjunction with the interviews, informants were reminded of their right to withdraw fully from the study at any time and that the interviews were being recorded. The audio files were stored on the same secure drive. Those working with transcriptions of the interviews signed non-disclosure agreements. During this process, both audio files and transcriptions were stored by those doing the work on an external hard disk, with all data transferred via manual connection to the secure drive. Data were subsequently coded using NVivo and once again stored on the secure drive. All names were anonymised during analysis.

Analytical approach

When examining our data, our approach was driven by a combination of theory and data in the sense that we were first and foremost guided by a coding protocol which was led by the research questions and theoretical concepts. The themes we selected for the analysis are valid as they are able to go beyond the actual situation and tell us something on a more general level (Schultz Jørgensen, 1989). According to Schultz Jørgensen (ibid.), validity is not just a matter of identifying themes and concepts, but also of examining a theme's prevalence and the links between themes to ensure they are neither overly stressed nor under-exposed.

The analysis was driven by a number of theoretical concepts related to this case study (see Appendix) as well as the implementation research, briefly outlined below, in terms of Winter and Nielsen's (2008) integrated implementation model, the concept of "loosely coupled systems" (Orton & Weick, 1990), the "concept of sensemaking" (Weick, 1996), and the concepts of "organisational change" and "change management" (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Winter and Nielsen (2008) have compiled significant theoretical findings within implementation research, combining both top-down and bottom-up approaches to develop a model of integrated implementation. The top- down perspective is based on official legislative objectives and requirements, viewing implementation from a control and governance perspective. Their model incorporates organisational and inter-organisational implementation conducted in this perspective, as well as the behaviour of management. In the case of VIDA, the programme is based on a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The research-based knowledge and the legislation, which are the foundation of the professional development programme's educational sessions, represent a top-down perspective; the bottom-up perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the ground-level implementation of knowledge into practice-based professional development.

Winter & Nielsen's implementation model (Figure 2) provides an analytical framework illustrating the macro, meso and micro levels in this case (Winter, 2012).
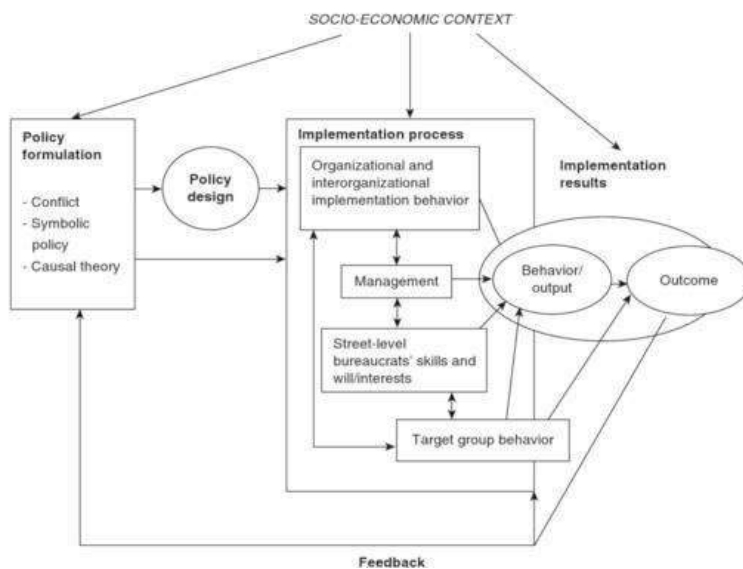

Figure 2. The integrated implementation model
(source: Winter, 1990; Winter & Nielsen, 2008 cited in Winter, 2012, p. 258)

The ability of professionals working in the field who have a desire to solve emerging issues represent, as such, the bottom-up perspective. And as illustrated in the model above, the implementation of a given professional development programme, such as VIDA, is dependent on the socio-economic conditions, the organisational, inter- organisational and individual levels, and the interplay between them. The implementation of the VIDA professional development programme towards practice development, higher ECEC quality and improved child outcomes is, as such, influenced not only by the participating individuals, but by the interplay between professionals developing their practices, the national and local contexts for ECEC, and the organisational and

inter-organisational connections – all of which are mechanisms that influence the implementation of the innovative professional development programme and thereby the impact on both the educators' practices and children.

In the following section, the VIDA innovative professional development programme is described in further detail[3].

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[3] All informants and municipalities have been anonymised.

DENMARK-SECTION II:

THE VIDA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In this section the VIDA programme will be described in more detail, including the background, motivation and vision of this innovative approach to professional development in ECEC, executed through an intervention for 3-6 year-old children in Denmark.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Wellbeing is crucial for children's development. Well-being stems from children's active involvement; from a sense of attachment and inclusiveness. The opposite is true of unhappy and often socially disadvantaged children; they do not feel included. These children need the support of competent and professional adults (Jensen, 2014) . In professional ECEC, pedagogical knowledge and expertise is applied when children who are not thriving are encountered. The vision of VIDA is that ECEC professionals need opportunities to improve their practices, and thereby child outcomes. This is achieved by teaching the professionals how to employ a more analytical and knowledge-based approach to their practice, whereby they learn to act based on reflections as to whether the education and care (ECEC) they offer supports the inclusion of the individual child: Are the right activities being set in motion?; What else could be done? Should a new approach be tried out? (ibid., p. 5).

This case study explores how a professional development programme such as VIDA, within a socially innovative implementation framework in ECEC, contributes to enhancing the learning and developmental potentials for children (aged 3-6), with a special view to enhancing the well-being and learning of all children and socially disadvantaged children in particular. In this context, socially disadvantaged children are understood as children who are influenced by living conditions of socio-economic deprivation, e.g., poverty, unemployed parents.

Research shows that there are huge developmental differences between socially disadvantaged children and their more privileged peers. These differences are what we call consequences of social inequality. Social inequality is problematic for several reasons. For example, social and cultural differences are reproduced generation after generation, and the education system implicitly contributes to this reproduction (Teese, 2013). Moreover, social inequality already seems to manifest itself in the ECEC system, and it seems to follow children throughout their schooling (Jensen & Brandi, 2016).

The research literature mostly considers the outcomes of programmes for professional development in terms of early literacy and language (e.g., Hamre *et al*., 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Howes *et al*., 2009). Such studies also support the findings from a recent literature review that showed that ECEC programmes targeted at narrowing the gap between privileged and less privileged children struggle to achieve the intended effects (Burger, 2010). Even though several studies have shown that early interventions can have a positive effect on children who live in conditions of poverty and other

stressful living conditions (see e.g., Heckman *et al.*, 2010), we also know how challenging narrowing the educational gap is, as already mentioned in reference to Burger (2010). In particular, knowledge about the effects of upgrading professionals' qualifications is lacking (Pianta *et al.*, 2009, Hamre *et al.*, 2012), as is knowledge about how such an upgrade affects daycare professionals' practices. These studies are extremely important and underline the need to further develop and explore not only the outcomes of such programmes, but also the dynamics of the implementation processes present in ECEC professional development programmes (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009; Zaslow *et al.*, 2010). Developing and examining such details and the effectiveness of new innovative professional development programmes is crucial if we are to address ECEC in relation to social inequality.

To date, studies investigating professional development interventions have primarily been based on individual perspectives on how learning in organisations and amongst professionals takes place. The present study on VIDA's professional development programme takes its theoretical outset in action- and practice-based theories of organisational learning, taking into consideration the contextual and socially embedded systems of learning and innovation and combining this with the theoretical approach to implementation that connects the external and the internal factors in the implementation processes of a professional development programme (Jensen *et al.*, 2012).

For an intervention to be socially innovative, it must meet two criteria: 1) it must be new, and 2) it must lead to improvements. That is, the innovation must demonstrate a positive impact compared to previous interventions. Bearing in mind that social innovation must entail a new approach that leads to changes that create value, we must be able to substantiate that the VIDA professional development programme has a positive effect if we are to define it as an actual social innovation.

DESIGN OF THE VIDA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The VIDA programme focuses on the professional development of ECEC educators and managers with a view to improving children's socio-emotional development and learning. The purpose of the professional development is to qualify ECEC educators and managers to base their work on an evidence-based platform. The objective is to provide children with better learning and development opportunities, and especially to provide socially disadvantaged children with learning opportunities on equal terms to their peers; however, the effects of the intervention on child outcomes are indirect (see Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen, 2015).

Three theoretical perspective
In order to meet all children's needs, and socially disadvantaged children's needs in particular, the VIDA intervention programme emphasised that activities should be developed and implemented in accordance with three theoretical perspectives (Jensen, 2014, p. 6):

1. A resource perspective – as opposed to a deficiency perspective;
2. An active approach to learning – as opposed to a view on children and adults as passive recipients in their learning and development processes;
3. An organisational learning perspective – this perspective promotes wide-reaching innovation, enabling genuine change throughout the whole system. All staff members must work with the same theme, e.g. language or learning identities, but the specific pedagogical activities may vary, not least because the children are involved in defining the process, as is

usual in a Danish context.

ECEC managers and one educator from each participating ECEC institution were offered an education and training programme consisting of a series of classroom sessions and workshops – see below (Figure 3). The training programme ran over a two-year period with a total of 17 full days of education and training. In the first year, the educators completed seven full-day sessions (scheduled every second-week over a four-month period), and in the second year, they completed seven full-day sessions (again scheduled every second-week over a four-month period) as well as three full-day practice-based sessions.

In addition, in both years -one and -two, ECEC managers were offered a two-day course and a follow-up workshop on how to facilitate learning processes in an ECEC setting. This setup ensured that the participants received support and training in relation to how to implement their new knowledge into practice throughout the course of their everyday working lives in order to strengthen the effects of the education and training programme.

The VIDA 5-step model of professional development
The VIDA professional development process is divided into five steps that reflect the interplay between education and practice in the programme (Figure 3) (the processes and the conceptual foundations are further explored in Jensen & Aakjær, 2016).
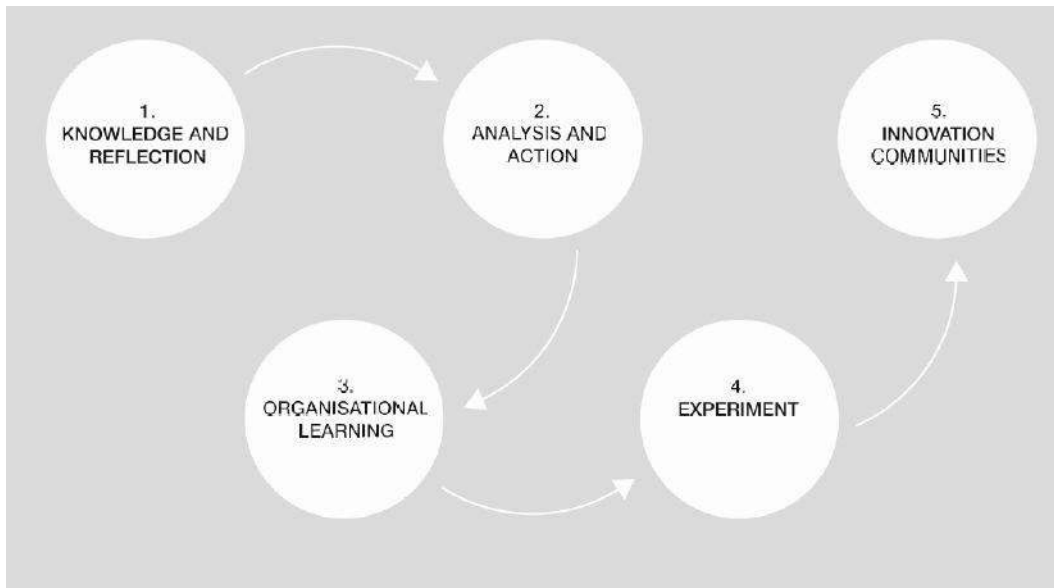

Figure 3. The five-step model of professional qualification (Source: Jensen, 2014, p. 11)

Knowledge and reflection:. Participants are introduced to theoretical and research-based knowledge about child well-being, learning and social inclusion. The initial step of the implementation process takes place as a top-down process presenting participants with predefined topics and content. This takes place in a learning context where participants are given the opportunity to reflect on and share knowledge. Everyday experiences are, as such, related to a research-based foundation. Experiences in the VIDA programme have demonstrated that the process of applying theoretical concepts to concrete practical activities is new for most of the participants. This initial step forms a basis for integrating scientific knowledge and potentially developing the knowledge in practice (see also von Krogh, 2011).

Analysis and action: For ECEC professionals, it is a refreshing change to be afforded the time for thorough analysis of the everyday practices in which they take part. As a part of the training, participants are introduced to reflection tools, as reflection is the learning dynamic that links research-based knowledge and knowledge from practice. The IT-based reflection tool developed for the project proved to be valuable in this context. The tool allows the identification and fleshing out of areas where it would be beneficial to take action; for example, in improving children's social skills, improving friendships, and improving ECEC professionals' ability to deal with conflicts as a group. These reflection tools support the transformation of abstract knowledge into practice-based knowledge.

Organisational learning: In more precise terms, this next step entails that the ECEC manager and another member of staff who has participated in VIDA training assume responsibility for sharing new knowledge with colleagues. Practice changes are created by the entire ECEC institution working together and, as we will discuss in further detail in the analysis (Sections III and IV), this process of change through shared sensemaking within a CoP is a prerequisite for innovation.

Experiments: Experiments in practice are important elements of the learning process. An experiment lasts a minimum of one month, and the entire ECEC institution works together in both the implementation and evaluation phases before and after the experiment. Examples of actual experiments conducted as part of VIDA include: 1) improving management of conflict situations; and 2) improving children's friendships with peers (more examples of experiments, as described by ECEC professionals themselves, are available in Jensen & Haahr-Pedersen, 2013 – in Danish only). The experiments improved the participants' learning through active planning, conducting, reflection and evaluation. This part of the implementation takes place as a bottom-up process, which means that the participants adapt their new knowledge according to the locally ascribed sense of meaning and bring these aspects into innovative practices.

Communities of innovation: This final step was realised through a two-day annual workshop where ECEC managers met. This workshop made it possible for participants to share and develop new and creative ideas for translating the research- and practice-based knowledge and methods that they had encountered within the previous steps into positive practice change. This process further integrates and transforms what was initially top-down, course-based dissemination of knowledge from the academic sphere into bottom-up, practice-oriented innovation.

This five-step model was deployed as part of the VIDA programme (2010-2013), in 2011 (see Figure 3) and repeated the following year (2012).

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The philosophy was that the process and timespan enabled participants to really get to grips with the working methods, management of meetings, knowledge sharing and experiments in such ways that they became a natural part of everyday practice. As one ECEC manager put it: "This type of knowledge sharing and exchanging of experiences has been really positive and has become a new professional development standard when we work with joint experiments" (quoted in Jensen, 2014, p. 11).

The education and training programme provided new knowledge which served as the basis for the educators' reflection and knowledge-sharing about innovative practices (at a meso-level). The objective of this reflection and knowledge-sharing process was to develop innovative practices to be implemented in the ECEC setting and to improve the quality of the learning environment in general (at the micro-level). The innovative practices of professional development were developed locally by the ECEC educators and aimed at meeting the needs of the individual child, and the social issues specific to the sub-set of socially disadvantaged children. The municipalities, meanwhile, were interested in improving ECEC quality at a higher level (macro-level).

All activities took place in inclusive learning environments as a way to counteract social inequality in the educational system. In addition, the VIDA training sessions sought to increase the ECEC educators' and managers' awareness of how their pedagogical approach had an impact on children's personal development processes and competences.

VIDA operated on the premise that, when dealing with socially disadvantaged children's learning and well-being through inclusive teaching in ECEC settings, pedagogical practices are based on specific ways of thinking; i.e., collective understandings, knowledge and attitudes based in the three perspectives mentioned above. As a consequence, these perspectives require that new learning processes make sense to the entire ECEC institution and not just a few individuals.

In the four participating municipalities, consultants supported participating ECEC managers in the innovation processes. Thus, the VIDA programme made a clear distinction between the education and training-based aspects – the course for ECEC managers and educators (top-down) – and the actual experimentation with innovative practices that was aimed at positive practice change (bottom-up). VIDA differentiated between: 1) participants in the VIDA education programme being introduced to scientific knowledge to be used during the programme, as well as knowledge that participants further developed and shared; and 2) experiments in practice with a view to enabling participants to interpret, convert and implement new theoretical knowledge, critical thinking and reflection into improved practices that benefit children.

This model for professional development, building on the five-step model and the three theoretically-based perspectives, was expected to enable participants to shift systematically between knowledge, reflection and actions (Brandi & Jensen, 2014; Jensen & Aakjær, 2016) and thereby improve high quality practices, improving learning and development opportunities for all children in ECEC, comprehensively, and addressing the issues of social inequality as well.

In the next section, we will address the questions of how VIDA is to be understood and conceptualised as an innovative approach to professional development, and to what extent this innovative approach to ECEC intervention programmes leads to improvements.

DENMARK-SECTION III:

RESULTS

In this section, the findings are outlined in relation to the following three research questions:
1) How is the innovative approach to ECEC professional development conceptualised and translated into practice in the VIDA programme period (2010-2013) and beyond?; 2) What is the impact of the VIDA approach to professional development on i) educators' practices regarding high quality ECEC (output), ii) child outcomes (outcome) and iii) improved practice at the municipal level (impact in a broader sense)?; and 3) Which factors (mechanisms/aspects) affect the implementation of the innovative programme for practice change within ECEC?

Key theoretical concepts (see Appendix) are used in the analyses in order to reach a deeper understanding of how and to what extent innovative professional practices can be identified and implemented. Additionally, the analyses will reveal which factors and mechanisms either support or hamper the implementation of innovative approaches to professional development within ECEC, as represented by the case of VIDA.

HOW IS THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ECEC CONCEPTUALISED AND TRANSLATED INTO PRACTICE?

Perceptions of innovation in ECEC

In the following, we describe how informants participating in the CARE case study responded to questions on "What are your thoughts on innovation?" and "How do you perceive innovation in the ECEC sector?". Some of the answers include that innovation must be "*acknowledged by a number of people as valid and practicable*" (stakeholder from BUPL, p. 40, line 13) because "*if an idea cannot be realised and extended to others, it isn't innovative*" (ibid., lines 4-6). The stakeholder from BUPL furthermore shared that innovation has meaning if "*…you actually produce something new and innovative [...] and some original ideas which typically and frequently break with the existing framework, ideas and standards, and with existing norms and patterns*" (ibid., lines 1-4); i.e., as in something completely new.

Interviews with an ECEC manager and an ECEC consultant from municipality X offer some nuances. The manager explained how, for her, innovation involves *"...thinking at all times: How can we do this [...] in a smarter way?*

[...] How can we do this in a way which creates the best possible environment for the children? [...] It's constantly a matter of refining and improving and drawing inspiration from the fact that, right now, this is what's going on in the outside world. Is that something we should try and respond to?" (ECEC manager from municipality X, p. 29, lines 15-19). The consultant from the same municipality added: "*I mean, it's not a stationary thing when it concerns people. Kids change. What are needed are changes. Local politicians change and have different political focuses. The national*

political landscape changes and has other focuses" (p. 6, lines 1-6). In this passage, the consultant expressed an understanding similar to Weick and Quinn's (1999) concept of change as a continuous process (see Appendix), which takes into account the fact that organisations change all the time and individuals cannot avoid action or sensemaking, meaning that sensemaking is also a continuous process.

As such, the above provides examples of how the informants see a link between continuous change within the ECEC sector and a kind of 'necessary' innovation in terms of developing pedagogical practices capable of meeting the challenges of ECEC in a modern and rapidly changing society.

To the questions of "Which current initiatives have the development of practice as an objective?" and "Which in- service training programmes and courses of further education have ECEC professionals participated in order to develop practice?", as many as 21 professional development initiatives were mentioned in addition to VIDA and APIIF (based on nine responses). When asked whether they "Experienced a change in terms of planning, choice of methods and professional focus?", two types of change can be found.

Firstly, the ECEC educators found that they encountered higher expectations in terms of their professional expertise, as opposed to expectation previously experienced, when participating in other professional development courses. They put this change into perspective in terms of their practice which, over the years, has involved greater demands regarding their expertise and professionalism. As one ECEC educator from the focus group put it: "*... you actually have to reflect on your practice every single day. I'm always thinking: Why am I doing this now? What are the pedagogical aspects of what I'm doing right this second [...] What do I want to achieve?*" (municipality X, p. 21, lines 15-18). The requirement in terms of professionals' innovative competences is that they should be able to substantiate and account for their practice; i.e., be capable of and prepared for critical reflection and a knowledge- based and goal-oriented approach to the job to a much greater extent than was previously the case (in courses outside the scope of VIDA).

Secondly, the methods of professional development had changed. While "*...previously, there was a lot more sit-on- your-backside [listening to] theory, [...] whereas now, there is more focus on that that's a killer. It gets boring, you know. Plus there's more, oh what's the word, facilitation. I can tell there's more of that, I reckon*" (VIDA educator from municipality X, p. 8, line 17ff). This ECEC educator alluded to what, in the VIDA programme, is referred to as 'a passive concept of learning' which, according to the informants, they have previously encountered. In VIDA, however, this learning principle is replaced by a principle of participants as active learners (see Section II for the design of VIDA).

The stakeholder representing the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior supported the view that innovative approaches are emerging and that ECEC educators are more receptive to new concepts and methodological rigour. As he put it, your "*...finger is much more on the pulse nowadays as a regular ECEC educator, I think, so there's certainly been a shift in a positive direction*" (ministerial stakeholder, p. 39, lines 1-3), adding that "*...when ECEC educators face challenges now, then they are much more likely to [...] look at themselves in a new way and say, so what can we do, it's something we have to deal with, can we do this in any other way...*" (ministerial stakeholder, p. 47,

lines 2-4) as compared to previously where they tended to refer problems elsewhere due to a lack of action competence in situations.

This change can be viewed in the context of broader changes in methodological approaches to contemporary professional development which, according to the stakeholder from BUPL, are increasingly competence-based.

In response to the question "How would you, overall, characterise professional development programmes in ECEC?", both the ministerial stakeholder and the stakeholder from BUPL distinguished between these two approaches: manual-based and competence-based programmes (ministerial stakeholder, p. 12, lines 1-8; stakeholder from BUPL, p. 24, line 19ff). The manual-based programmes have a certain degree of "mandatoriness" (stakeholder from BUPL p. 28, line 8) and are described as "inflexible", "directive" and applying "standardised methods".

These approaches are characterised by a more "top-down" perspective than the competence-based programmes. According to the stakeholder from BUPL (p. 25, line 6), certification and evidence-based programmes belong to this top-down category. Competence-based approaches such as VIDA, on the other hand, support the introduction of professionals' experiences, developing their competences based on reflection on one's own practice in relation to new knowledge. Professional development programmes belonging to this latter category are referred to as "problem solvers". It is also highlighted by the informants as a strength of these programmes that ECEC educators have greater "influence" on their personal development process, and that the process of professional development "is adjusted according to the professionals' context". This approach thereby places greater emphasis on bottom-up processes. Action learning was mentioned as an example of a competence-based approach to professional development (stakeholder from BUPL, p. 28, lines 12-18).

How this distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches to professional development is viewed, meanwhile, varies somewhat. At the ministerial level, there is a desire to cater to the varying traditions within the municipalities and packages are therefore assembled combining programmes from both categories (ministerial stakeholder, p. 12, lines 8-12), whereas, from the perspective of the professional body (BUPL), the competence- based and bottom-up influenced professional development initiatives are preferred, and only research projects based around, for example, action research and a co-researcher concept are supported (stakeholder from BUPL, p. 23, lines 2-7).

VIDA links professional development and research-based knowledge
Another theme that emerged from the interviews touches upon the link between professional development and research-based knowledge. The informants indicated that, in general, they have not experienced any connection between research and professional development, i.e., their training. However, it is precisely the connection between research-based knowledge and practice which is established in the VIDA programme. The informants also indicated that this coupling of research and practice has been lacking in other professional development initiatives aimed at developing practice. Experiences from VIDA, meanwhile, have underlined the importance of research-based, practice-oriented programmes (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 38, lines 6-13; university college teacher, p. 13, lines 10-12). This perspective regarding the interplay between research-based knowledge and practice will be further explored in this section.

In the informants' responses to the question of "How does professional development respond to priorities and quality objectives?" in the three municipalities, it is clear that, in municipalities X and Y, whether or not municipal priorities and quality objectives are met has previously been more or less left to chance. In the wake of VIDA, however, an effort is being made to ensure that professional development not only lives up to priorities and quality objectives, but also follows the VIDA approach to implementation so that priorities and quality objectives can be adjusted according to the principles of the VIDA programme.

In municipality X, for example, strategies have been developed concerning *"how municipality X adheres to and implements new knowledge and research in relation to results of the VIDA project"* (Strategi for dagtilbudsområdet, Municipality X, 2015, p. 3), whereby it wants to maintain the links between research and practice. This strategy seems to indicate a hierarchy in terms of which professional development measures the municipality is willing to invest resources into, embedding them in the ECEC sector (ECEC consultant from municipality X, p. 3, lines 6-8). Future municipal investments in professional development initiatives, one must assume, are contingent on whether they are consistent with the VIDA approach; i.e., whether they are research and evidence-based and whether the link to research is present in the development process.

In municipality Y, they have integrated the three fundamental principles of VIDA into every major project in the ECEC area and have used VIDA's five-step implementation model in the municipality's own measures to develop practice (Jensen, 2014, pp. 14-15). The ECEC consultant explained that: *"...the movement project, or body and learning, is also something we as a municipality have been involved in developing, alongside VIA [a Danish university college], so we have therefore made sure that this way of thinking [from VIDA] has also been incorporated. So it has been built up in the same way [as VIDA] with ECEC educators and managers taking part in courses, and coming home and conducting experiments along the way…"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 13, lines 13-17).

In a third and new municipality (municipality Z), the first of two planned VIDA sessions concluded with the development of models for prioritisation in the municipality's professional development. Within their programme for 'knowledge-based pedagogical practice', they wanted to select *"...five or six methods, or actions […] which the institutions can use and where the pedagogical consultants are trained in their use, or can offer support, so as to offer sort of a smaller portfolio all in all, right, so there aren't 100 different things"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Z, p. 9, lines 13-16). In this context, VIDA would constitute one action that could be selected.

This analysis contributes, as such, to an understanding of innovation as a dynamic process, as something which occurs in the course of everyday encounters with the children, and as a new approach to pedagogy, and it must be reflexive and systematic to be innovative. The analysis also pinpointed that innovation in ECEC, such as VIDA, is a social process. In VIDA, new ideas are created and applied in socially dynamic interactions, and it therefore makes sense to stick to the definition of innovation as a socially innovative concept upon which we will now expand.

VIDA characterised as social innovation

In the informants' reasoning as to why VIDA is an innovative programme, three overriding themes emerge as characterising the VIDA programme's socially innovative perspectives (see Table 1).

Interplay between research, education and practice	The interplay between research, education and practice in the planning and realisation of the VIDA programme permeates the whole process of implementation and constitutes a new principle of professional development compared to earlier measures.
Interplay between learning and experiments creating organisational learning	Organisational learning comes about through the interplay between learning during educational sessions (Learning Laboratories) and the practice experiments (training to implement new knowledge into high quality practices as defined as process quality, which the ECEC institutions were obliged to conduct as a part of the VIDA programme).
Interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes	Top-down and bottom-up approaches in the VIDA programme, including dynamic and context-sensitive ways of adapting to the realities of the field of practice, both at the administrative and institutional level.

Table 1 – Social innovation
These three perspectives are presented in further detail below.

Interplay between research, education and practice

VIDA's programme of innovative practice, consisting of the five-step model, was developed in collaboration between research, education and practice and is viewed by the informants in this case study as unique and providing meaning. As one consultant described this collaboration: *"...one of the reasons it made so much sense was the thing with both instructors, [...] project management and consultants met to adjust things throughout the project and had that level of closeness..."* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 34, lines 9-11). This provides a sense of the presence of both a coupling – or closeness – and autonomy within the various areas, corresponding to Orton and Weick's (1990) concept of loose couplings. Loose couplings are characterised as a dialectic concept where it is precisely the contrasting pair 'coupling' and 'separation' that are combined in simultaneity within the same system. Research, education and practice are three sub-systems representing different forms of professional expertise within the education system which are separate, but also susceptible to influence by one another.

To be able to develop the programme's training, they held *"...planning days, sometimes with an overnight stay, where we also had to learn to understand each other – we had to find a common language"* (university college teacher p. 9, lines 9-10). The university college teacher added, *"...it's the researcher's project so it's important that we understand what the researcher is trying to do, the researcher's concept of learning, and how we can gain ownership of this concept of learning [...] after all, we should be representatives of the concept of learning found in the VIDA qualification folder through our actions..."* (university college teacher, p. 8, lines 9-15). A shared understanding is important in terms of ensuring a 'red thread' in the VIDA programme and this reflects a sensemaking process. Sensemaking is important in change processes (Orton & Weick, 1990). The more people participating in the same sensemaking process, the more likely it is to lead to the establishment of collective meaning (Weick, 2000). Organisational structures should be

understood as coherent local understandings that are vital to the organisation's social structure, culture and norms (ibid.) and thereby vital to understanding the mechanisms behind practice changes though professional development.

This concept of sensemaking is related to the VIDA programme; for example, the collective sensemaking process equipped those involved to deal with participants' encounter with the researchers. This was important because: *"...the researchers have their own way of understanding things and their preferences [...] and that sometimes resulted in certain clashes in the sense that the practice environment struggled to understand how the researchers might struggle to see the connection between, why should we answer those questions, and then we have to sit here, and what does it have to do with the questions we're supposed to answer..."* (university college teacher, p. 4, line 13ff). In such situations, the university college teacher outlined her role as follows: *"I had to communicate some knowledge [...] which stemmed from the researchers, and which I had to try to introduce to the practitioners and make it relevant and make sense for practice..."* (university college teacher, p. 4, line 12ff). This was possible because they had reached a shared understanding which the teacher could use as a foundation for acting in practice.

The informants stated that the gap between research and practice which they have experienced in other research projects was reduced in VIDA. In other projects *"there's a really long way [...] there are some things that go to waste because there's such a long way"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 36, lines 9-10), which is indicative of the lack of a common understanding and collective sensemaking process. In contrast, participants in VIDA found that the research influenced ("shone through"), reaching all the way down to the participants, because: *"...the researcher was so visible at all times, and she WAS THERE! And that's also what's been so fantastic in our VIDA project; that the researcher is genuinely interested and is part of the environment: that makes a massive difference"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 36, lines 17-19).

It becomes clear that a concept like sensemaking is key. It makes sense for the participants to work with the programme when the distance between research and practice, or theory and practice is so vast.

Interplay between learning and experiments creating organisational learning and change
The university college teacher practises the model learning principle by applying VIDA approaches and methods when teaching ECEC educators and managers. This is also apparent in responses to the question "How did VIDA differ from other forms of professional and practice development?". The immediate response was: *"that it was certainly implemented in the whole ECEC institution, might say, because it was tackled [the VIDA approach] in that way, you know"* (focus group from municipality X, p. 47, lines 6-8), later adding: *"that we were actually challenged to do a project over the course of four weeks – it was extremely tough [...] just the fact that everyone had to take responsibility for their own little group; that they actually had to turn up to work having prepared [...] certain competences came into play among certain members of staff which we hadn't seen before. I thought, well I never..."* (Ibid., line 17ff). It is apparent from our evidence that the members of staff had to be "active in their own learning processes" alongside their colleagues in a "community of learning" which required the application of "the resource perspective". Thereby, competences which one senses had previously been somewhat hidden among the staff were put into play.

Of equal importance is that the ECEC educators' learning process in acquiring VIDA approaches, tools and methods occurs, in the vast majority of cases, in the context of their everyday working life instead of being away on a course, as one consultant explained: *"...the fact that there are certain guidelines and there's a degree of support of, well an issue you have to explore; I think that's really important, but at the same time also the thing that there's an invitation to use your own practice [...] to act according to your own practice; like, it's not just a concept which is applied to practice but vice versa"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 25, lines 5-9). The learning process and the implementation process are thereby combined through the optimal utilisation of the possibilities resulting from a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. As such, VIDA approaches function simultaneously as objectives for practice change and as a means for achieving said objectives.

The VIDA approach supports the professionals in their implementation of the programme into practice by equipping the managers with tools for facilitating the learning processes through the five step model of professional development. An important part of implementing the VIDA programme is that the ECEC institutions actively involve the entire staff (organisational learning) and create frameworks for practice development that are consistent with VIDA. Both an ECEC educator and a manager from each institution took part in VIDA. According to the university college teacher, this is what's "innovative about VIDA" because normally only ECEC educators participate in such programmes. The university college teacher found that the participation of ECEC managers increases *"...the possibility that members of staff will actually be able to return home and be given the chance to use the new knowledge which he or she has acquired..."* (university college teacher, p. 33, lines 17-19), adding that *"...the manager is the real key figure. Because, if the manager doesn't get on board, then it becomes really difficult to be the educator, you know!"* (ibid., lines 5-6). In this participant's words, the manager is the "missing link" in professional development. This view is supported by an ECEC educator who explained: *"If I've been on something [training/course], then it's completely okay for me to say that I want to talk about it at a staff meeting, and time is set aside for doing that, but [...] we don't go into so much depth as now with this VIDA thing. [...] I'm not really good at standing there and telling all my colleagues blah blah blah, now listen to this [...] She [the manager] has more... clout..."* (ECEC educator from municipality X).

Another advantage of the fact that both ECEC managers and educators took part in the VIDA training programme is that differences in their understandings and approaches became apparent. According to the university college teacher, this is an advantage because it provides an opportunity for discussing the differences and reaching more of a common understanding. In this context, VIDA became *"...a way of thinking, an understanding, and approach which can be ours in common..."* (university college teacher) for ECEC managers and educators. Just as was the case among the project management, university college teachers and practitioners, the shared approach among ECEC managers and educators kick-starts a collective sensemaking process which promotes the implementation of VIDA at an institutional level, resulting in organisational learning.

As well as training days, the ECEC managers also attended a course in facilitation with systematic development through a *"...focus on that ECEC managers need certain tools, they need certain instruments, they need some strategies for how to create development and learning at their own institutions"* (university college teacher).

According to the university college teacher, this is another way in which VIDA contributed something new to the field of professional development. These courses in facilitation have been a contributory factor in ECEC institutions' adoption of a meeting structure where: *"...time is set aside for working with pedagogy [...] they got some tools which they could use in VIDA [...] that they have really embraced, and it's the thing about getting everyone actively involved; I mean, then you can say it also supports the thing with active learning at a staff meeting"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 43, line 11ff). Along similar lines, the ECEC manager in municipality X found that, in her institution, they *"have become a lot sharper in terms of holding staff meetings; when it comes to that, we have really got a lot out of this facilitation thing"* (p. 38, lines 4-5).

Top-down and bottom-up approaches in VIDA
The third perspective characterising VIDA as a socially innovative professional development programme was identified through the way informants talked about their "experiences with VIDA" and stressed that "the innovation in VIDA" is to be found in the integrated bottom-up top-down approach: *"...that's one benefit we've been able to take with us, the whole thing that coupling top-down and bottom-up is completely key in order for it to work"* (municipal head of ECEC administration from municipality X).

The integrated top-down bottom-up approach found in the VIDA programme can be seen, for example, in the consultants being given the opportunity to develop and define their role along the way, which, in turn, promotes appropriately context-sensitive project management with e.g., the timing of measurements being optimised because they discuss: *"...when it would be smart to send them out, and could we send them out along with something else so the institutions don't get bombarded with 1,000 emails"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Y, p. 49, lines 9-19).

In addition, an inter-municipal network group was established where there is an opportunity for sparring about experiences in supporting VIDA implementation in practice as a social innovation. To summarise, the analysis shows that innovation is conceptualised as:

- Something new: a new pedagogical perspective, a new approach to the view of children, reflexivity and systematic critical thinking about practice in relation to research-based knowledge and theories.
- Ideas: ideas which break with the existing frameworks and structures; ideas which emerge and are developed in dynamic processes between knowledge and practices.
- Realisation of 'the new': ideas which remain unrealised are not innovation; frameworks and structures must be broken-up and reassembled to provide space for dynamic innovativepractices.

Next, we move on and ask to what extent VIDA's innovative approach to professional development has had an impact on professionals' practices, and thereby on the children they work with, as well as an impact in a broader sense.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF VIDA APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The analysis in the previous section showed how all the various groups of respondents characterised the VIDA programme as innovative in relation to the applied definition; i.e., that the VIDA programme offers something new, the realisation of ideas. As the analysis showed, it is also commonly understood that VIDA represents new ways of acting, pedagogically speaking, new approaches to the encounter with children, and that there is talk of a break with existing forms of organisation, types of training/professional development and social structures in ECEC institutions, as well as in municipalities with respect to how they deal with socially disadvantaged children.

In this section, the analysis turns to the second element in the definition of innovation; namely, that the new must have an impact. We therefore consider the question: what is the impact of VIDA's innovative approach to professional development on i) child outcomes (outcome), ii) educators' practices (output), and iii) improved practice at the municipal level (impact in a broader sense)?

The analysis incorporates findings concerning: the effects on children's well-being and learning; the impact on professionals' development of practice in the ECEC institutions that participated in VIDA (2010-2013); and the impact of VIDA in terms of sustainability and VIDA's extension to other institutions in participating municipalities, as well as other ECEC institutions in other municipalities using the VIDA model for professional development beyond the CARE project period (from 2014-2016). The data included in this part of the analysis are, firstly, existing data from a RCT which was conducted to study VIDA's effects on children's well-being and learning. Secondly, we use existing data from case studies on educators' organisational learning and practice development resulting from participation in VIDA. Finally, additional data sources are incorporated such as analysis of the implementation of VIDA in a new municipality and strategy notes and reports from those municipalities that have chosen to offer VIDA to all ECEC institutions. It is thereby possible to analyse whether the VIDA process ensured sustainable development in the ECEC sector.

Impact of VIDA on child outcomes
This section builds on findings published in 'Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in daycare. Summary of results 2013' (Jensen, 2014), in the discussion paper 'Does Professional Development of Preschool Teachers Improve Child Socio-Emotional Outcomes?' (Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen, 2015) and in CARE's D 3.2, 'Professional Development and its impact on Children in Early Education and Care: A Meta- Analysis Based on European Studies' (Jensen & Rasmussen, 2016).

Measurements of the effects of VIDA 2010-2013 are based on a RCT design. A total of 11,994 children, in 127 daycare centres in 4 municipalities participated in VIDA, 2010-2013. The children were split into three groups. One group received what might be termed the VIDA-Basis package. In VIDA-Basis, staff were specially trained with a view to changing their practices. The second group, VIDA-Basis+, combined this training with a focus on parental involvement. The third group was a control group. In the analysis of effects, 2,160 children were included for whom data from each of the project's three data collection rounds were available.

VIDA gauged effectiveness by asking daycare staff to complete a questionnaire for each child. This questionnaire included questions regarding the child's socio-emotional development taken from the 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997), which is an internationally used and recognised tool. SDQ measures five dimensions: emotional symptoms, conduct problems,

hyperactivity, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour. Each of these five dimensions is treated as a separate outcome and the first four dimensions can be combined to generate a total difficulties score. SDQ also provides a basis for calculating a difficulties index (SDQ impact score). Cognitive competences were measured according to learning objectives inspired by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA), focusing on children's learning within areas relevant to the Danish daycare curricula such as written and oral language, mathematical understanding, understanding of nature, etc. Children were measured in three rounds. The number of children in each of these rounds shifted, but, as stated above, 2,160 children participated in the every round. As such, data regarding the children consisted of their SDQ score and cognitive competences, as well as socioeconomic register data and municipality.

The analysis showed that the VIDA intervention programme had a positive effect on all children in terms of well- being and socioemotional development. In broad terms, the VIDA intervention had positive effects in relation to several SDQ dimensions. Firstly, the VIDA-Basis intervention resulted in significant positive effects in two SDQ dimensions: emotional symptoms and conduct problems, which were reduced. There were also improvements in the remaining three dimensions: hyperactivity, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour. However these last effects were not statistically significant. In addition, there was a significant improvement in the total scores of difficulties (combining the first four SQ dimensions) for the VIDA-Basis intervention. Secondly, there were also positive effects of the VIDA-Basis+ intervention. However, there were only statistically significant effects in one of the five dimensions: a reduction in conduct problems. The effects of the VIDA-Basis+ intervention were generally lesser than for the VIDA-Basis.

The VIDA programme had particular effects for disadvantaged children in two dimensions: VIDA led to a reduction in problems with peer-relationships among children from minority ethnic backgrounds. The VIDA-Basis+ parental model programme had a significant effect in reducing behavioural problems and problems with peer-relationships among participating children from low-income families (Jensen, 2013). We also found gender differences.

Behaviour problems were reduced for boys through the VIDA-Basis intervention, and the same picture emerged on several dimensions, although not prosocial behaviour. In summary analysis showed that children's social outcomes were satisfactory, but no significant effects were found in terms of the cognitive outcomes (Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen, 2015) and no specific effects on closing the gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers, except for two dimensions, as reported. Two structural features influence the effects: child composition (>40 % of disadvantaged children) and a high turnover of staff both reduced the effects.

One conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that it takes time to implement such a complex process of innovative change involving many aspects of learning and professional practice. The VIDA programme was conducted over a period of two years, but this intensity of implementation might be insufficient to produce measurable effects of an innovative intervention programme like VIDA – including effects on child outcomes. Whether these findings with regard to effects are because measurements were conducted at too early a stage of the process is a matter for discussion. More up for discussion is to what extent the SDQ measurement could be supplemented with other measures, e.g., quality measures (Melhuish *et al*., 2015) which might result in different findings.

VIDA was included in a meta-analysis based on European studies on professional development and the impact on child outcomes (Jensen & Rasmussen, 2016), and the study showed that the effect-sizes were somewhat smaller than in other studies and that this might be due to the relatively large samples compared to other European studies (e.g., Henrich & Leseman, 2014).

In summary, the effects of the VIDA innovative approach to professional development seem to be dependent on a number of factors: the sample size, composition of children, and turnover of staff. The effects also depend on whether the programme is implemented as intended; the competences, will and motivation of professionals to translate the intervention into high quality interactions and learning activities which enhance children's development; and the characteristic features of the ECEC institution in terms of both the composition of the group of children and the structural quality, the latter including the stability or turnover of personnel. As implementation research has shown, however, conditions which have either supported or hindered participants – both the resources available within the workplace community and external conditions – play a crucial role in determining whether or not a programme is implemented as intended and results in positive outcomes (cf. Winter & Nielsen, 2008).

In the next section we therefore first explore that impact on educators' practices and then further explore such implementation processes in relation to VIDA.

Impact of VIDA on educators' practices
This part of the analysis is based on a forthcoming paper, 'A Socially Innovative Approach to Professional Development in Early Childhood Education and Care – A Case Study' (Jensen & Brandi, 2016). A total of 235 educators and a number of managers, all of whom were from the intervention group, filled out a questionnaire on: a) their background; b) to what extent their pedagogical practices in general, and those more specifically related to socially disadvantaged children, were informed by evidence and theory; c) to what extent managers facilitated knowledge sharing and changes based on an organisational learning capacity perspective; and d) to what extent motivation and involvement of practitioners was realised. In addition, interviews with all managers in the intervention group (pre- and post-) and field studies were conducted.

Knowledge-based targeted and systematically improved daily practices
Analysis of data from the self-reported questionnaires (survey) showed that improved teaching practices were realised in daycare centres based on the knowledge (theoretical, research-based, and methodological) that was communicated, shared and developed via the VIDA professional development programme. 64% of the participants responded that this theoretical knowledge was transformed into new practices through the educators' work with translating and implementing the VIDA research-based knowledge (endline), while 59% answered yes on this question prior to the intervention (baseline). The improvement was significant. When it comes to working with socially disadvantaged children, the improvement was even clearer, as 79% of the participants (endline) answered that they used theoretical knowledge in order to renew practices for socially disadvantaged children compared to 59% (baseline).

Interviews with ECEC managers before and after the intervention helped to understand findings from the survey that the professionals' knowledge and reflections about children's learning and development, and about inclusion and exclusion mechanisms, were enhanced. Based on the analyses of interviews, we found that participation in VIDA also contributed to knowledge-sharing

and training in critical thinking and analysis of practices with regard to child learning and well-being based on a Vygotskyan and Dewey-inspired theoretical approach to child learning and development (Vygotsky, 1935/1978; Dewey, 1938/1986). The professionals worked with new opportunities to incorporate their new knowledge in reflection on and renewal of their everyday practices. However, there were differences between daycare centres due to differences in leadership of the organisational learning processes in practice.

The analyses included in the field studies showed that participants used the IT-based reflection tools to obtain a snapshot of the children's and teachers' social and learning skills. Moreover, these snapshots supported the explorative and analytical processes that led to the educators' knowledge-based, analytical work to formulate new goals and plan learning activities for all children, as well as activities that especially contributed to including socially disadvantaged children in communities of learning in peer groups. In this process, both the ECEC managers and consultants played a crucial role in supporting educators with regard to understanding, interpreting and sharing results from the analyses of the IT-based reflection tool. In daycare centres where ECEC managers failed to offer a supportive approach to the implementation of the programme's ideas and learning principles, innovation of practices was weak or non-existent.

Knowledge sharing as and organisational learning process
It was examined whether ECEC managers succeeded in creating an open learning culture, involving all staff, by using a measure of Organisational Learning Capacity (OLC) (Alegre & Chiva, 2008). From baseline to endline, the participants reported significantly higher levels on the organisational learning capacity dimensions with regard to 'experiencing support and encouragement when presented with new ideas' (from an 85% baseline, to a 96% endline), 'new initiatives are met with a positive response' (from an 83% baseline, to a 93% endline), and 'you are encouraged to act in new ways' from 64% (baseline) to 83% (endline). These are the same dimensions that VIDA addresses in the five-step implementation model. As all participants in the VIDA study used the principles of the programme to some degree, the intention of implementing the programme as organisational learning can be considered a success. The question of whether or not the varying levels of implementation have been strong enough or consistent enough to produce robust child effects was addressed in the RCT study (see Jensen, Jensen & Rasmussen, 2015).

Involving and motivating staff to implement VIDA
Through field studies, it became possible to show how organisational learning processes occurred, as demonstrated below in an example of how VIDA led to targeted practice renewal aimed at enhancing learning and inclusion opportunities for all children. A long-term collective learning process from one of the participating ECEC centres, *Villa Maj,* is presented below (see also Jensen, 2014, p. 13). The concept of children's 'identity as learners' was introduced via the VIDA IT- reflection tool and is defined as: 1) all children see themselves as individuals capable of learning (not only learning intellectual skills, but also learning to be a good friend); and 2) children identify with the learning goals defined in the learning communities in which they find themselves. This concept of 'learning identity', as explained here, is not the same as regulating children's learning. On the contrary, the concept entails stimulating the way children perceive themselves and increase awareness of their own learning through activities offered at daycare centres. Especially socially disadvantaged children need to experience that they are included in a group while learning and developing new skills. Children's learning identities, and thus their self-perception, are strengthened when they are involved in learning activities and other tasks, such as play activities, that they can actually do. It is in this perspective that

the concept of learning identity should be seen.

By analysing the practices at Villa Maj, the ECEC manager, in collaboration with the educators at the ECEC centre, concluded that teaching practices needed to be improved if all children were to be included. Therefore, an experiment was developed aimed at initiating activities that encouraged every child to participate in learning activities. Focus was on making the concept of 'learning identity' more concrete and on working with the individual child, as well as building-up inclusive learning activities for all children. Activities comprised:

- Creative art projects that stimulated the children to develop their own tools, materials and ideas. The children worked together in groups to create a piece of artwork.
- Words, language, stories and drawings that were combined to create a joint project: a book that all the children were expected to contribute to.
- Language development and training through a game of picture lotto. Children with different skill levels learned to express themselves and to be considerate towards others. This stimulated both the individual child and inclusion among the children in the learning community.

These activities were implemented throughout the entire centre. All staff were inspired by the manager to adopt the new pedagogical practices introduced through these activities. Consequently, the learning identity concept and the overall objective of focusing on all children's resources, both personal and social, were converted into practice at all levels throughout the daycare centre, and staff were involved and motivated to collaborate on this experimental process. Moreover, the experiment enabled a renewal of practices; staff took a renewed, structured approach to sharing knowledge, using didactic reflection and implementing processes of change based on principles of inclusive teaching together.

Staff found that every child in the daycare centre had developed new skills, and that the "simple format and clear structure, in particular, had a positive effect and was appropriate for the age group. The children felt sufficiently challenged and felt that they were good to something," (quoted in Jensen, 2014, p. 13) as one member of staff stated. She then added, "The experiment gave the children a common task; helping one another to sing and give massages, thereby strengthening the sense of community and group identity" (ibid.).

To sum up, the analyses presented here show that the VIDA programme improved professionals' knowledge-based renewal of practices and reflection, contributed to knowledge sharing and the renewal of pedagogy throughout centres, and raised the motivation for further development in most ECEC centres. The example from Villa Maj described in more detail how this type of interaction between a professional development programme and experiments can have a positive impact on the organisation as a whole, on the participants, and on the learning situations that are created for children. Professionals' learning and development of practice have led to increased quality in terms of positive and more responsive interactions between ECEC educators and children. This renewed pedagogical practice shows that ECEC personnel are more conscious and goal-oriented in their practices, which is in line with VIDA's theoretical content, methods and its three principles. The example also underlines the importance of leadership. In a broader perspective, as one ECEC manager put it, VIDA has "*added value for the children*"; both those directly involved in VIDA and those subsequently entering ECEC. More specifically: *"there was a period where I almost felt that we were spitting out referrals to pedagogical and psychological counselling one after another [...] And that's certainly*

been minimised. And I am convinced that this can only benefit the children" (ECEC manager, quoted in Jensen & Brandi, 2016).

Impact of VIDA in a broader sense and sustainability

Interviews for this part of the CARE case study were conducted with an ECEC manager and educator in municipality X who had participated in VIDA, as well as with an ECEC educator employed after the end of the VIDA programme. The interviews took place roughly two years after the conclusion of VIDA at the centre in question and showed that the VIDA approach is still embedded in the institution's practice, but is no longer as clearly visible as previously. Over time, they have stopped calling 'it' VIDA (ECEC manager, p. 75, line 13). However, the ECEC educator explained that the VIDA approaches are still a part of their practice: *"Without us really thinking about it, they are"* (ECEC educator, p. 60, line 2). The recently employed ECEC educator was not aware of VIDA, which she assumed must be because VIDA *"...has become a part of everyday life, so it's not really something they consciously think about"* (newly employed ECEC educator, p. 5, line 7). Based on these responses, one might be inclined to believe that everything they learnt throughout VIDA had been forgotten; however, this is not the case.

What has actually occurred can, using the concept of innovation, be considered lasting and sustainable practice change; i.e., the process of change is still ongoing even two years after VIDA's conclusion. An explanation can be found in the process which staff have undergone, whereby sensemaking has gone from being an individual to a collective practice, meaning that enactment and interlocked behaviour have established new VIDA-inspired cultures or cosmologies which we, according to Weick (2000), might explain as a second nature. Involving all members of staff is therefore crucial to implementation. If one member of staff continues to follow existing practices then, regardless of other staff members' willingness for change, they will remain stuck in the former's mode of practice.

In responses to the question "What does the ECEC manager do to maintain VIDA?", it became clear that the ECEC manager maintains the VIDA principles through facilitation and deliberate application of these principles and of the programme's tools and methods. This is evident, for example, in relation to a concrete issue they recently faced with a child which presented a challenge to the personnel. The ECEC manager could sense that a negative attitude towards the child in question had become pervasive and she therefore undertook a reshuffle, deploying new and resource-focused personnel because: *"...when the adults gain a new perspective on the child, something happens inside the child as well, you know, and that's bloody brilliant; instead of us saying whew, we had better get the psychologist to take a look at him, there's probably something wrong and he probably needs analysing"* (ECEC manager from municipality X, p. 6, lines 11-14). In this way, they managed to resolve the issue. According to the ECEC manager, this practice is a result of VIDA. The resource-focused approach is also reflected in the ECEC educator's description of how they deal with conflicts among the children: *"What I think is obvious to take into consideration is what resources does this child have? He's damned good at building stuff with LEGO – OK, some over here! There's a few of us – take a look over here, he's good at doing this!*
[...] Instead of, in one way or another, finding his faults, you know what I mean? And precisely so the other children don't stigmatise this kid [...] and I see that as a benefit [...] of VIDA, among other things" (ECEC educator who participated in VIDA 2010-2013 from municipality, p. 52, line 11).
Another example of how the institution applies the VIDA programme's innovative approach to

practice development can be seen in the fact that the institution has changed its procedures; for instance, when opening-up in the morning in order to accommodate a specific child's need for a secure environment when being dropped off by the parents. Previously, it was the children themselves who decided where they wanted to be in the morning, but this led to considerable frustration for the child in question as it was difficult to get involved in the other children's play when given more or less free rein. As such, the lack of boundaries had an exclusionary effect on this child. As a result, the institution has changed its early morning procedures so that children can now only play in the rooms where a member of staff is present and when their own homeroom opens, they have to finish whatever they are playing with and go there. This has resulted in a more secure environment and has increased a child in question's well-being, as he now finds it easier to join in play. Moreover, the change has also increased the sense of security and well-being among the entire group of children. As a direct result of VIDA, the institution also splits the children into small groups and applies an active concept of learning in relation to their activities.

Extending VIDA in participating municipalities
Following the conclusion of VIDA programme (2010-2013), municipality X decided to also offer professional development through VIDA to the institutions which had been part of the control group because: *"when we were halfway through [the VIDA programme], we all agreed that we felt the project had so many positive aspects that it should form a common foundation for the whole municipality"* (ECEC consultant from municipality X, p. 16, lines 16-18). The municipality therefore developed its own VIDA programme which they named Broadening VIDA (see Figure 1). This programme was more compressed than the original VIDA programme, conducted over just nine months instead of the original two years. The idea was for the entire ECEC sector in municipality X to work together as one unified community of learning, including every ECEC institution in line with the VIDA learning philosophy. Broadening VIDA was conducted in 2014.

One institution who underwent Broadening VIDA was included in this study. The institution had chosen to specifically work with children's friendships in the experiment phase and the ECEC educators recall how the children's behaviour was affected: *"I mean, there wasn't a single child left standing alone somewhere and crying; right away, someone was there to comfort them and bring them to an adult and explain and tell, and then something really good came out of exactly that thing with giving them the chance to say, was it a mistake? You know, if they happen to hit someone with a spade or whatever [...] it doesn't have to be malicious or anything".* They continued, *"...we saw it all the time – then someone came over: Hey, I just noticed, and take a look..."* (focus group from municipality X, p. 51, line 18ff). The VIDA experiment, as it turned out, also had an effect outside the kindergarten with parents telling the ECEC educators that: *"...they've been to football training and other parents have stood there commenting that the two boys from our kindergarten are SO good at helping and comforting others"* (ibid., p. 53, lines 8-10).

When the participants in this programme were asked "What did you learn from VIDA?", their first response was: *"The three principles! [...] And the small groups [...], they have stuck around"*.

They expanded on this: *"...what comes to mind is precisely the thing of making full use of all members of staff, and then small groups so you get around to the individual child; that's absolutely fantastic [...] and that's what we've kept doing, at least when it comes to projects, because we know [...] That's when children learn most [...] with these curricula, it's small groups and one adult involved, plain*

and simple, and no other adults disturbing things" (ibid., n.p.).

In the focus group interview, it was made clear that VIDA has become a shared practice for all educators at this institution. They employ all three principles and, having completed their VIDA programme, they have continuously become better at and more aware of making optimal use of staff resources. Children are with ECEC educators rather than an assistant because, as one educator explained: *"...sometimes we end up trivialising it a bit when we say 'with an adult'. I mean, we're all adults, because we're so concerned about being equal, and we just aren't really, and that's the thing; that's what's a bit delicate about this, you know"* (ibid., n.p.). Furthermore, they plan their activities according to a sociometric mapping of the children, where all the children's names are put on a board and they discuss which children get along, so that the children and their relationships form the foundation for assembling groups.

VIDA's five-step model for professional development, and the associated facilitation workshops for ECEC managers, has since been highly significant in terms of how staff deal with problems among the children. Prior to a focus group interview with ECEC educators, they were asked to record a video log documenting how they practised the VIDA principles. This video log consisted of two short film clips recorded at a one-week interval, demonstrating a specific intervention in relation to two boys which the ECEC educators followed using the video log. These boys had been very dominating and aggressive towards one another and other children, often exhibiting erratic behaviour. The first clip showed one of these boys suddenly pinching the cheek of the child sitting next to him. The ECEC educators were challenged by the boy's behaviour and were unsure as to how to deal with it. With guidance from municipal learning support teachers, the ECEC educators initiated a coordinated and goal-oriented intervention in line with the VIDA principles of basing interventions on a resource perspective and taking new approaches to the children which support their involvement. In this way, they succeeded in transforming what had previously been a relationship between the two boys characterised by aggression to one characterised by a sense of community and, eventually, friendship.

During the focus group interview it emerged that, at the point the second video clip was recorded, an educator had been in the process of renewing their approach to the children for 14 days, which had resulted in an intensive learning process for the boys, very much in the spirit of VIDA because: *"we needed the kids to see each other, that is to say, that the two boys see each other, and I have therefore started to place them together more often in small groups [...] so that both boys can see that they share certain resources"* (ibid., n.p.). As such, the video log offered an example of how an ECEC educator can achieve a significant positive outcome in terms of children's relationships in just 14 days through the attentive and persistent application of new approaches to children. The account from the ECEC institution taking part in the focus group was very similar to that from the institution in the same municipality which participated in the VIDA programme (2010-2013), Their account demonstrates that the VIDA model for professional development can be replicated, and even in a more compressed version. According to Mantovani, Bove and Cescato (2015), such sustainability is a key characteristic of innovative professional development.

Impact at the management and administrative levels

Both at the management and administrative levels, a clear influence from VIDA can be seen after two years. The municipal head of ECEC administration explained that VIDA resulted in lasting innovation in the municipality, as *"...we have gained certain tools which enable us to support other projects and [...] we [...] have used it, that is the model for thinking in terms of a resource perspective,*

thinking management, thinking facilitation, organisational learning; we apply all that, plain and simple, as a hard and fast standard framework for everything we do, so in that sense, it has contributed to certain systems for doing things, also at the organisational level and in terms of administration" (municipal head of ECEC administration from municipality X). The municipal head of ECEC administration explained that they have appointed *"…a strategy group with the managers […], and then discussions take place at management meetings from time to time and we [the administration] compile and, given that we compile the good ideas and have them qualified, one might say, and make decisions, we also determine the direction, so it's an interplay between choosing a direction, so top-down, and then involvement, so bottom-up, you know. We are well aware that we won't accomplish anything if we stick to top-down the whole time!"* (ibid., p. 34, lines 3-9).

This process has resulted in a strategy for how the municipality retains and implements new knowledge and research regarding VIDA into practice change (Strategi for dagtilbudsområdet, municipality X, 2015). This strategy contains four elements (ibid. pp. 4-7):

1. Annual experiments to maintain an investigative and experimental approach to change;
2. Retaining an understanding of the child as an active learner and equipping all staff to conduct activities based on the children's varying abilities, potentials, motives and interests;
3. VIDA's three principles should be outlined in the upcoming quality report for 2016-2017 under the heading "shared professional concepts and methods", as well as an expectation that these principles are incorporated and discussed at the institutions on an ongoing basis;
4. Ensure, through organisational learning, that the municipality's pedagogical interventions have a theoretical and knowledge-based foundation in order to translate research into practice and create workplaces able to attract, develop and retain qualified personnel.

With this strategy, it would appear that VIDA will likely continue to influence practice in the ECEC sector in municipality X for many years to come. VIDA also continues to exert an influence on the way meetings are held, with the facilitation methods introduced by the VIDA programme increasingly common.

The ECEC manager revealed to us that in her institution they: *"…have become much more focused on holding staff meetings…"* (ECEC manager from municipality X, p. 38, line 4), and that they have also become better at facilitating meetings based on VIDA at the municipal level. She explained that: *"…it used to just be a bunch of information […] where I was sat there thinking that I could just have received it by mail and then I'd have been at the institution, you know… Now they invite debate instead. […] And sometimes they do something a bit different where I think, oh yeah, I can go back and do that too!"* (ibid., p. 60, lines 1-14). As such, VIDA has spread to the level of the municipal administration in that consultants have also adopted the VIDA facilitation methods in their practice and state that they can't do without them. As we can see in the above statements from an ECEC manager, this assimilation and implementation helps maintain VIDA because ECEC managers themselves encounter the VIDA approaches, methods and tools similar to those employed by the university college teacher in the learning model introduced during VIDA training. This helps them recall what they have learnt from VIDA and gain further inspiration from encountering new approaches to facilitation.

VIDA thus exerts a radical influence on children, ECEC educators and the management and

administrative levels even after the programme's conclusion. VIDA has changed the organisational culture, initiated by a sensemaking process at the start, involving the collaboration between researchers, universitycollege teachers and practitioners.

Extending VIDA to additional municipalities
In municipality Z, extra funding had been set aside in 2013, 2014 and 2015 for initiatives in ECEC institutions with a high proportion of disadvantaged children. In connection to this, in 2015, VIDA extended to municipality Z where, as was the case with the Broadening VIDA programme in municipality X, ECEC managers and educators have received training, in a total of 18 ECEC institutions. Even though, in principle, the original timeframe has passed and the developmental funds have been used, it was decided that an additional 14 ECEC institutions would participate in a VIDA programme in 2016. The ECEC consultant from municipality Z found that the ECEC educators have: *"...undergone a shift, and they have gained new knowledge; they may have begun to regard the children and pedagogy in a new way. Well, for example, I can remember one of them who said, on the very first VIDA training day where this thing with a resource perspective was being discussed, that you can't have a resource perspective when they don't have any resources! And nine months later, he had changed his tune, so then I think, well it has increased the quality for everyone"* (ECEC consultant from municipality Z, p. 35,lines10-18).

A study of VIDA in municipality Z showed that changes in practice have occurred on a number of levels. On the first level, in particular, VIDA has strengthened ECEC managers' efforts to facilitate knowledge and learning into all their institutions (Jensen, 2016). However, it has proven somewhat more difficult to implement the VIDA programme in its entirety within a one-year timeframe. Compared to the original VIDA programme (2010-2013), which took place over the course of two years, one year seems insufficient in terms of achieving the same degree of innovation. It must be stressed however, that the VIDA principles' contribution to creating new pedagogical practices and new approaches to children is heightened when participants adopt the resource perspective; however, once again, the intervention seems to primarily have had an impact at the management level. There appears to be a difference between the implementation strategy found in the VIDA programme (2010-2013), involving consolidation at the administrative level and training of ECEC managers and consultants to 'lead the way', and the implementation strategy established for VIDA in municipality Z. In the latter, it has been left up to the individual ECEC institution to determine how projects should be organised. There has been greater emphasis on a bottom-up approach at the expense of the broad guidelines offered by a top-down perspective.

As well as being adopted by selected institutions in municipality Z, the VIDA programme has also been launched in three additional municipalities as part of the package of preventative measures from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, 'VIDA – A part of Early Intervention – Lifelong Effect. Early Support for Vulnerable Children', with the aim of supporting an early, targeted intervention for children and young people. The VIDAprogramme, as well as the other programmes in this package of preventative measures, was primarily chosen because both the Ministry and The National Board of Social Services wanted to introduce programmes where there already existed evidence for their effectiveness (ministerial stakeholder, p. 3, lines 11-12). Questioned as to the sustainability of the VIDA programme, the ministerial stakeholder responded that VIDA is a wonderfully sustainable concept but that, in conjunction with the compilation of the aforementioned package: *"...someone is making noises about the material beginning to be a little outdated"* (ibid.,

p. 7, line 9), and that he or she expects that 'in five years, VIDA will be entirely removed from the realities on the ground' and will have been, *"left in the dust if that kind of thing [evidence-based programmes] isn't kept up to date, and [...] nobody is doing that, and that's a massive problem…"* (ibid., lines 15-18). According to this stakeholder, VIDA represents a change in the development of practice within the ECEC sector over the course of the last 10-15 years and, alongside other programmes with a competence-based approach to practice development, has helped nurture new standards within the ECEC system.

WHICH FACTORS AFFECT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VIDA?

In this last section, the contextual factors that have an impact on the implementation of VIDA are examined. The most dominant cultural and socioeconomic contextual factors for innovative processes in the development of practice are highlighted. Drawing inspiration from Winter and Nielsen's (2008) integrated implementation model in public sector organisations, this analysis is structured so as to consider the macro, meso and micro levels, both individually and in the dynamic interplay between the levels. Theoretical concepts such as loose couplings (Orton & Weick, 1990;,Weick, 1990), sensemaking (Weick, 1996) and change management (Weick & Quinn, 1999) are also used.

Research and ministerial level (macro-level)

According to Winter and Nielsen (2008) e.g., Figure 2 the top-down perspective is based on the official legislative objectives and requirements and views implementation from a control and governance perspective. The ministerial and research levels are incorporated in this perspective; in the case of VIDA, this makes it top-down in two ways.

The ministerial stakeholder who participated in this study explained that the political incentive to launch projects like the VIDA programme, and the subsequent package of preventative measures 2015-2017 arises from the fact that: *"…whoever may be the current minister of social affairs, he or she wants to leave a mark on the area they are responsible for, and so, generally speaking, there will always be a new proposal during such a four-year period, and this is also true of the child sector as it is a relatively important field within social policy…"* (p. 4, lines 16-19). However, top- down governance is different because VIDA has not been implemented as mandatory legislation or a manual-based programme; instead, participating municipalities have themselves elected to take part and have had to prioritise it in terms of funding as there was a degree of co-financing. The ministerial stakeholder expressed a belief that this results in a different sense of commitment among the municipalities (ibid., p. 16, lines 13-14) because: *"…the municipalities are just as interested in getting value for money and they have exactly the same expectation [as the National Board of Social Services] that VIDA can help support some of the disadvantaged children…"* (ibid., p. 37, lines 11-15).

Governance of the implementation process, from research to education and practice, influences and becomes part of the implementation context. The collaboration on the project between research, education and practice, including administration, has been guided by clear objectives while remaining flexible and sensitive to local conditions.

Administration and institutional level and management (meso-level)

Asked "Which organisational factors have influenced the implementation of VIDA", the municipal head of ECEC administration first mentioned that municipality X: *"…has a flat organisational*

structure; one could say that the distance from an ECEC manager to me is not very far. [...] Furthermore, the distance from me to the municipal chief executive is not very far either, so there aren't all that many points between [...] and our chief executive officer. That means that decisions are smoother, quicker and a little less bureaucratic" (p. 3, lines 5-10). As a result, *"if there's something we need to discuss, then we can just poke our heads around the door to get a decision as to our next steps"* (ibid., lines 17-19).

These statements illustrate how the municipal administration links to other organisational levels and departments related to ECEC within the municipal organisation in municipality X. At the same time, the municipal head of ECEC administration intimates that there is a great deal of autonomy with: *"...a lot of leeway to work with development. We have a lot of leeway for making our own decisions and you could say that, in our organisation, when a proposal has been drawn up about this or that, we are often, very often, met with a 'yes'"* (ibid., p. 4, lines 6-8). In other words, one finds the simultaneous presence of coupling and autonomy which is characteristic of loose couplings (Orton & Weick, 1990). There are, of course, also scheduled regular meetings, for example with ECEC managers to support development in municipal ECEC settings, because, as the municipal head of ECEC administration put it: *"...when we look inwards at development, then we think that it's really important that we look outwards [...] it's important to step a little outside one's comfort zone and discuss with some other people – get to know their framework conditions, learn about their developmental processes, and to then take these things back with you"* (ibid., p. 35, lines 2-9). Here, one can sense the intention to accommodate diversity in ways individual managers tackle their processes as an inspiration for others, whereby the simultaneity of coupling and autonomy is apparent.

In terms of the 'sustainable implementation of VIDA', it is crucial that VIDA is not *only* implemented in the institutions. Although it is *only* the ECEC managers and selected educators that have participated in VIDA training, with support from municipal consultants, the municipal head of ECEC administration has, in his own words: *"...had the executive function, and that means that I have supported ECEC managers and consultants in progressing the project, you could say, and in terms of the strategic development, both in the start-up phase, how we could implement it, and subsequently, how we could then embed and maintain"* (p. 2, lines 7-10). This implicates a supportive involvement at the executive level in three phases: the start-up phase, during the process and the follow-up phase. According to the municipal head of ECEC administration, this is only possible if the VIDA approaches and methods are embraced by the ECEC consultant and herself. It is they who take the initiative to draw up proposals (ibid., p. 4, lines 3-5), and it is the municipal head of ECEC administration that defines the overall direction for development.

To this end, communication between organisational levels is of crucial importance. Communication involves both *"...stuff like discussions on VIDA at management meetings: what direction do I want us to take [...] how can it be done, what is needed for us to head in the managerial direction we choose..."* (ibid., p. 5, lines 14-18) and more formal, strategic communication via the municipal quality report. The quality report is an important tool for communication and management because it *"is also rubber-stamped through our system, through the children's committee and the municipal council, to provide some indicators to the individual ECEC manager [...] making it clearer what direction we are working towards, but it also offers the ECEC managers an opportunity to prioritise"* (ibid., p. 20, lines 4-14).

As such, the municipal head of ECEC administration sees it as her natural duty to set a course, as is also clear in the way the administration supports and governs in relation to the municipality's participation in VIDA. The view from the executive level is: *"I shouldn't be involved with the details*

of practice at all. I look at like other programmes where it's a matter of having a responsibility for ensuring something will work, and that some other people make it work, so it's the role of establishing some systems which allow you to support it, and that's also something we adjusted along the way" (ibid., n.p.). More detailed planning is left to the ECEC consultants and ECEC managers with the 'autonomous' room to manoeuvre provided by the municipality's management culture. The municipal head of ECEC administration is first and foremost engaged in creating shared meaning within the organisation and supporting the process on the basis of certain guidelines and systems, while, at the same time, making adjustments along the way and inviting ECEC educators to bring their competences and resources into play in the VIDA concept. According to Winter's (Winter, 1990; Winter & Nielsen, 2008 cited in Winter, 2012, p. 258) integrated implementation model (see Figure 2), there are grounds for presuming that different organisational levels with different resources available to them will tend to develop their own local collective cosmologies which are not necessarily in keeping with other levels within the same organisation; especially not if the organisation, as in the case of the ECEC sector, is spread out geographically. In municipality X, meanwhile, VIDA has allowed the establishment of a common culture for the entire ECEC sector and, with the administration's sustained effort to themselves use and facilitate the VIDA principles, methods and tools, as well as the municipality's strategy to maintain and implement new knowledge and research in relation to VIDA, as detailed in the next section, a foundation exists for enhancing this culture for the benefit of all children, including the disadvantaged, and of ECEC educators, managers and administrators.

In the compilation of the quality report and the strategy for maintaining and implementing new knowledge and research in relation to VIDA, a combination of management- and employee- driven processes is in evidence, reflecting Winter integrated implementation model (ibid.) which stresses the importance of precisely such a combined top-down bottom-up approach. As mentioned, the top- down bottom-up approach in VIDA is, according to the informants, an innovative characteristic, but it is of equal importance that municipal administrations can themselves combine top-down and bottom-up approaches in their implementation and are willing to exploit the implied possibilities with regard to implementation. This is evident in municipality X, for example, by the administration prioritising additional resources for the consultants so as to enable more follow-up work at ECEC institutions. The institutions sought more support from the consultants in conjunction with devising and conducting experiments where the consultants' role was: *"...to constantly link people's experiences with having time for reflection, taking a helicopter view, introducing new knowledge",* concluding that it gave a *"good momentum to it, it made good sense"* (ECEC consultant from municipality X). This shows that the administration are responding to a demand originating further down the organisation and thereby fulfils a duty to ensure ECEC institutions have reasonable conditions for developing practice.

The fact that both VIDA and the administration use integrated top-down bottom-up approaches has proven beneficial in terms of the fields of research, education and practice as it enables a dynamic process where context- sensitive choices and adjustments can be made along the way. The municipal head of ECEC administration talked about this approach enabling adjustments that become *"...a sort of catalyst for achieving... an effect (n.p.)"*.

At the municipal level, three key factors can therefore be identified for the implementation of VIDA and sustainable professional development. Firstly, the existence of a flat organisational structure

characterised by loose couplings. Secondly, that the municipal head of ECEC administration understands how to exploit the strengths inherent in these loose couplings in his/her change management by allowing space for employee autonomy while at the same time plotting a clear course in terms of which direction development should take within the ECEC sector. Loose couplings and top-down bottom-up processes thereby have certain shared characteristics, although loose couplings do not necessarily correspond with hierarchical structures. Thirdly, that this change process is given the optimal conditions in terms of the municipal head of ECEC administration's management style and his/her communication in words and actions, strategies and methods. The municipal head of ECEC administration's communication must be clearly aligned with VIDA, thereby establishing and supporting a shared language for the intended development and a shared culture. By using VIDA methods, management facilitation and tools, a culture is nurtured regarding how 'you do things in municipality X', even when the ECEC educators 'forget' that it originates from VIDA. In this way, sustainable professional development is guaranteed through an ongoing managerial commitment to supporting the development of shared organisational structures.

It is this level – the interplay between top-down and bottom-up governance – which is missing or not yet established within the first year of implementation in the new municipality Z, which has a clear impact in the form of a lower level of implementation, being most influential at the managerial level. Based on Winter and Nielsen (2008), the ECEC management level comprises an in-between position which can belong to both the top-down and the bottom- up perspective as the ECEC manager manages employees while also being subject to management by the administration, able to institute bottom-up processes through feedback to the administration regarding, for example, implementation problems of a more structural nature such as a lack of resources.

In our interviews with an ECEC manager from municipality X, who participated in VIDA (2010-2013), as well as in VIDA activities beyond, we could discern the same factors applying to management at the institutional level as at the administrative level: 1) a flat organisational structure; loose couplings; and 3) change management through clear communication and sensemaking. This This is, of course, because the ECEC manager is part of 'the target group' for the administration's management and therefore receives precisely the room to manoeuvre these factors, in terms of feedback to the administration and management practice. From the ECEC manager's viewpoint, the flat organisational structure is evident, for example, in her having *"been part of a working group regarding how we can take it to the next level and suggested, among other things, that we should conduct some experiments, and there's actually been a nice memo sent out regarding a strategy for this thing of keeping the pot on the boil with VIDA, you know"* (ECEC manager from municipality X, p. 82, lines 13-16). In her narrative, she was referring to the municipality's strategy for maintaining and implementing new knowledge and research in relation to VIDA. The flat organisational structure is also evident in her own managerial practice; for example, when the institution's values and principles are to be compiled and in the evaluation of curricula where she has always: *"...done it with the employees, evaluated it together and written it in such a way that everyone can see themselves"* (ibid., p. 38, lines 8- 9).

Regarding her own management of the institution, she otherwise stated that it is *"...both very much about managing certain pedagogical processes. And then it's managing employees, plus I really like being out there with the kids, and I take part in meetings with parents and all those kinds of things, so it's best that I also know the kids..."* (ibid., p. 2, lines 1-6). Here, she demonstrated precisely the

combination of, on the one hand, managing processes and personnel, while, on the other hand, being in contact with the children and what is happening "on the ground", which is important in terms of both personnel management and cooperation with parents. Her interest in being part of the everyday pedagogical work is not a matter of control, but a contribution to the process of sensemaking regarding the institution's practice, providing a foundation for change management.

The ECEC manager explained that the municipality's aim is *"...when they [the children] move on, then they should leave this place with the feeling that they are capable of learning"* (ibid., p. 25, lines 10-11). However, this has been difficult because: *"...there can be all kinds of different twists and turns in this place [...] because it's been really important that everyone [...] has had the chance to plan what they want to do and participate in decision-making processes and all this stuff, but precisely that, I reckon, in one of these areas, then we have to have more of a shared understanding of how we go about addressing this..."* (ibid., p. 26, lines 1-6). She thereby demonstrated an awareness regarding the necessity of shared understanding and collective sensemaking processes in terms of values and objectives so as to be able to manage change within loose couplings and ensure that an institution's practice is clarified by striking an appropriate balance between coupling and autonomy; something we touched upon in the previous sections.

With regard to management, the personnel have told the ECEC manager: *"...you know what, you set some or other course and then what we think when you say 'we need to head in this direction', then it's the right thing, isn't it"* (ibid., p. 84, lines 17-18). She is clearly able to create understanding and trust in her judgement, and she can do the same thing as her superior, the municipal head of ECEC administration; namely, identify a managerial direction and leave the detailed planning to the ECEC educators.

As such, similarities can be seen in the respective management strategies at the administrative and institutional levels, although another factor of significance for innovative processes in professional development is also in evidence at the institutional level in that the ECEC manager makes a great effort to delegate tasks according to the resources among personnel. This is reminiscent of the approach adopted by the university college teacher in applying VIDA approaches to participants during VIDA training days. They experience for themselves what it means to have a resource-focused perspective and thereby gain a deep-lying understanding for what they should practise in relation to the children. This was illustrated in the earlier example of how a specific child led to a reshuffling of personnel and a change in the early morning procedures in order to better match staff resources to the boy's needs. The ECEC manager provides another example: in conjunction with the adoption of Tabulex, which is an electronic communication and registration platform for staff and parents, she was aware that one member of staff was good at such things: *"...she has, plain and simple, become the one we all ask; I make a big thing out of saying it, also to parents, and she is blossoming. At one point, she had a fair bit of sick leave – not anymore. She gets to use some of her other competences which may not be directly related to the core task; I do that with a number of staff members"* (ECEC manager from municipality X, p. 37, lines 6-13).

ECEC educator and child level (micro-level)
The ECEC personnel are those closest to the target group. They are what Winter (2012) refers to as "street-level bureaucrats". A possible challenge on this level involves the relationship between resistance to change and sustainability, with the ECEC manager from municipality X explaining that:

"...the members of staff who resist change [...] I enthusiastically accept that, and luckily they know that, so they're not afraid to say something, because sometimes they are precisely the ones who just say 'Hey, let's pause for a moment, let's take a look at what we have that works well and then take things from there'. So in my view, sustainability is one of the fundamental things which should be the common thread throughout, and some of the people who were previously called opponents of change are exactly some of those who remind us to say 'Hey, we have this here which works, let's take things from there" (p. 33, lines 10-17).

According to Weick and Quinn (1999), in terms of the organisational sensemaking process, existing practices are a central element in determining what the organisational "we" thinks. Weick and Quinn recommend using questions as a tool for organisational self-analysis in a three-phase model of change management where freezing creates an overview of the status quo, drawing attention to the sequences and patterns of work which characterise the organisation. Next comes the rebalancing phase where patterns in the organisation are changed and reinterpreted with regard to new objectives, such as in VIDA where practice is reinterpreted on the basis of new principles.

Finally, in the unfreezing phase, practice is resumed with all that implies in terms of improvisation, translation and learning within the organisation, but in a way which is now more attentive regarding new objectives, principles or approaches. This process is also evident in the work with the boys recorded in the video log discussed earlier. The ECEC educators had to pause for thought; they were at a loss as to what to do but, working alongside a learning support teacher from the municipality, they realigned and found a new way of approaching the situation. In keeping with the passage quoted above, this new approach was not a new innovation, but involved things they already knew worked; namely, a resource-focused approach, active learning and communities of learning. In the final unfreezing phase, the ECEC educator began her intervention.

As such, the importance of taking pause and evaluating practice is clear at the micro level as a critical assessment of whether or not there are grounds to change something which works. At the same time, there is a willingness to challenge one's own practice through new applications of existing knowledge

FINAL INTEGRATED ANALYSIS

The following six criteria for innovation were identified by Mantovani, Bove and Cescato (2015): creative process, replication, dissemination, propagation, flexibility and openness, individual and collective engagement. As shown by the analysis, VIDA fulfils each of these six criteria beyond the criteria set out for this case study.

VIDA is first and foremost a *creative process* offering all participants the opportunity to reinterpret their practice based on VIDA's three principles: respectively, a resources, active learning and organisational learning perspective. Furthermore, an inclusive pedagogy approach was incorporated by bringing together theoretical perspectives from Vygotsky (1935/1978), Dewey (1938/1986) and Bourdieu (1989) and thereby identifying pedagogical strategies to support even the most disadvantaged children in a set-up which helps gather the programme around a theoretical and research-based foundation. VIDA's five-step model for professional development involves an alternation between education (removed from practice) and change of pedagogical activities and approaches to children (within practice) which results in professionals learning to work

systematically with reflection and critical thinking which is mirrored at all levels – new to all the participants.

In VIDA, the criteria of *replication, dissemination and propagation* are fulfilled, as is also expressed by a ministerial stakeholder: *"…as it is only one ECEC educator and one manager from each institution that participate, there is the task of implementing it within the institution. Another task is implementing it within the municipality. And a third task is implementing it once the project is over"* (p. 30, line 19ff). As such, replication, dissemination and propagation are linked to creativity in VIDA that they are an intrinsic part of the programme itself, whereby VIDA appears to be a reinterpretation. It is a well-known phenomenon (e.g., Fixsen *et al.*, 2005) that interventions are not always implemented as intended, perhaps because employees do not feel as though they are involved, can influence processes or possess the necessary competences. In VIDA, the intention was to tackle this problem by involving participants – not only during training, but also upon returning to the ECEC setting. There is a risk that the necessary will, time and resources for a proper implementation are not available, whereby replication, dissemination and propagation do not occur. We saw examples of this in municipality Z where they had not compiled an implementation strategy taking this aspect into account. In municipalities X and Y, meanwhile, the programme and change were integrated from the start and there was also an awareness of roles and the task at hand at the administrative level.

The design of the VIDA programme therefore anticipated the challenge of implementation by integrating implementation phases in the programme itself in the form of the five-step model. As a result, the transition from training to the ongoing work with VIDA in practice, even after the programme's conclusion, does not appear to be as much of a challenge as if it was a purely top-down or bottom-up programme. Replication, dissemination and propagation have thereby already taken place within the VIDA programme such that what remains (post-project) is learnt from one's own learning within VIDA and maintained by continuing to apply the principles, methods and tools. Contextual factors are, however, influential as the initiative for doing so lies outside the VIDA programme. It is therefore up to the institutions and the administrations themselves to maintain the application of the VIDA approach in ECEC settings, an aspect we have already touched upon.

The criteria of *flexibility and openness* are fulfilled, as expressed by the informants, by VIDA's integrated top-down bottom-up approach which requires precisely such a constructive interplay between the micro and macro levels and between research, practice and administration (conceptualised as "social innovation through collaboration", see Jensen, 2014, p. 15). This occurs partly by involving the administrative level, primarily through the participation of municipal consultants in VIDA training days and facilitation workshops where they also gain a concrete understanding of the VIDA concept and of the tools and methods they themselves can use in supporting and facilitating the ongoing implementation of VIDA in ECEC institutions; partly by the VIDA programme leaving it to the institutions to discover how they want to translate VIDA into practice through situated organisational learning resulting from experimentation.

During this process, there is the opportunity for both *individual* and *collective engagement* in the VIDA programme where it also becomes apparent that the various criteria are intertwined. Individual engagement comes into play when ECEC managers also recognise and evoke resources among personnel, giving them the opportunity to "shine", but also when they, through their facilitation, create opportunities for reflection and feedback from all employees. Collective engagement comes about through the programme's communities of learning where everyone is involved in the development of

a shared understanding and common objectives.

The criteria for innovation mentioned above are six criteria which are both contingent upon and promote one another and propagate, just as in collective sensemaking processes where enactment and interlocked behaviour are similarly contingent upon and promote "more of " the same. This is because, when enacting verbally or reacting in other ways, you also become a part of your surroundings which, in turn, react to this enactment. As such, you are yourself a part of the process of enactment, or creating your own reality, through your actions and thereby also influence the dynamic changes in conditions. However, having an influence does not mean you control your surroundings; merely that you are not fully in their power (Weick, 1996). Summing up, we can conclude that,

- On the one hand, VIDA meets the criteria for innovation linked to creativity.
- On the other hand, the analysis shows that these criteria are interwoven; i.e., criteria 3-6, for example, constitute the innovative elements of VIDA with regard to professional development, and it is also this criterion that supports the programme's sustainability.
- The final criterion regarding group involvement and collaboration is likewise intertwined with the others and must be understood in this context. As mentioned, the criteria of creativity can also be discussed in terms of the question of when something is new and when it's 'just' the renewal of existing ways of working.

The connections between the three empirical questions, supplemented by the theories' contributions to the analysis, thereby help create new understandings and insights into what constitutes an innovative approach to professional development and the development of practice. In the following section, the analysis will be summarised in a conclusion regarding the findings.

DENMARK-SECTION IV:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of the VIDA study was to contribute to research by examining the overall question: "How can an innovative approach to professional development in ECEC improve educators' practices and thereby improve learning opportunities for all children and for socially disadvantaged children in particular?". Of special interest is how the educators' knowledge-based, targeted and systematic approach improved their daily practices in general and, more specifically, when working with socially disadvantaged children. How was new knowledge shared with all staff throughout daycare centres and what was the role of leaders? And to what extent was involving and motivating staff to perform this innovation realised?

The design of the innovative practices within the VIDA professional development programme is based on premises from research on innovation in the public sector (Sundbo, 2003; Jensen *et al*., 2007), as well as practice-based innovation and organisational learning (Ellström, 2010; Brown & Duguid, 1991) as described in Jensen and Brandi (2016) and Jensen and Aakjær (2016). Only the ECEC manager and one educator from each ECEC institution participated in the training programme. Hence, the design of VIDA relies on an action-based understanding of organisational learning (Argyris, 2003); i.e., a collective learning process where a number of employees acquire new knowledge and, using this knowledge and an IT-based reflection tool, change work-related practices that are then systematically practised and implemented throughout the organisation. An important tool for the organisational learning processes as the foundation for innovative practices of professional development was the use of critical-reflection groups at each institution. Innovative practices were introduced within these groups by the participants in the education and training programme, thereby transmitting knowledge to the entire organisation, as well as to other institutions in the municipalities that participated in VIDA (the macro-level).

The case study revealed that informants, representing different professional cultures, settings and systemic levels, nevertheless agreed upon – or have a shared understanding of – a range of definitions of what innovative approaches to professional development in ECEC should involve: new practices, new ways of working in the pedagogical environment, new ways of encountering and interacting with children, especially socially disadvantaged children and issues of social inequality, and new approaches to professional cooperation, organisational learning, CoP and innovation. However, new ideas alone are insufficient – these ideas have to be realisable and must improve children's well-being and learning, particularly socially disadvantaged children.

The study of the impact of VIDA evidenced that the VIDA intervention improved socio-emotional well- being and learning among 3-6-year-old children, including socially disadvantaged children. Secondly, we found that professionals' practices became knowledge-based, reflective and creative as they worked with experimental learning in practice. Thirdly, management and the role of networks and learning communities affected implementation, and thereby child outcomes and structural features, just as staff turnover and the share of socially disadvantaged children influenced outcomes. Lastly, the evaluation of the VIDA programme showed that the innovative approach to professional

development that VIDA represents seems to be sustainable and replicable in other contexts.

The study led us to some notable considerations. An innovative approach to professional development in ECEC implies new learning and development opportunities for all children in universal daycare, such as in the Danish context, where 97% of all children attend daycare. Challenges remain, however, of translating ideas into innovative practices, and of combining professional learning in an organisational learning perspective with innovation in ways that make sense for all professionals. Learning and innovation are regarded as interconnected activities which occur in and through professional development activities (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 41).

In relation to our findings, the concept of social innovation becomes relevant as VIDA is characterised as a socially innovative approach to professional development. Also, the idea of CoP was implemented in the programme, defined as a group of people within several contexts that come together to actively engage in VIDA in order to improve quality of practice and thereby children's outcomes. This notion entails that several CoPs can co-exist within the same group of professionals and across other communities (e.g., communities of innovation [CoI]), and, based on these, new communities can emerge, e.g., around innovative initiatives/interventions such as VIDA.

Additional insight that the Danish study contributes to is that employee stability and the share of socially disadvantaged children influences the effectiveness of the innovative professional development programme. Moreover, the case evidences that management and support by consultants in municipalities is crucial for the implementation of innovative programmes that transform practices.

More research in a European context is clearly needed to shed further light on the content and impact of innovative approaches to professional development within ECEC on both educators' learning and practices and child outcomes. There are a number of more recent examples from US contexts regarding innovative approaches to effective professional development, e.g., by using coaching, and by supplementing, for example, literacy instruction using media-rich interventions such as video-guided mentoring (e.g., Cabell *et al*., 2011; Penuel *et al*., 2012). Such studies show that new approaches to professional development might improve child outcomes. In a European ECEC context, however, innovative approaches to professional development is a growing research field and the VIDA study helps to elucidate aspects of professional involvement, CoP and innovation. Further research will contribute with knowledge about how this approach might influence child development if starting earlier, with children aged 0-3 years, as we will test using an
Abecedarian Programme within an Innovative Implementation Framework (APIIF-pilot[4]and APIIF Scale-up[5]).

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[4] Available at: http://childresearch.auinstallation28.cs.au.dk/apiif-pilot-abecedarian-programmet-implementeret-som-innovativ-fornyelse/
[5] Available at: http://childresearch.auinstallation28.cs.au.dk/apiif-effektevaluering-abecedarian-programmet-implementeret-som-innovativ-fornyelse/

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Concepts and definitions

In the Danish case, the following concepts and definitions have been used for both developing the questionnaire for data collection, and for analysis. Some concepts are fairly straightforward and were also used in CARE's D 3.1 report (Jensen *et al*., 2015) as a common vocabulary across national contexts. Others are more specifically related to this case study, based on an innovation theoretical approach and the Danish ECEC context.

Change and change management

Change and change management are defined according to the principle that change is a continuous process; organisations change constantly, including small alterations to, for example, everyday operational processes and social interactions (Weick & Quinn, 1999). The continual change perspective must be considered in contrast to an episodic change perspective which views change as a sporadic intervention or disruption from a state of equilibrium. When organisations are perceived to be constantly changing, change management becomes the redirection of something which is already emerging.

Communities of practice (CoP) and communities of innovation (CoI)

In relation to this case study, the concept of a CoP is defined as a group of people that comes together in order to actively and practically engage in a specific domain that interests them for a shorter or longer period of time. Multiple CoPs can co-exist within the same group of professionals and individuals can simultaneously belong to multiple CoPs. New CoPs can also emerge; for example, in conjunction with innovation-centred initiatives/interventions.

Drawing on elements from social learning and innovation theory, West (2009) – in line with Engeström (1999) – argues for the necessity of seeing shared innovation efforts across communities as a unique social structure, which he conceptualises as communities of innovation (CoIs). The concept of CoI integrates theories of social learning, shared meaning, shared practice and theories of creativity. Despite many overlapping elements, CoIs differ from CoPs in the sense that the learning content in CoIs is evolving and dynamic (compared to a more stable base of knowledge/competence in CoPs), and the products are innovations (e.g. new practices, contrasted to CoP learning, described as learning how to master existing practice) (this conceptualisation is explored further in a working paper, Jensen & Aakjær, 2016).

Innovative approaches to professional development

Based on a review of literature, Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook (2009) define innovation as follows: "Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new/improved products, services or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace" (ibid., p. 1334). In this definition, the focus is limited to the commercial sector; however, the idea of renewal by transforming ideas into new products, services or processes applies to the topics of the CARE project, in particular, quality as related to professional development. In an ECEC context, however, it makes sense to propose a broader, more social understanding, of innovation such as Dawson and Daniel's concept of social innovation: "social innovation refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges" (2010, p.16).

In terms of professional development in ECEC, innovation is defined by differentiating between three levels: 1) the political approach to professional development (form, content, delivery modes, etc.); 2) the inter-organisational and collaborative aspects that contribute to innovative approaches to professional development in ECEC; and 3) professional development focused on developing innovative competences among ECEC educators (i.e. seeking to ensure practice innovation beyond the scope of the original course of professional development by teaching practitioners to innovate, themselves, by incorporating new knowledge/ideas and reflecting upon practice) (see also the narrative review on innovative approaches to professional development conducted by CARE's Italian team (Mantovani *et al*.,2015).

Knowledge and learning

Critical to innovation is knowledge and learning (Hartley, 2014). In order to include this, our framing of innovation in the Danish case must account for *how* the outcomes of innovation are created (how innovation takes place) and in that sense, it is meaningful to consider innovation processes. Drawing on work by, amongst others, Brown and Duguid (1991), Ellström (2010) and Engeström (1999), an innovation process can be conceptualised as a *learning* process. In Brown and Duguid's (1991) research, learning and innovation are regarded as interconnected activities which take place in and through work activities. Essentially, they argue, evolving CoPs are sites of innovation through their "constant adapting to changing membership and changing circumstances" (ibid., p. 41).

Learning through participation in CoPs and CoIs

In the case study, we argue that the theory of situated knowledge provides a sound theoretical basis for a bottom-up dynamic in implementation design. Acknowledging that learning occurs in everyday activities at workplaces (Ellström, 2010; Engeström, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991), learning and competence of the individual learner are understood as negotiated and defined in actions and interactions embedded in a complex socio-material context. In this perspective, learning is regarded as a continual process of the individual simultaneously becoming skilled or knowledgeable in the situated practice, experiencing a sense of meaning in the local activity, and contributing to the social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hence, learning takes place through individuals' participation in CoPs, experiences of legitimacy or lack of legitimacy when taking part in social situations, and experiences of alignment or dis-alignment of their skills and competences with the CoP (ibid.; Wenger, 1998). To recap this perspective, learning can be regarded as situated and interconnected with the social learning of a CoP. CoPs can be regarded as platforms for an exchange of experiences, and well-functioning CoPs are quintessential examples of what Wenger (2010) more recently has conceptualised as *social learning spaces*.

Loosely coupled systems

Characteristic of loosely coupled systems is that they are systems where the various subsystems differ substantially, but are nevertheless highly sensitive to one another (Orton & Weick, 1990). 'Loose coupling' is somewhat of an oxymoron that. Weick (1996) uses in order to illustrate the plasticity which exists in the cooperation between subsystems; e.g., how different professional groups and organisational levels work to develop practice within educational institutions.

We use the concept in the case study to demonstrate how the management style in a municipality makes it possible to exploit the opportunities for change management found in loosely coupled systems by clearly communicating objectives and strategies while, at the same time, allowing

practitioners room to manoeuvre so as to complete assignments in their own ways within a given framework.

Professional development
Professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skillsets and attitudinal perspectives of early years practitioners and professionals (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, cited in Sheridan *et al.*, 2009), as well as related activities such as parent support. Professional development programmes are composed of pre-service training at the vocational, bachelor's or master's level, and the ongoing professional development processes that take place in ECEC centres, such as in-service-training or lifelong learning initiatives related to ECEC.

Quality
ECEC is often defined by two types of quality: 1) structural characteristics such as group size, child-to-staff ratio, and teacher qualifications (e.g. Howes *et al.*, 2008; Slot *et al.*, 2015); and 2) process characteristics such as children's day-to-day experiences in ECEC settings, encompassing the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of children's activities and interactions with educators, peers, and materials that are seen as the proximal determinants of child development (Slot *et al.*, 2014, p. 48).

Sensemaking
With the concept of sensemaking and its interweaving of, inter alia, identity, sociality and actions, a deeper understanding of the implementation of an innovative approach to professional development within an organisation can be achieved, as well as of how collective sensemaking in processes of change affects the success of said changes. The extent to which an ECEC manager is able to make sense of the changes that innovation entails can be crucial to their success. If, for example, differing views exist as to what 'makes sense', staff will act differently in accordance with their particular views. Weick and Quinn's (1999) concept of sensemaking is thereby closely affiliated with change management, as accordingly, change management cannot occur without sensemaking.

ECEC educators
There is a long, project-wide discussion that precedes the operational choice of terminology referring to ECEC staff in this report – from aides, to caregivers, educators, teachers, pedagogues, childminders, etc. Although no unanimous cross-country terminology could be agreed upon, we will make use of the term 'educator(s)' to designate those who hold the charge of caring for and educating children attending ECEC.

Socially disadvantaged children
Socially disadvantaged children are characterised as being children from low income households, children with unemployed parents, poor children, at-risk children and families and children from single-parent families.

B.

THE ITALIAN CASE

ECEC as participatory city laboratories:
Reggio Emilia and Milan

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Acknowledgments:

SUMMARY

This case describes two exemplary approaches to *innovative* in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners: Reggio Emilia and Milan, two examples of *participatory* ECEC city laboratories. The report is part of the project *CARE* (a collaborative project funded by the European Union to address issues related to the quality, inclusiveness, and individual, social, and economic benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe) and in particular of the qualitative part of the T3.3 (WP3), focusing on examples of good-best practices of continuing professional development for the ECEC workforce.

The main questions addressed in the study were: to explore what have been the most relevant/innovative opportunities of in-service professional training offered to practitioners in the Reggio Emilia and the Milan Municipalities in recent years; to increase our understanding on how can a PD project framework developed on the city level be interpreted and renewed at a micro level and to describe what types of PD are effective in improving professionals' practices, daily work, relationships with children and family participation. Involving the voices and perspectives of the professionals was a main task in the Italian study to increase our understanding on how innovation becomes a participatory process when it is based on the active participation of many actors, thus creating Commonwealth thoughts, goals and engagement.

New and existing data were combined in the field work of both cases, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups with stakeholders, researchers, pedagogical coordinators, teachers and educators from the field, analyses of "existing" quantitative and qualitative data (documentary sources, project, publications, videos).

The results illustrate experiences and practices carried out in different developmental niches within a shared background of permanent/on-going PD system. Reggio Emilia and Milano are different in size and quality of life, but they share many of the key words and experiences which have marked the history of ECEC in Italy and the idea of innovation in professional development. Highlights like civic participation, bottom-up community experience, the idea of childhood as a precious and valuable period of human life, reflective practices, experiential learning, documentation and life-long education for professional growth are emergent characteristic from our study. In Reggio, PD is a process of reciprocity where more experienced or mentor teachers and *pedagogisti* work together and learn from each other and though exchanges between services. In Milan, the scale and the diversity of the city lead to the need to find and coordinate external experts as mediators of strategic projects which are a mixture of bottom up (themes and needs emerging from the field though the *pedagogical coordinator – posizioni organizzative,* PO) and top down decisions (the final choice of the strategic themes), moderated locally through workshops with children and families (see *MIBA* and *Didattica Inclusiva e Flessibilità* projects). Reflective practices and link with research are common in the two cities, although with a greater emphasis on intersubjective observation in Milan and on documentation in Reggio.

A constant effort to train professionals to encourage family participation is common, although interpreted differently in the two cases. Reggio creates opportunities for PD and resources though the Malaguzzi International Center - Milan finds new sources for supporting PD in the folds of a financing source which requires the implementation of workshops involving children and parents in centers.

The common idea, very powerful, is that professional growth and research are strictly linked, that the approach is participatory (action research) and reciprocal (each partner contributes to the growth of the other), and that knowledge, practices and results benefit the whole system.

Further research is needed to continue to explore the current challenges of transferability from theory into practice and from center to center (which is a crucial challenge in a large-scale case such as Milan) and the role of the pedagogical coordinator as a promoter/*engine* of innovation and the main vehicle of transferability in a long-term perspective.

Preview of its structure

This chapter consists of four sections: 1. Introduction; II. The case of Reggio Emilia; III. The case of Milan; IV. Conclusion. Firstly the introduction to the two cases highlights objectives and aims of the study, a brief presentation of the two selected cases, criteria for site selection, research design, method and procedures for data collection and data analyses. Secondly, the two case studies (I. Reggio Emilia, II. Milan) are presented in two separate sections, each including: a contextualization of the case, a presentation of the innovativeness of its PD system, findings and interpretations of results. In the final section, the implications of our findings are discussed at a national level.

Key terms

In this report we use the general term practitioners to refer to those working in the ECEC's systems (across 0-3 and 3-6 centers) and pedagogical coordinators, *pedagogisti, posizioni organizzative* (PO) to refer to those who have a role of coordination/management/designing of PD practices and improvement of pedagogical experiences. Educators is mainly used to refer to those working with children aged 0-3, whereas teachers is used for those working with children aged 3-6.

Asilo nido: a centre for children aged 3-36 months, usually open from 8.30 a.m to 4.30 p.m plus pre- and post- hours (7.30-8.30 a.m/ 4.30-6.30 p.m) on a 11 month basis. *Scuola dell'infanzia*: a pre-primary school/preschool, for children from 3-6 years that, in the Municipal system, offers a 40 hours (full-time) or 25 (part-time/*tempo ridotto*) of service during five days a week. *Servizi integrativi* (Hoshi-Watanabe et al., 2015) (Centri gioco, centri per bambini e famiglie, servizi domiciliari…), generally open for a maximum of 5 hours a day, for 5 days a week; *sezioni primavera* (bridge classes for children aged 2-3).

INTRODUCTION

The Italian study examines two cases as ECEC city-laboratories with innovative PD system: the case of Reggio Emilia *A model of diffused pedagogy* and the case of Milan *Fostering innovation in a big city: continuity and change*.

Both are considered exemplary ones in Italy because they have not only contributed substantially to the advanced programs that many now associate with Italian early care and education (OECD, 2012), but they have also developed high quality services for young children and their families that highlight the potential for "creative innovation" and the value of local interpretation within the Italian culture. Despite of the local differences of each case, due to the combination of cultural, geographical, socio-economic, political factors numbers of ECEC's services, pedagogical tradition, in both sites these efforts have focused on the needs and potentials of children from birth to six and their families by a massive investment in enhancing ECEC-professionalisms and competencies through the development of a system of long-term in-service professional development initiatives within a socio-constructive approach to learning where community of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), participatory learning (Literat et al., 2012), sharing of ideas and analysis of real and contextualized cases/practices play a crucial role.

They both represent *good examples* of participatory practices of context-driven innovation in in-service professional training within a bottom-up perspective. They are also examples of the innovativeness of the link between the ECEC services, the Municipality and the Universities or research center. Both cases exemplify how continuing professional development is not only a matter of providing training and of using new approaches and methods within these initiatives, but also to have in place effective support and mentoring in school (the role of the pedagogical coordinators or of the teacher-mentor are key examples in this sense) to ensure the teacher's learning is put into practice in the everyday life of the educational centers through various methods-and approaches. Research suggests that approaches referred to as participatory or bottom-up are more likely to be effective in promoting a change in practice (Harlen, 2004; Guskey, 2002; Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013; Bondioli & Ferrari, 2004), as well as situated-approach of analyses of practices (Altet et al., 2004). How teachers' perceived this innovative proves and how they face the challenge of the transfer of knowledge and application in the real life of their context is a main question that is being addressed in our work.

Reggio Emilia is a medium sized city (with a population of 171.665 inhabitants) which has benefitted from a long-lasting political and administrative continuity within the city and in the Region Emilia Romagna and has worked not only locally but also networking in the region, over Italy (Malaguzzi has been the founder and first president of the Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia) and it is – internationally - known as the best Italian experience in the world. It represents continuity in the effort of implementing ECEC keeping an eye on sustainability, has a wide experience of innovation. It has been studied mainly for its offer to children and families, rather than on PD. It has always been in the first places in the Italian ranking for the quality of life and is a town for young people and of young people. The infant toddler centers and preschools are universally recognized for the pedagogical approach that is studied and appreciated all over the world. In brief, it can be defined as a model of *diffused pedagogy*.

Milan represents a large city, characterized by innovation and strong connection to Europe, invested by the problems and complexities of a metropolitan area. It has been characterized in the last 40 years by several changes in its administration and also by differences between the city political administration and the regional administration. The scale of the city, its constant effort in investment and innovation in ECEC through political and administrative discontinuities are unique in Italy. Milano has set the lead for the first extensive experimentation of new services like Centres for children and families which are now widely diffused in Italy, for an extended net of company and mixed (public/company) services, has long-lasting experiences in connections and integrations between various 0-6 services as the other best known Italian experiences and carries out since the Seventies a stable collaboration with its research centres (Universities, ISMU, etc) are the reason of our choice. In brief, the PD system can be defined as "permanent effort in PD innovation through discontinuities".

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Within the original objective framework of the case study as stated in the Description of the Work (DOW, 3.3. *Objectives,* pp.12-13), specific questions address in the Italian case study were aimed:

- to explore how the intersection of different factors regarding professional development within the ECEC's services (individual, relational, contextual, organizational, political, cultural, systemic) are translated into good-exemplary practices of in-service training within a long-term and sustainable perspective;

- to explore the perspectives of the ECEC's practitioners at a micro level;

- to increase our understanding on how innovation becomes a *participatory process* when it is based on the active involvement of many actors within a systemic-participatory framework/system (policy makers, researchers, stakeholders, educators, teachers, pedagogical coordinators, children, families) and creates Commonwealth thoughts, goals and engagement.

Specific issues addressed in the Reggio Emilia study are: the role of the mentor teacher; reflexive practices and collegiality/teamwork; documentation. Specific issues addressed in the Milan study are: the role of coordinators as key figures/multipliers; experiential learning and teamwork/collegiality; the use of ICT's; University-school partnership.

Criteria for site selection

The Italian cases (Reggio Emilia and Milan) were both selected on the basis of the criteria drawn from the Literature Review conducted in the first part of the study and already presented in chapter 1. Criteria for site selection were also connected with the findings of the comparative analyses of the professional development system conducted in Year I of the CARE project within the WP3 (see D 3.1, Jensen et al., 2015). To ensure a context driven process of research, we combined our choices with the perspectives of experts from the fields and stakeholders who participated to the site-selection process.

Criteria for site selection were: non episodic, systemic, sustainability, networking, connection with research/action research processes, focusing on key figures (coordinators *formazione dei formatori*),

transferability, top down-bottom up approaches, reflexivity and active learning (workshops, …), teamwork and collegiality, the use of ICT.

Research design, method and procedures

The Italian case study is conceptualized as a "holistic case study" (Yin, 2009) with embedded subcases (multiple units of analysis). It responds to what Yin describe as the goal of case study: "[to] illuminate a particular situation, to get a close/in depth understanding of it" (Yin, 2004, p. 2) by making direct observation and data collection in natural settings. Observing each subcase within its contexts therefore requires the capacity to adapt each method to the specific treats of each local case. Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is "its ability to examine in depth a 'case' within its real-life context" (ib. p. 1). A case is a "phenomenon specific to time and space" (Yin, 2004, p. 5).

Specific subcases were therefore identified and included in both studies: in study 1 (Reggio Emilia) two subcases were includes as example of innovation at a micro level: *Asilo Nido Panda (0-3), Scuola dell'infanzia Diana* (3-6). In study 2 (Milan) three subcases were included: *Asilo nido Paravia (0-3), Scuola dell'infanzia Narcisi (3-6), Asilo Nido Bambini-Bicocca (0-3)* [6]. In both cases, the identified subcases included those already involved in the WP2 study, plus two additional centres in the Milan case.
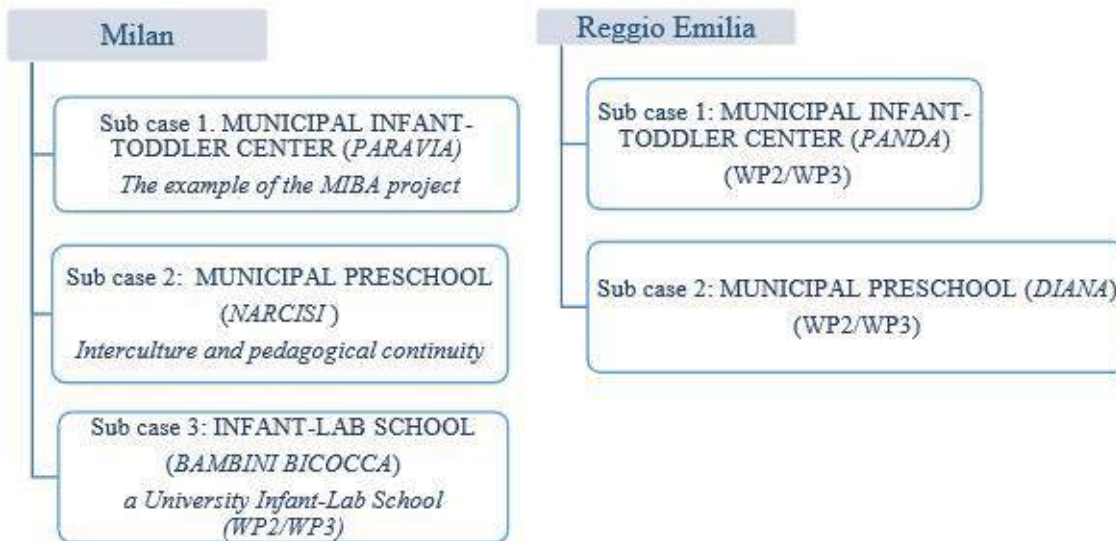

Fig. 1 – Specific Units of Analysis in the Italian Case Study

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Brief description of the selected subcases

Case 1. Reggio Emilia
Subcases involved in Reggio Emilia are an infant toddler center and a preschool identified as key representative sites of the network of infant toddler centers and preschools of the Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia.
Subcase I: *Asilo Nido Panda* opened in 1979 in a purpose built center constructed by Reggio Emilia Municipality, based on an architectural design shared with Loris Malaguzzi, architects, pedagogical co-ordinators, teachers, and parents, is a very well know *asilo nido* in Reggio Emilia.
Subcase II: *Scuola dell'infanzia Diana* is another historical school in Reggio Emilia, opened in the 70s, inside the public park in Reggio Emilia's historical old town. Both are very well known settings, already involved in the WP2 case study.

Case 2. Milan
Subcases involved in Milan are an infant toddler center, a preschool, and the University Infant Toddler Center. All three identified subcases meet the criteria drawn from the literature and assumed in our study: they are part of the Municipal system of the city of Milan; they are connected to other services within a perspective of pedagogical continuity; the pedagogical coordinators have a key role as engine of innovation; they have a significant number of children of immigrants and socially disadvantage families. All three sites are part of the professional development system of the Municipality of Milan in collaboration with the Universities of Milan with a focus on Education.

Subcase I. *Nido Paravia,* an old and very well know infant toddler center (opened in 1984) with a high number of immigrant children (45% c.a.) and many intercultural issues and tensions. The *Nido* was involved in the PD-project *Milano Bambini* (MIBA) developed at a city level between 2011 and 2013. For this reason, we have selected it to illustrate how the innovative practices developed at a macro level is translated into renewed practices of CPD at a micro-level.

Subcase II. The *Scuola dell'infanzia Narcisi* is a preschool situated in a semi-peripheral area of the city with a high number of low-income families and socially disadvantaged children, and a strong connection between the *nido* and the primary school of the same zone. The school has a tradition of collaboration with one of the most important Research Center on intercultural issues in Italy (ISMU Foundation: *Istituto di Studi sulla Multi-etnicità*) and with the University of Milan Bicocca. For this reason and for its focus on intercultural education and inclusion we have involved it in our field work.

Subcase III. The *Nido Bambini Bicocca* is a University Infant-toddler Center situated in another semi-peripheral area of the city on the University Campus (*Nido Bambini-Bicocca*), opened in 2005 as an experimental infant toddler center (University childcare) in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan. The Nido was already involved in the WP2 work. Overlapping and synergies will be explored and described in more detail in the findings section of this chapter.
A greater detailed description of each subcase will be provided to contextualize our findings in the final part of the chapter.

Data collection procedure

A full set of procedures needed to conduct descriptive case studies were established. In so doing, we singled out converging lines of evidence with the aim of making our findings as strong as possible (Yin, 1984; Stake 1995). Good case studies, in fact, benefit from having multiple sources of data.

According to this premise, two types of data were combined in our work: existing or documentary data, such as projects, evaluation documents, graduate or Master thesis/dissertations, observations and videotapes, and new data, such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups with practitioners and stakeholders. Varios types of qualitative data were combined: semi-structured interviews with key-participants (ECEC practitioners: 0-3 educators, 3-6- teachers, pedagogical coordinators and stakeholders); focus groups with a sample of selected practitioners in each site for in-depth exploration of some of the issues that emerged from the interviews; observations of in-service training practices in the identified subcases; analyses of existing documents (projects, focus group transcriptions, videotapes) and new videos. We collected and analyzed all the documents we considered important in order to contextualize and analyze in-depth our case (Macro/Meso-level) and its innovative projects for ECEC staff PD.

More specifically, data collected in study 1 (Reggio Emilia):
a) Existing documents: publications; documentations; projects and reports from the Reggio Emilia s.r.l.; projects of professional development initiatives; all documents regarding past and on-going projects.
b) New data: 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with different informants, as follows: stakeholders (n=2), *pedagogisti* (n=2), educators (n=5), teacher trainer (n=1); atelierista (n=1)

Data collected in study 2 (Milan):
a) Existing documents: publications; transcriptions of interviews conducted in previous research projects; Projects and reports from the Municipality; Reports of the evaluation of specific PD project (i.e. *MIBA*); Website materials of the Municipality; Documentations, Master/Phd Thesis.
b) New data: 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with different professionals as follows:

- stakeholders (n=2) at the city level (1 representative of the Milan Municipality and 1 representative of the University Milano-Bicocca);

- academic representative from the MIBA project (1 from University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore; 1 from the University Milan-Bicocca) (n=2).

- educators (n=12) (4 interviews for each subcase: 2 experienced teachers, 2 teachers with less experience);

- coordinators (n=4) (1 per site, plus 1 for further deepening in the Narcisi preschool);

In addition: 3 focus group discussions with a sample of practitioners were conducted (1 per each subcase).

The criteria for selecting our participants in both studies (study 1 and study 2) were:

I. Educators with a range of between 20 and 30 experience-years within the ECEC services in

the city of Milan. The assumption was that when an educator has many years of experiences in the field, he/she becomes an interesting informant regarding the evolution and the changes in professional development initiatives within the center/service.

II. Educators with few years of experiences (no more than 5 years in the field). The assumption here was that the voices of these educators is of interest because they explained their need for professional development, having a cultural background that was in most cases a university background.

III. Educators with between 10 and 15 years of experiences. These educators expressed a new, pragmatic, expert and critical perspective. They could talk about their experience of professional development with a less nostalgic view compared to the more experienced teachers.

IV. Coordinators were involved as key informants of professional development experiences. They could explain and describe key elements of PD, taking into account the most recent transformation of in-service training. In most cases, they were actively involved in the professional development initiatives both in the planning phase and in the evaluation of PD impact.

V. Stakeholders were experts from the Municipal-political level and from the Universities.

Recruitment of participants and interview's guide

Participants were selected using bottom-up procedures: we asked each center to single out 4 volunteer-teachers (2 experienced teachers and 2 younger/less experienced teachers) and we asked each pedagogical coordinator to collaborate in planning the interviews. We used both semi-structured interviews and open-ended interviews. We adopted a flexible format to reveal how case study participants express their own implicit construction of reality. The main goal of our qualitative study was to gather as much information as possible on the ways our participants constructed their experiences, looking at their insights in each case. To reach these goals, we involved key people in each case being studied.

We involved these figures in semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1), with the purpose of reconstructing the evolution of the system for the ECEC staff PD, the changes, the way in which innovative projects and PD practices were perceived from a meta-perspective (that of the stakeholders) and an *internal* perspective (that of the practitioners). When some key aspects emerged and needed further investigation, we conducted some follow up interviews or focus group discussions.

Informed consent

An *"*informed consent form" (see Appendix I) was used to get research agreements from the local authorities, directors of the *focal-*centers, ECEC practitioners and "stakeholders or other key figures" (coordinators, supervisors, etc.) who participated to our study. The participants (interviewees, focus group participants and videotaped practitioners) were asked to read and sign the informed consent and return it to the researchers. Permission to use short video clips and audio recording of good PD practices to be included in our video library were obtained at the local level. Transcription followed the international criteria (Jefferson, 1984).

Data analysis

Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and entirely transcribed. Data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis methodology (see, i.e., Berg & Lune, 2012). The main data sources were the transcriptions of the interviews, the focus groups, the work sessions and the field notes, while other data, such as observations and videos, were used as a support to illustrate and exemplify dynamic learning processes and in-service training practices.

Content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Kohlbacher, 2006) was used to analyze data transcribed from the interviews and focus groups discussion. Content analysis implied two procedures: (a) identification of key themes drawn from the literature review within a deductive process (with categories identified ex-ante, such as, for example *"innovativeness", "impact", "process", "theory-practice", "ICT & tools-innovative methods"* of PD, *"experiential learning" "workshops", "reflexivity",* and so on (Boyatzis, 1998); (b) the above-mentioned categories were used in all the interviews to share these categories with the themes and topics inductively detected from the interviews, to contrast and compare our data. Qualitative content analysis "is a research method […] [which] identifies […] themes of patterns" within the text of an interview. It "goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts, to examine meanings, themes and patterns […] in a particular text […] to understand social reality [of the interviewees] in a subjective but scientific manner" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). As with most qualitative research, we used this method to analyze our case, organize data around the main topics, key-themes or central questions and single out the data to be examined (Hartley, 2004, p. 329).

From a methodological point of view, the analysis was developed into two phases. In the first stage of the analysis, a single researcher analyzed data from each single case study separately. At this stage, preliminary grounded categories were established inductively, based on the "manifest content" (i.e. the potential of the workshop approach; the role of teamwork; the importance of the coordinator; inclusion; 0-6 continuity …) according to the relevance with regard to both the data and the research questions. Grounding categories in the data from which they derived guaranteed that they were also meaningful to the teachers involved in the case studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 2-3). During the second stage of analysis, the preliminary categories were discussed with the whole research team and further developed to gain a more extended picture of the data: in-depth analysis of each interview was conducted by the team using connected, inducted categories with categories deductively drawn from the literature.

As last step, we carried out a meta-analysis, in order to highlight common "trends", themes and topics among all the subcases and to give a more complete picture of our "holistic case". These categories included: *inquiry based learning, experiential learning, reflexivity, collegiality and teamwork, documentation, observation, new tools and methods for PD, interdisciplinary approach, ICT and so on*.

For these reasons, in presenting our findings we will keep together the multiple level of our analyses: we will combine results from the existing data - review and analyses of grey materials, PhD dissertations, Master Thesis, in-service projects, evaluation reports - with issues emerging from the content-analyses of the semi-structured interviews conducted within each subcase involved. Qualitative content-analysis, in fact, "is a research method […] [which] identifies […] themes of patterns" within the text of interview. It "goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts, to examine meanings, themes and patterns […] in a

particular text […] to understand social reality [of the interviewees] in a subjective but scientific manner" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Qualitative researchers use this method to analyzing Case Study, to organize data around certain topics, key-themes or central questions and to find the data need to be examined (Kohlbacher, 2006). We will based our interpretations of findings on this methods with the aim meeting the idiographic nature of our case study.

In the next sections we present the two studies in separate section: Study 1 (Reggio Emilia); study 2 (Milan). Each case study section begins by providing an introductory contextualization of the case, its ECEC system and its professional development system. Secondly it describes how the cases meet the criteria for innovative approaches to professional development. And thirdly it presents the findings of our analyses.

ITALY - CASE STUDY 1

REGGIO EMILIA

A model of diffused pedagogy

SECTION I:

CASE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

In this section we provide a description and a contextualization of the case of Reggio Emilia: *a model of diffused pedagogy,* selected as a key-example of *innovation* in the field of early childhood education and care and of the ECEC practitioners' in-service professional development. In order to draw a framework of our case study, we start with a snapshot of the Municipal ECEC's settings. In the first paragraph we describe the city, its context, its ECEC system and the current system of in-service professional development. In presenting our case we will consider the following three levels: Macro level (the integrated Public System with 84 ECEC settings); the Meso level (infant toddler centers and preschool system under the Direct Municipal Management: 12 infant-toddler centers and 21 preschools; 33 centers part of the total 84; and the Micro level (two selected subcases: the Nido Panda, a municipal Infant-toddler center and the *Scuola dell'infanzia Diana,* a municipal Preschool; both have already been involved as case study in the WP2.

In the final paragraph we will present our findings from the analyses of the interviews conducted with stakeholders, teacher's mentors and educators.

The city and its Municipal ECEC system

Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia is a town "on a human scale" located in Northern Italy and with a population of 171.665 inhabitants. It has always had a high Italian ranking for quality of life and its municipal infant toddler centers and preschools are recognized for a pedagogical approach studied and appreciated all over the world.

It has ancient monuments, but also contemporary art works like the Calatrava bridges, Spazio Gerra, the works of "*invito a*" (invitation to) and the "European Photography" exhibition.

Rich in social and cultural ferment and with high numbers of associations and services, Reggio Emilia also has a University which has grown quickly in recent years. Reggio Emilia participates in many   European   and   international   projects   and   was   the   only   Italian   town   to

participate in the "Intercultural cities" project.

Reggio Emilia is where the Italian tricolour flag was born in 1797 and it can still be seen in Municipal Town Hall Museum. The city was awarded the Gold Medal for the Resistance and continues to be rich in collective identity. The city's new motto is: *Reggio Emilia, town of the people*.

Situated in the heart of the Po Valley with River Po on its north border the Province of Reggio Emilia has over 500.000 inhabitants, one of nine Provinces in the Emilia Romagna Region, in turn one of Italy's wealthiest regions.

The mountains of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennine national Park form the southern border of the Province and the foothills are dotted with castles and ancient churches forming the legacy of Matilde of Canossa.

The Theatre Foundation, the National Dance Foundation, services for the elderly, an excellent local health service and the experience of the early childhood centres are all aspects of working towards an integrated community of people coming from 136 different backgrounds.

Reggio Emilia cuisine includes the traditional Parmigiano Reggio cheese, Lambrusco wine, Balsamic Vinegars of Reggio Emilia and a vast variety of excellent cold cuts.

The economic fabric of Reggio Emilia includes 58.000 companies with 7,700 agricultural-zoo-technical companies using cutting edge production techniques, and 28,500 companies in the tertiary sector (commerce, transportation, services to companies and to people).

Reggio Emilia resident popolation

From 1989 to 2012 the population continued to grow

Until 1995   800/1000 more residents per year

Until 2010   average 2000 more residents per year

Since 2010   500 more residents per year

In 2013   300 fewer residents (from 172.833 to 172.525)

Data Municipality of Reggio Emilia

Resident Popolation 0/5 years

Year 2012	10.073	6%	population
Year 2013	9.891	5.7%	population
Year 2014	9.562	5.5%	population
Year 2015	9.284	5.4%	population

Birth Rate
2013   10,0‰
2014   9,5‰
2015   9,4‰

Integrated public system with over 80 facilities

48 run by the Municipality
33 managed directly
15 managed indirectly (educational cooperatives)
21 run by Fism (Catholic)
14 run by the State
4 run privately

School year 2015-2016

Infant-toddler centres(0/3)
Integrated public system 2015-2016

NIDO D'INFANZIA
1603   Total places
3974   Total residents 0/3 years
40,34   % attendance

Preschools (3/6 years)
Integrated public system 2015-2016

PRESCHOOL
4757   Total places
5310   residents 3/6 years
89,58   % attendance

The integrated public system in the city of Reggio Emilia

Early childhood services have always been characterized by a variety of providers. The choice in the city of Reggio Emilia has been to create an *integrated public system*, supporting the work of different providers tied by Conventions of reciprocal financial and social commitment and professional development. This choice of plurality, sustainability and social participation has made it possible to respond to a demand for multiple cultural and pedagogical references, and promote higher quality in the services through exchange and comparison of viewpoints, at the same time as increasing numbers of places available through investing a plurality of resources: private, state and municipal.

Conventions with Educational Co-operatives, identified on the basis of a public competition with three-year validity, and requiring the presentation of a pedagogical project and a management project, regulate infant-toddler centre and infant-toddler/preschool services managed indirectly by the municipality.

The Protocol of Understanding between Reggio Emilia Municipality, the Reggio Emilia Provincial Office for Schools, and Reggio Emilia's FISM (Italian Federation of Maternal Schools) for a Quality Educational System enriches the responsibilities of the municipality towards state-run schools - building structures, furnishings, refectory – with themes of education and professional growth.

The Convention with FISM (Italian Federation of Maternal Schools) stems from this Protocol of Understanding: it is a contribution to the functioning of structures with management, organisational and cultural autonomy. An autonomy which is a characteristic of schools belonging to FISM.

The nature of the Conventions in this integrated public system is different. Conventions with educational co-operatives, identified on the basis of public tenders for a three-year period and which require presentation of both a pedagogical and management project, define the indirectly managed infant-toddler center and preschool centers in premises which are the property of the Municipality.

In the Reggio Emilia territory, the cooperative values are particularly and deeply felt: participation and solidarity have deep and ancient roots and the cooperative movement represents a particularly consolidated reality in the social, political, and economical fabric assuring larger equal rights and a greater work development.

In the mid '80s there are many families who can't find a place for their children inside the educational institutions, in particular way in the infant toddler centres, due to an increase of the requests. For the Municipality it is difficult to widen the network of the directly managed services also due to current financial difficulties. The reality imposes to find out new solutions so as to give an answer to this important request by the families and the most critical time is when, at the end of the '80s, the progressive reduction of the funding given by the Central Government to the Local Institutions makes the situation even more problematic. To come out from this crisis the Municipality of Reggio Emilia chooses its own original solution. After a wide debate, with the realisation of Progetto Infanzia (Early Childhood Project), it focuses its attention on the childhood by reorganising its own network and by widening the services connected to infant toddler centres. At the same time the Municipality is committed to strengthen the offer of centres fostering a quality childhood and, thanks to its experience, it gives its contribution to the growth of all the other experiences of quality present on the territory. Thanks to these guidelines in 1987 the first two cooperative infant toddler centres are established and managed by two cooperatives working in the field of services for people and in the course of the years others will be added. In those years a rich path of dialogue and educational alliance is started between the public and the private social areas of the city up to the situation nowadays which is a real mixed integrated system: municipal, cooperative, self-managed infant toddler centres and preschools and state and private catholic preschools.

The quality of the cooperative management in the services for the childhood is characterized by its projects, following the common reference values shared with the Municipality whose main aspects are:

- The project approach to the idea of child and education
- The enhancement of the different languages of children
- The life-long professional development of the operators
- The collegiality of the work

- The attention and care for the environment as a fundamental referent of the
- educational process
- The documentation of children's learning processes
- The involvement and participation of families in the educational project
- The qualification of the infant toddler centres and of the preschools as public
- services, as places giving values to the different contributions by respecting the
- cultural, ethnical, religious features of everyone
- The attention and care for the organizational aspects as elements granting the
- quality of the educational approach
- The pedagogical coordination as a tool of further qualification of the services
- The network with the territory

A Protocol of Understanding between Municipality, Provincial School Office, and FISM informs municipality tasks regarding state schools with themes that are educational and have to do with professional development: the structure of buildings, furnishings, refectory.

The Convention with FISM (Italian Federation of Maternal Schools, Catholic schools) stems from this Protocol of Understanding. Stipulated for the first time in 1992 - the first of its kind in Italy and a starting point for all other Regional Conventions - it is a contribution to the functioning of structures with autonomy of management, organization and culture. This autonomy is an essential and indispensable characteristic of schools which are part of FISM.

In an *inter-institutional table* periodically convened by the *Istituzione*, and in which leaders of different providers participate, the integrated public system has a place of common sharing and planning of professional growth initiatives which are oriented to giving identity to the offer of education in the entire system, and to producing projects of horizontal continuity.

Starting with the centrality of children's rights, the city of Reggio Emilia's integrated public system has been built on shared reference points, which today we still consider to be essential values and responsibilities in choices to be realized this year and in the future:

- *Recognition of complementarity between the rights of children, of families, of teachers*. The existence and quality of the services is an objective that requires an attitude of co-operation capable of achieving greatest wellbeing for all parts.
- *The role of the Municipality* which directly manages a significant number of infant-toddler centers and preschools. This aspect is a guarantee of quality in the system, quality which becomes concrete in the production of and informing know-how which is a legacy of the city community, and in the capacity for research and innovation made concrete in experience.

  To this end, with this perspective, and thanks to international interest in experience of education in Reggio Emilia, over the years the city has created *Reggio Children s.r.l*; the International Center project; and today also proposes an educational Foundation. These are all choices and parts working to produce and give value to the investment in research and professional growth essential for quality in services as delicate as educational services, in which worker knowledge is central.
- *Community structures of education*, public and collective forms, focused on children's right to education, to respond to the needs of families. Therefore, places capable of keeping the levels of education and the social together, where collegiality, the co-presence of more than one adult

figure, numerically significant peer groups, and family participation, offer a guarantee of quality and of social control in education.

- *The flexibility* of opening hours in the services is regulated by the right of children and adults to become and to be a group: times of arrival and leaving are differentiated, to respond to different family needs, but also seeking to safeguard a nucleus of shared time in which children and adults give shape to educational experience, over time becoming a community that knows how to learn together. This is an objective and a value for children at all ages, from the first months of life.

Contained in the Protocol of Understanding are provisions for journeys of professional development.
In particular the "Thinking with the Hands" professional growth journey is offered to 0-6 educational institutions in the city [municipality] and province of Reggio Emilia.
It is offered as a resource for supporting and strengthening the local education system with the aim of promoting dialogue and exchanges of viewpoint between the different educational experiences.
Drawing on the legacy of knowledge and experience of the schools in the local territory, meetings are structured to include work in groups, interactive workshops, and the creation of observation tools and documentation.
(The courses are in collaboration with F.I.S.M. and authorized by the Emilia Romagna Regional Office for Schools Office XVI Territorial Area for the Province of Reggio Emilia with D.P. Protocol No. 7595 of 21 July 2015.)
Starting in October 2015 another activity was initiated: a programme of themed openings offered by the Documentation Centre to the whole of the public integrated system.
On these occasions the Documentation Centre offers part of its archive of materials which in terms of quantity and quality constitute an invaluable legacy of experiences and research, on the learning and culture produced in infant-toddler centres and preschools by children and adults, which is organised according to specific themes and presented with competent interlocutors (mentor teachers and atelieristas, International Centre staff, and *pedagogista*).

In 2003 the Municipality decided to entrust governance and co-ordination of 0-6 educational policy/politics to the **Istituzione Scuole e Nidi d'infanzia**, a dedicated municipal body with powers of autonomous management, administrative and pedagogical decision making.

The culture of childhood and education produced in Reggio Emilia's municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools is founded on the philosophy of a "hundred languages" which credits children, and women and men, with having differentiated possibilities of communication and elaboration and multiple possibilities for evolving as their genetic heritage; it identifies connections and solidarities between languages, between areas of knowledge, and between body and mind, as a rich wealth for learning and understanding. Experience of education in the infant-toddler centers and preschools is founded on an idea of knowledge as a process of individual construction taking place in encounter and interpretation of the cultural heritage produced by humanity during its history, and also on exchange between subjective points of views and theories; founded on the importance of inter-personal relations for the construction of individual identity and knowledge. Thinking together is conducive to elaboration of thinking that is open to research, and also to a mentality with a propensity for welcome and tolerance. Learning in groups produces knowledge, and social knowing, which is constructed as vital to an idea of citizenship in the present and future world.

"A day in an infant-toddler center" video

In Reggio Emilia's experience of education, a great deal of attention has always been given to *research, seen as a permanent attitude of thinking* in all the subjects involved in the educational project and as a primary strategy for formative professional growth. In fact, research and professional growth are constituent parts of the educational project.
"Either education is a situation of research and this research produces new pedagogy, or it provides an offering that is delivered to young children, subjecting them in a message which is already completely pre-fabricated and codified in some way."
(Loris Malaguzzi 1990)

Professional Development and Research

In Reggio Emilia's educational services, the professional development of staff is a crucial element for quality. Professional development, considered not as receiving given contents but rather as "self"-reflection shared in the working group and exchanges of knowledge, is a process that works towards cultural and social sensibility and elaboration of competencies and knowledge, some also operative, in the different professional roles. In this perspective, formation is closely fused with research, understood primarily as an *attitude in thinking* and a way of relating to children, colleagues and families on a daily basis. Research is an activity requested, encouraged and included as part of working hours for everyone working in the educational services, producing a very high quality in what is offered educationally and an important cultural heritage.

Professional development is characterized as a process aimed at building understanding and awareness of the meanings and methods of education, the central qualifying points of the educational project, and the specific competencies of the various professional roles. Ongoing professional development is both the right and duty of each individual and of the group, and is included and taken into consideration in the work schedule and organized collectively in terms of its contents, forms, and the methods of participation of each individual. Professional development is given priority within the daily activity of the centers and schools through the reflective practices of observation and documentation, with the weekly staff meeting being the primary occasion for in-depth study and sharing.

Professional development takes place synergistically between the staff meetings of the single preschools and infant-toddler centers, the system-wide professional development program of the educational services, and the educational and cultural opportunities provided at the local, national, and international levels.

Sensibility and capacity for reflection, self-reflection and research mature as part of an organizational culture proposing cultural scenarios and frameworks of meaning which make it possible to create relations between the particular and specific realities of one's own school or infant-toddler center, the system of services, the city (community), and the most up-to-date knowledge and elaborations of theory. Frameworks of meaning make it possible to bring the particular/local aspects of each single infant-toddler center and preschool into the more general context, valuing the attitude of building relations which is at the basis of knowledge processes and the feeling of belonging to a network of services and to a city that looks to and designs its future.

This attitude in the system of educational services is informed and made possible by the presence of a **Pedagogical Co-ordination**, by the plurality of professional profiles (teacher, atelierista, cook, assistant workers, pedagogista…) and experiences shared and compared in groups of colleagues gathered in update meetings that are included in the working hours, by parents' participation in the educational project, by relations of reciprocal listening between [city] administrators and the system of infant-toddler centers and preschools, by the national and international relations the system of infant-toddler centers and preschools has been capable of attracting, informing and maintaining over time. It is necessary for this willingness and attitude to find places and projects capable of catalyzing human and instrumental resources. For this we consider the contribution of a **diffused pedagogical system** to be fundamental, made up of the Pedagogical Co-ordination together with: the Center for Documentation and Educational research, the Video Center, and the Gianni Rodari Theatre Laboratory, which through their more general work with the city's integrated public system and their relations with the International Center also constitute a bridge between municipal Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers and these partners. This diffused pedagogical system informs the quality of daily life in the Schools, understood as shared research between educators, children and families.

Daily educational action in the schools and weekly update meetings therefore represent, for each educator, a primary occasion for deeper exploration, reflection and exchanges of viewpoint on experiences. These take place within the frame of an annual professional growth project the Pedagogical Co-ordination is responsible for formulating and conducting, constructed in relation with the formative opportunities and proposals of the International Center, and of other partners such as the University, the city's scholastic Institutions, and national and international research authorities etc. through the Center.

The educational design of *daily life*: A *key example* of in-service PD in recent years
Formative teachers in dialogue between reciprocity and relation

> *It is now known that each one of us acts as if we had inside us a theory or several theories. It is the same for teachers: whether they know it or not, they think and act according to personal theories gathered in histories it is not easy to re-trace. The problem is how these combine with the education of children, with the practice of relations, with the rules of work.*
>
> *Co-existence, and a communality of problems, generally make a good accord between behaviors easier, with modifications of these personal theories. This is what we have always sought to facilitate.*
>
> (*Loris Malaguzzi, 1993)*

This project is situated in the 2007/2009 two-year experimentation of new organisation of the *Istituzione* of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers, also related with the Loris Malaguzzi International Center, and places particular attention on the area of "the educational design of daily life".
Teachers, "professional developers in reciprocity and relation" in a diffused pedagogical service

The *orientation* of this two-year experimentation of the current organisation is being conducted with seeks to re-signify the idea of a *diffused pedagogical system*, which equips itself and researches into tools and resources for adding quality and updating a cultural vision, and a systemic transversal management of the *Istituzione* of preschools and infant-toddler centers; with the intention of:
- coordinating, diversifying, extending professional growth opportunities for an ever greater number of participants
- diversifying and giving potential to strategies
- being conducive to greater Exchange between experiences
- connecting different levels of communication

We know organisation must be understood as a value, that it asks for a coherent structure and requires choices/actions capable of structuring in this direction.
This must be positioned as a priority choice, a resource for the diverse elements of the educational project.
This diffused system has deep roots in our experience, going far back in time, but it presents today with an identity that is still becoming: we see its possibilities, we have only experimented with parts of it, are aware it is constructed as part of a process, and by the entire educational system.
The diffused pedagogical system is made up of:
- resources such as the pedagogical team, System Resources (Center for Documentation and Educational Research, the Gianni Rodari Theatre Laboratory, the Video Center, Remida) the mentor teachers in reciprocity, project groups, working groups/collectives, pedagogistas, staff in Director's offices, individuals in the connection tables with Reggio Children and other

institutional bodies;
- pedagogical tools such as documentation as part of experiences under way, times for updating/reflection, communication with families…
- strategies such as professional growth in the field, exchanges between experiences (within each group and with other realities), collegial work, the co-presence of staff with different educational backgrounds, the presence of the mentor teacher in preschools and infant-toddler centers for significantly long times, in order to activate the exchange of points of view and discussion, self-updating and development, periodical meetings for monitoring and verification of the various planning and connection tables …

In reality those things quoted as systems resources/elements, can also be seen as tools and strategies, depending on the level they take (a part/element, function, mode of relation, of communication…) and vice versa. However, what appears central to us is the effort of seeking to name them in order to recognise them, make them emerge from the indistinct, in an educational and professional development system so dense with relations, situations and choices that it is can be experienced as an ever-present background and scenery, its meanings and our perceptions of it flattened.
The thing that is binding is the "mandate" outlined by the pedagogical Coordination in the annual professional development project, which translates into periodical exchange with the Pedagogical Coordination itself (as well as the relationship with the pedagogista for each center), where we can continue to explore and to argue for *how we think of and practice this educational project today*.

The focus of experimenting with the role of reciprocally formative (mentor) teacher is on *learning to learn among adults in a perspective of reciprocal professional growth* between the formative teacher and the infant-toddler center/preschool class teachers, the atelierista and the pedagogista/s. As if to say: this offers us a dilated, amplified, higher potential situation for re-reading what has been learned, and the strategies for learning it: the work group/collective sees its capacity grow for being a place of constructing and circulating learning.

The objectives of the collaboration strive to:
- give value to and amplify the potential of newly employed teachers and pedagogisti
- reinforce the capacity for re-reading, listening and interpreting elements of complexity and possible difficulties identified in certain classes
- research into and define other kinds of meeting and communication with families
- contribute to formulating and constructing accompanying journeys towards elections of the City Childhood Council in 2008/2011
- accompany the inhabiting of spaces renewed and radically transformed in renovation work
- renew tools for documentation that hold memories and meanings as part of the process in journeys realized, documents put together in a conjoined effort between infant-toddler /preschool teachers and formative (mentor) teachers.

In a *reciprocal perspective*, the formative teacher is asked to

- make her experience available to others with the intention and choice of *highlighting the value of different qualities and identities* in the teachers and educational institutions involved in this two-yearly project of deeper exploration/experimentation;

- offer herself as an interlocutor dedicated to research into deeper knowledge on educational work in daily life, with a capacity for *re-reading daily contexts, actions, and ways of designing with greater awareness*, in order to recover and update quality in daily life;
- bring thoughts and ideas for re-reading experience, contributing to journeys of professional growth constructed as part of research into *diversified strategies for exchanges and dialogues*, in continuity with experiences that have been realized in recent years.

Reference contexts

Contexts in infant-toddler center and preschool classrooms are the "places", the foremost sites, of work and professional growth for formative (mentor) teachers, teachers and pedagogisti.

Formative teachers gather and formulate elements from these contexts, to give quality to educational experience in daily life, as they live out and experience proposals and situations with colleagues, children and families.

The intention is therefore to invest further in a way of formulating, interpreting and acting, based first and foremost on work in the field, from where possible contributions can be taken for groups exploring more deeply, or for specific professional growth journeys and projects.

In the light of this experimentation, certain distinctive qualities/conditions can be underlined in this experience of professional growth:

- co-presence, understood and practised in diffused, continuous, dilated periods of time in daily life, is conducive to an identification of "issues/topics/aspects" and being able possibly to re-read them in real time and/or close after the experience (with colleagues and the pedagogista)
- the possibility of bringing together definition of an [educational] proposal, seeing it carried out in daily practice conducted in different ways with the children, and being able to discuss it when the experience has been realized and documented.
- the possibility of creating a context for observation of adults (formative teacher and/or classroom teacher) to activate the exercise of interpreting the role of the adult, for example on questions she asks children, re-launches that take place during work, how she activates a group dynamic, how a learning context is presented…
- the possibility of giving greater potential to care taken with a pedagogical dialectic, creating conditions for extending the imagination, comparing different approaches, almost a border- crossing, going beyond the risk of application of models

These opportunities all belong historically to the cultural legacy and educational project of Reggio Emilia, and can take place during the normal course of life in an infant-toddler center or preschool, but they have greater potential and dedicated resources (people, times, places) in this experience.

Documentation as a tool for sharing and reflection

From the start of the experimentation it has been fundamental to keep a track and memory of meetings, issues and experiences in document/notebooks…, particularly focusing on the point of view of the mentor teacher. Tools shared in part during the year with colleagues in infant-toddler centers and preschools.

In collective evaluation meetings at the end of the school year, in certain situations an awareness emerged clearly of the fundamental need to organize times and tools from the first meetings in each center, for a shareable and shared documentation between formative (mentor) teachers, teachers

involved in experimentation, and their respective pedagogisti. This is true for projects in everyday life and education in general, but here with a particular focus on the learning between adults.

A tool must therefore be designed which can be constructed by more than one pair of hands, and with the work in progress.

It also seems very important to us that the formative teacher, the work group and the pedagogista reflect on their journey, and if possible produce documentation to compare with other centers involved in the project.

Towards a "starting pact"

Starting from reflections and considerations on last year's experience which include indications from teachers and pedagogisti, to define a "good starting pact" it is necessary to have a hypothesis for a map of meetings and strategies to choose as options depending on context, but not considered in strictly chronological order:

- meeting of the extended group of formative teachers and pedagogisti referring to the pedagogical coordinating team, to reflect on different modes of growing professionally, to define meanings together, and possible ways and times for "exchange" during the year; to define agreements for beginning this year's experience, with possible methodologies for an accord with schools/centers which are already known

- meeting with schools/centers already known to give continuity to the themes, nuclei, and areas discussed last year, and connect them with this professional growth project

- identify professional growth journeys and/or projects which can involve the formative (mentor) teachers in a relationship with the school/center in which presence is anticipated

- meeting of the formative (mentor) teachers with the pedagogista of each school/center involved

- meeting of the pedagogista with the school/center she coordinates to define which classrooms and areas the formative teacher could enter into dialogue with (the presence of the formative teacher is not necessarily included here). Parents in the City Childhood Council will be informed of these choices.

- meeting between teachers, pedagogisti, formative (mentor) teachers in the school/center before the experience begins (evaluate whether to do this with the project group, or with the whole collective group of workers to immediately create a sense of shared professional growth, experience of exchange, and discussion of points of view)

- meeting between all schools/centers involved in this year's journey with the pedagogistas and formative (mentor) teachers, to share the meaning and sense of this professional growth project (documentation, strategies for growth, times, ways and lengths of stay in the school/center…)

The role of the pedagogista

In Italy, the profession of *pedagogista,* or pedagogical coordinator, emerged during the 1970s, when a few municipalities (such as Bologna, Modena, Parma, and Pistoia, among others) began to open their own systems of first preschool and then infant-toddler education and care. This process spread throughout Italy, though slowly and unevenly; as a result, *pedagogisti* were found first and most commonly in northern Italy, with somewhat different definitions of their duties in the various locales.

The role of the *pedagogista* in Reggio Emilia is embedded in a system of relationships with teachers, other school staff, parents, citizens, administrators, public officials, and outside audiences.

The *pedagogista* cannot interact with just one part of the system and leave the rest aside, because that would injure the system. At this time, in 2016, there are 13 *pedagogisti* in the Pedagogical Coordinating Team who work collegially in their own working group; and also interface with the "collectives," or working groups in the schools (composed of teachers, *atelieristi*, mentor teachers, auxiliaries, cooks, and any other staff) within each school; and with administrators, officials, and public bodies who are stakeholders in the Reggio Emilia "project" of early childhood education.

Currently there are 10 "direct" *pedagogisti* who coordinate the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools. Each of us usually follows four different centers/schools (except for a few individuals who follow a smaller number, because they have other special assignments). Additionally, there is another "direct" *pedagogista*, who is responsible for the integration of children with special rights. Overarching these 11 *pedagogisti* are two cross-cutting, or "transversal," *pedagogisti*, who coordinate the pedagogical system throughout its entire complexity.

The Pedagogical Coordinating Team are responsible for guaranteeing the quality of early childhood services in the municipal system and ensuring they are consistent and unitary. The municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia do not have on-site directors. Instead, administrative and supervisory functions are distributed across the system. Such administrative functions as hiring teachers and staff, admitting children, and collecting parent fees take place in the central office. Then, within each center and school, the educators and staff work as a collective to provide high quality services. To accomplish that, they depend on their assigned *pedagogista* and the rest of the coordinating team for support in making choices and decisions and interacting with families and the public.

A Reggio pedagogista describes:

"All the Pedagogical Coordinating Team are often found out in the centers and schools, but we meet together weekly to discuss policy and problems related to the whole network of our early childhood services. We engage in a continuous exchange of information regarding what is happening within the schools, new advances in theory and practice, and political developments. All of us seek to be flexible, sensitive, open, and able to anticipate change--in the same way as is expected of teachers and staff in the system. We see ourselves as constantly transforming and growing professionally, through exchange with others. We are constantly striving for clarity and openness, one to another, and seeking to be forces for integration. In our work we interact with city administrators and employees of many kinds (elected officials, civil service employees, and representatives of cultural and scientific groups) whose suggestions must be pulled together. Furthermore, our presence is active inside the infant-toddler centers and preschools as, together with the teachers, we support and integrate the various aspects of the experience of young children (for example, the learning experience that traditional thinking would divide into separate compartments).

Because all members of the pedagogical team are active at different levels of the system, our competence is multifaceted. We bring a high level of flexibility and a "systemic point of view" to our work. For example, we work with colleagues in the political and administrative branches of city government, contributing to executive and managerial functions. Another very important part of our responsibilities is the in-service, ongoing professional development planned with teachers and staff. These days, individual *pedagogisti* join others to support a certain number of infant-toddler centers and preschools; and everyone also bears other specific responsibilities within the system. For example, one of the *pedagogisti* serves as liaison to the state-run (national) preschools in our city,

and another has the charge of keeping abreast of new communication technologies, and so on. Today, however, something even more is called for regarding professional development, due to the influx of new kinds of children and families, as well as the wave of newly-hired teachers, *pedagogisti,* and other staff, that have come into the Reggio Emilia early childhood system".

Paola Cagliari, the Director of the Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools, and Claudia Giudici, President of the *Istituzione Nidi e Scuole dell'infanzia*, have worked closely together to conceive and lead a transformation of the professional development system that they call a *"diffused pedagogical system."* The 'diffused system" of professional development is not designed for linear and top-down transmission, but instead creates many collegial zones of knowledge creation and exchange, where competences are deepened and enlarged in a forum that ideally promotes learning between older and younger generations, across job categories, around pedagogical issues of enduring concern. This *new* system amplifies tendencies of past years, and sharpens earlier emphases, yet also reveals the capacity of the Reggio early childhood system to evolve and adapt to new conditions and challenges.

The "diffused system" of professional development involves new arrangements of organization as well as of content focus. Organizationally, instead of a single *pedagogista* interfacing with each infant-toddler center and preschool, instead some professional development situations are created where two (or more) *pedagogisti* interact with small groups of teachers and mentor-teachers who may come from more than one school. In this way, new faces come into close contact with one another. The first focus on which they work is the feeling that they all belong; they are all entitled to express their own points of view and encouraged to offer their own experiences, while receiving ideas and learning from others. To reach this goal, they have to meet and encounter one another on repeated occasions, to establish trust and rapport.

Regarding content, the intellectual content of professional development is currently focused on "conceptual knots" that can be explored in collaboration across educational roles. The "knots" are those everyday yet enduring thorny issues of teaching, such as how and what to observe; how children interact and learn; how and what to observe; ways to encounter the zone of proximal development of children, colleagues, and parents; and how one becomes part of and contributes to the educational action. These topics represent a departure, at least temporarily, from a focus on long-term projects, such as have been described extensively in the many publications and exhibit themes prepared by the Reggio educators. Yet, the patrimony of that kind of *progettazione* and documentation is not to be lost; instead it will be kept alive through contemporary study and then revisiting with children some of those past themes, delving back for guidance into documentation preserved in the schools and the Documentation and Educational Research Center.

The ultimate intention is for the pedagogical team and teaching staffs to form, and inform, each other reciprocally. They will develop professionally together, supporting a mutual flow of exchange and learning. The heart of it is not in *when* or in *what size and composition* of groups the educators meet, but instead in *how* they meet the form and spirit of the encounters. If the encounters take place in a genuine and open-minded way, then the meetings can achieve the intent to value--equally and maximally--all the thoughts that everyone can bring or contribute. It is the responsibility and special charge of *pedagogisti* to give value to all the contributions, and then to integrate all the contributions of the protagonists in the conversation. They have to attune themselves and give value

to the thoughts and words of everyone, and they have to integrate those words to give them back to the group. This is parallel or similar to what they also do with children, as well as what they do with parents and families. If it is not done, the educators lose the possibility to construct participation. Indeed, this is the very basis of participation.

The International Center, professional growth, and research in the infant-toddler centers and preschools

The International Center project was born of the experience and cultural elaboration of the municipal Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools in the city Reggio Emilia. This experience and culture has been capable of speaking to the world and opening up new perspectives for education, and has the task of extending and evolving this culture through creating new relations, zones of interdisciplinary research and international dialogue.

The intrinsic inter-dependency between the infant-toddler centers and preschools and the International Center is expressed in the Convention between the *Istituzione* of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers and Reggio Children s.r.l. and the close synergy that exists between the International Center's activities and the Professional Growth Project of the *Istituzione*. This synergy values and highlights the human and intellectual qualities of other partners and has a concrete effect on possibilities for professional growth made available to staff, and the quality of activities at the International Center. The relation of close synergy on research and professional growth is actualized in the construction of inter-school and inter-disciplinary projects co-ordination groups which also benefit from the collaboration and presence of international, national and local partners and institutions with whom relations have been built over time, either by the *Istituzione* or by Reggio Children.

Pedagogical documentation, which is the tool and structure of practitioners' daily work with children in infant-toddler centers and preschools and in the weekly update meetings, also becomes the tool and structure of these journeys designed together, which in turn inform the contents of many of the International Center's activities. These are simultaneously occasions for professional growth for those enrolling in courses, weeks of professional development, visits, workshops etc. and self-professional growth for teachers, *atelieristi*, *pedagogisti* involved as speakers. The opportunity for *Istituzione* staff to benefit from occasions of professional growth offered by the Center to local and International participants is also highly interesting.

Attachment B1
"The Big Fly and the Little Fly" infant toddler-center documentation

Attachement B2
"The Ring-around-the-Rosy Game" preschool documentation

Annual Professional Development Projects 1999 - 2013
Educational Contents and Strategies.

1999-2000

We consider professional development to be a place for the prefiguration of action, as elaboration and research from the starting point of action, as the conjoined process of negotiation of inter-subjective meanings between self and a plurality of persons.

The opportunities identified in this project, take into consideration a kind of professional growth realized both through a way of working which is "self-reflexive and dialogical learning", and also through the more usual and simple "transmission".

This cultural orientation, based on socio-constructivist premises, and which runs through every aspect of our experience in all its aspects, considers both "information contents" and above all "how" these are used, that is to say, re-interpreted and re-invented, generating new knowledge, to be important and complementary with each other. They are two very different modes of professional development, and in general are used for different objectives: the first for obtaining results of adaptation or divergence compared with pre-formed contents; the second as conducive to "constructive" comprehension of the "self as learner"

2001-2002

Professional development strategies keep design thinking as a reference point structuring both theory and practice. They highlight the value of interaction, welcome and promote subjective and inter-subjective aspects of learning, direct attention both to the outcomes and processes of professional development, introduce reciprocity as a further element for awareness, and access documentation in a form which makes adult processes visible. To us these strategies seem pertinent to today's challenge: that of increasing our knowledge of knowledge processes in order to have access to better strategies for learning and interpreting one's self and the "world". The design of professional development, which stems from this choice of framework, is structured as design that, during the course of the development action itself, increases its capacity for supporting the questions, organization and awareness emerging during the journey.

2003-2004

The choices orienting this professional growth project have been made both in continuity with recent professional development projects working on a re-reading of our identity, and also in relation to emerging issues in contexts internal and external to the system of schools and centers, so as to weave *continuity* with *change*.

Key words in the professional development projects of recent years, *identity, memory,* and *future,* are cultural filters through which we have chosen to continue viewing the different themes considered during professional development journeys.

These cultural filters give meaning to the dimensions of ethics, politics and society before technical and pedagogical ones, to our idea of school and of education, they require that we listen to the contemporary world and choose to want to be in a relation with our historical and cultural context.

We believe that "*thinking in historical terms*" in Gregory Bateson's words, is a trait we should continue to inform and exercise in our profession, and one of the objectives of this professional development project.

On a parallel level this attitude also requires us to learn to look at reality in terms of looking at the *relations and processes*, not as an element to take and reproduce. That we take an interpretative paradigm which uses connection and interdependency, problematizes the links between forms of

knowledge, promotes and sustains the attitude of working on strategies, that poses questions not answers.

The "*Crossing Borders" Conference*, and the way we conceived and organized it, seems to us to have been an extraordinary opportunity we offered ourselves, intentionally, of possibilities related to these objectives.

2004-2005

As infant-toddler centers and schools we are part of a journey of research and transformation on a daily basis. It has been a forty year journey which we tried to synthesize in the *"Crossings Borders" conference* and in the *Traces of Identity* journeys in particular (with an awareness of the provisional, and always in wide-reaching inter-disciplinary dialogue with other educational and cultural experiences) accomplishing an operation of re-cognition necessary to be able to continue a re-configuration of our identity, today as we move towards reinforcement of our institutional identity and the macro-system structure (the Institution of Preschools and Infant-toddler centers, Reggio Children, Friends of Reggio Children Association) which has been quoted on several occasions while presenting the "Malaguzzi" Center.

It seems to us the International Center is currently a point of arrival for culture and creativity on this journey.

Obviously the International Center will also become something other, but we feel it has roots in this history, which began long ago but is always ready to renew. The Center will be a new place, to be created, to be inhabited, which will gather certain needs of the infant-toddler centers and preschools and will develop them, these and others, offering new tools, stimuli, and opportunities to us and to the city, to the world. It will be another piece in the mosaic and a contribution to the idea of an educating city.

How might a professional development system be configured, diffused and articulated around several poles of experience? Poles which are the "Malaguzzi" Center, the infant-toddler centers, Reggio Children as a credited body for professional development, the University, other levels of schooling?

These questions, interrogatives and tests will accompany us during the course of the year in appointments and occasions on different levels. They are exercises in prefiguration that we are called on to make.

We think the professional development project could take two key words and therefore two concepts, simultaneously as both framework and content. Words we feel to be particularly meaningful for our identity and found in the traits of the International Center itself; particular traits, among the most subversive of our project, which have spoken to the world and which we feel to be at great risk: *the culture expressed by childhood* and *the hundred languages*.

The two concepts, very closely related - the culture expressed by childhood and the hundred languages - chosen from several original concepts in our project, are felt by us to be particularly significant today because they re-propose an idea off culture as the construction of shared meanings, re-propose an idea of school that supports, develops, produces, and gives visibility to the culture of childhood and mankind.

A school which "does not mirror, does not copy, does not duplicate the world, does not adapt, does not close it eyes, does not want complicity with conformist attitudes" but situates itself in a dialogue with the world because it school is itself culture, and not a preparation for culture.

In fact, this metaphor, disruptive in our experience, brought a highly innovative point of view, which asked to break with the culture of separation (of disciplines, of learning, of human beings) and we feel it is still capable of interpreting new situations today, ways of seeing the world many authors offer us in relation to the challenges of today's society: from Bateson's *patterns that connect*, to ecological knowledge, to Morin's pertinent knowledge…

For us it was and is a unifying idea for declaring our project. Not the only one possible, we have used and taken as a focus, on different occasions, the ideas of participation, documentation, etc. In a project which thinks of itself in systemic terms this is a natural process. The idea (the theory) of the hundred languages has promoted quality of context and the increased capacity of adults to stay with children, because it is a metaphor for a kind of knowledge that is generated by multiple roots, interconnects them, and develops them in inter-disciplinary forms.

The fact that the hundred languages was brought into the schools at the same time as the atelier often leads to a narrowing of interpretation to this dimension. In reality the metaphor also contains an idea of knowledge holding within it a multiplicity of subjective and inter-subjective points of view, and therefore making participation a strategy and a structure. As we were saying: the culture of the hundred languages is not only an expressive or a disciplinary approach, it is an ethic of the necessity for a plurality of points of view and cultures in the construction of knowledge.

It is an ecological vision, because it is more respectful of the nature of human beings and of the world, a more circular and equal vision (without superiority or hierarchy of one aspect over another) and therefore it also democratic. Every act of knowledge is active and creative and holds within it the uniqueness of each one of us. (se è una citazione aggiungere references)

In the interaction between languages, in encounter between things that were separate because they belonged to different universes, new languages and new learning are generated, new processes of creativity and innovation.

In this sense the hundred languages were, and are constantly, a cultural provocation not only on a theoretical level but also on the level of practices.

Therefore, in our transition towards the creation of the Malaguzzi Center we feel the desire to renew our commitment on these two concepts, to hand them back to ourselves, as the framework of values for our professional development work.

2006-2007

Internal professional development is again connoted as a fundamental place for reflecting, self-evaluating, and evaluating the quality and quantity of learning opportunities we offer children, families and ourselves, and further, for increasing our awareness on research, the tension to knowledge which must characterize our work, and which makes it possible to progressively construct a sense of belonging while also taking possession of knowledge and competencies. Each work group's choice, together with the pedagogista, will simultaneously evaluate two perspectives:

- identification of a single dominant theme among those offered for deeper exploration, as an emerging project in the center/school during the current school year
- identification of more than one journey, among those offered in workshops and theme meetings, and which are useful for increasing connections between classroom experiences realized with the children in daily life, and increasing the adults' professional competency.

Many of the themes proposed are continuous with last year (for example "Research into continuity", "Cultures in Dialogue", "Gardens of Taste", "Ray of Light", the Exchanges Project" etc.) conceived as they were to continue over several years to allow and enact meaningful design procedure, re-cognition, and documentation shared among more than one work group, and related to the specific nature of different professional roles.

New themes stand by the side of these, having emerged from clear requests for deeper exploration, together with workshops and other professional development strategies (e.g. "detached and replaced" teachers, and other forms of "tutorship") which are still partly being experimented with, thinking particularly about our newly employed staff and/or staff with only an annual contract.

The task awaits of developing a second chapter for the "Hundred Languages of Children" exhibition (to enrich the edition that has now been travelling the world for 26 years) with experiences that are most representative of our history, identity and today's changes (e.g. Children Art and Artists, Dialogues with Places etc.). We are thinking of also using this challenge as a professional development strategy and resource with schools/centers which participated directly in working on the documented experience, and also with those that followed different journeys.

2007-2008

Priorities identified are:

- creating connections in the system both on the level of values and on the level of organization, internally and with the city;
- Increasing awareness of the effectiveness of different professional development strategies and make them practicable in the system's different places, using all resources to their best for the system by encouraging exchanges;
- Differentiating professional development opportunities in relation to people's different levels of competency and experience;
- Creating favorable conditions for reflection on our daily action in relation to broader social and conceptual scenarios.

2009-2010

In 2010 the Professional Development Project is structured around three transversal aggregates of themes:
- the political-cultural-pedagogical identity of early childhood services;
- conceptual and operative tools for collegial work and design thinking;
- contexts of receiving and Welcoming.

These transversal and aggregate themes are in-context choices and seem the most appropriate today among many possible ones, to make a system of the distinctive traits in an educational project, which through re-sharing can make it possible to have important and necessary working conditions, sensibilities, and forms of knowledge for the quality of experience and learning in adults and children, and for innovation in the system.

The three aggregate and transversal themes are organized in a feasibility plan which includes an initial planning of times and possible interweaving, including a restitution of the work produced, which will be presented at the end of the year on three occasions of professional development open to all infant-toddler centers and preschools.

The political cultural and pedagogical identity of the infant-toddler centers and preschools and of the integrated public system. The ecology of the system of infant-toddler centers and preschools and of the integrated public system is founded on a culture of sustainability. By culture of sustainability we mean the educational project's capacity to express quality today which is perceivable and culturally propulsive and at the same time constitutes a spendable legacy for the future; and the capacity to interweave and balance the different political, administrative, cultural, social and pedagogical reasons which shape the system of infant-toddler centers and preschools, in a systemic vision threading through all action and formulation.

Conceptual working tools for collegial work and design thinking.
This transversal aggregate theme touches on another fundamental element of the educational project: collegiality capable of choosing and of self-planning. The proposal is to return to systematizing collegial journeys and tools, re-implementing working tools and concepts that belong or have belonged to the way of working in infant-toddler centers and preschools.'
Aware that organizing work is always also a cultural choice that influences the quality of the contexts we work in, and therefore of adult and children's learning.

Contexts of Welcome
We propose a closer focus on a value of our educational experience and an event: the welcoming of children and their families at the beginning of the school year.
How does a school understood as a system organize for welcoming? A theme which is offered as a context for reflection, that is part of life in infant-toddler centers and preschools, and which takes on its own particular specific emphasis at the start of the school year.

2010-2011
This year we are proposing a professional growth project which is a declaration of intents, which by starting with certain premises and identifying points of arrival and horizons, describes initial developments but not the whole of developments.
Malaguzzi said:
"We like to think of teachers as explorers who use maps and compasses: they know the directions but they know that every year the terrain, the climate, the seasons and the children add new ones and that the orders of times and problems can change. The destinations are important and must not be lost from sight; but more important is how and why we arrive at them".
From this perspective we have tried to conceive this year's project with a strategy of thought and mode which seeks to welcome and declare the different needs, thoughts and critical issues gathered, exchanged and worked on last year, but which have roots going much further back.
We have therefore tried to welcome a socio-constructivist idea of knowledge, which places emphasis on the nature of process of knowledge itself, with a strategic structure interpreting the professional development project in a dynamic of process, and going beyond the idea of juxtaposing different projects, all oriented to contributing to an increase of learning and experience, but often experienced and practised as separate and autonomous.

What framework for the professional development project this year?
The first references the new maps in our city, new city maps at a complex time characterised by great economic difficulty, and by disorientated culture and values.

Education as a strategic competency in the city is the scenario, the framework requiring choices and development of at least three key words, which are not new but new in this context, and which we already spent a long period of time on last year: internationality, quality, and sustainability.

Quality was declared in the May seminar of the city childhood councils as a choice in organisation, environment, time and persons which express solidarity with children's knowledge processes. As the right of children and adults to see they are recognised in their life and relational contexts.
It is necessary today to make new agreements on which elements are non-renounceable, the foundation of quality, the central kernel on which to elaborate an idea of sustainability today.

Sustainability understood as the capacity for simultaneously keeping in mind the political, social, economic, cultural and pedagogical reasons that shape people's rights, and the capacity to project into the future, that is to say, maintain and nourish the legacy for future generations.

Today, with the new economic and financial context of individual citizens, but above all of public administrations, we would add a fourth word: the right to wellbeing, not as the individual right to seek out happiness and a life of ease, but as the right of a community to be capable of giving itself a politics of equity, solidarity, care and tutelage of all citizens, of promoting quality of life for all. A right to wellbeing in which educational services are an integral, substantial and non-optional part.
In this frame the choice is theme the key words in a statement of overall design which is to say, in the relation between services and the city.

Intents until December:

- Re-discuss the tools for [assessing] contributory fees and service access criteria that give concrete form to the right to access education which is a right of all children with a mixed commission of parents and teachers. This journey is conceived in relation to the City Childhood Councils whom we ask to read and interpret the needs and particularities of their local territory through an analysis of their own users. This reading [interpretation] can become a tool for representatives of infant-toddler centers and preschools making up the Commission.
We believe this reading can also acquire new elements in the month of November in meetings of the Social Territorial Poles and Territorial Teams of *Officina Educative* [a municipal educational service related to middle and secondary schools].

- Formulate proposals with School Union Representatives for sustainability in the services network through a joint commission which we request to produce a hypothesis by November to discus in school collectives and with City Childhood Councils.

- Activate debates on the services which act as occasions for raising awareness, and re-constructing a culture of childhood and of services, and inscribing this intention in:
- Class meetings
- Birthdays of infant-toddler centers and preschools
- Occasions I the city (conference of the National 0/3 Group)
- Study Groups to the city
- Start a professional development process – through the theme of welcome – of identifying conceptual and strategic nodes of practicing design.

How can the dynamic of professional development as process we are constructing, contribute to these intentions?

The contribution lies in the consideration that communication processes activated in a dynamic of socio-constructivism (with children, between adults during professional development, in class meetings, in the construction of convergence and consensus on levels of management and policy/politics) have the same nature and require the same tools and awareness. Therefore, we expect productive contaminations and will work towards these intentionally.

In this sense we anticipate the work of all system resources to support and integrate these processes, through a process of professional development with a pedagogical coordinating team extended to include the diffused pedagogical system, in accordance with the processes and themes agreed, and with the intention of giving greater quality and instrumentation to the interventions of these resources.

The diffused pedagogical system will dedicate more to reflection and make this more visible. This could mean fewer meetings in the infant-toddler centres and preschools, but greater quality and a multiplicity of presences.

We will give a written form to this declaration of intents/dynamic of process in an open form of narrative in construction, which welcomes the provisional and the evolving. A working tool which flows, and is more coherent with constructivism, which we commit to producing as rapidly as possible.

What we are proposing and asking of you, is to form a pact of trust and reciprocity together.

Trusting each other reciprocally in a declared process of inter-dependency and co-emergence we believe to be necessary in this social and historical moment in time, and which requires design, a perspectival way of seeing, and competency on the part of all protagonists in the educational project.

Some points for reflection:
It is a consolidated attitude in our experience, periodically and as part of a process, to gather and welcome evaluations on the effectiveness of journeys and strategies adopted in the annual professional development project, and their coherency with professional development needs.

What is new is that we are seeking a new agreement of strategy, shifting the vision of a professional development project based above all on the quality of projects with a theme, to a vision that places at its center the fundamental issues of the dynamic process of professional growth itself.

This means being capable of "making disequilibrium" in our professional development system in order to equip ourselves with better tools for conceptually processing the experiences themselves, and acquire design thinking with greater precision and clarity, through issues which are transversal [thread through everything].

Derrida [notes that] in order to be able to reconstruct different points of reference it is necessary to deconstruct what exists, in the sense of showing what lies behind certain thoughts, choices and behaviours. This means creating spaces – mental, organisational, and social – in order to be able to think, to distance ourselves from pre-formed thinking, stereotyped formatted visions which no longer get reviewed, interrogated or discussed.

We have re-read [re-analysed] our attitude to organising professional development, from a point of view of giving greater value to our legacy of experience - which is large but not always immediately accessible - through different ways/ modes of implementation and bringing the legacy to interplay with perspectives for the future. It is a rhetorical point to highlight that "gaze" is central

in viewing at this legacy, therefore how we are capable of reading it, regenerating it, in order to interpret elements, concepts, distinctive traits…

The last point in this introduction, perhaps the most of-the-moment and requiring our greatest effort, is the idea of the structure itself of the professional development strongly conceived as a dynamic of process.

This updating in the idea of professional development structure requires a map of strategy and procedure: places for exchange and times and strategies made possible by these places go together, they give shape and emphasis to the structure itself.

All this must be coherent with our socio-constructivist ideas.

We are attempting a structure contained which can be part of design thinking and at the same time as doing this also manifests and makes explicit the design thinking itself.

Keys for interpreting the map of procedure and strategy:
- greater weaving of local and global (…)
- encouraging an attitude of local and daily research (…)
- giving greater potential to exchanges of points of view and viewpoints on (…)

We know the desire to be capable of reading and review experiences is very diffused, and this is confirmed during those time when situations of exchange and discussion are activated, such as the inter-collectives at the end of the school year, or meetings at the start of this school year, or inter-class meetings, places in which it is possible to give value to the contribution of each person.

What also emerges is a desire to go beyond the idea of presenting a project with the children which is usually understood and conceived as something finished and complete, and to privilege an attitude of exchange of viewpoints/discussion/dialogue on central nodes, fragments, or concepts that emerge and thread through the entire process nature of projects and daily life.

We would like this same documentation material to be a pretext for arguing the different concepts and levels of the issues (materials on welcome could open to what it is we understand by welcoming contexts, what qualities we imagine, or would like to have, in order to define a good infant-toddler room/3-year-old classroom/idea of a standard classroom; whether what emerges in individual talks with parents are included in them and if so how; what idea of the authoritativeness of this educational experience the spaces; if they "speak" about us and our roles as educators and educating adults,…)

We are thinking of a way for understanding the shape of our actions, and of experiences we have, a kind of meeting that calls for autonomously exercising our own mind, calls for a capacity to think and argue which takes into account insecurity/incompleteness and reflexivity.

This means to activate an interwoven and inter-dependent consideration of the facts and place the emphasis on professional development and self-development, through relations, in process, and in the field.

Given these conditions of professional development each person is called to actively participate in order to have more familiarity with the structures of their knowledge in order to structure their own competencies in relation to the children's learning, as well as issues posed by families…. What I am learning (not merely what the children are learning, their potential and possible knowledge structures), each person protagonist of their own research into knowledge, of their own journey of professional growth, in a relation with, and in exchanges of viewpoint with… in a dynamic of flow,

but intentional and also partially planned.

Map of strategies and procedures

The professional development journey is for and with the diffused pedagogical system, the pedagogical coordinating team, system resources, and mentor teachers, as well as for the staff of infant-toddler centres and preschools.

We can remind ourselves of the many different places of strategy: collective meetings [whole center/school staff], inter-collective meetings [several collectives together], inter-class meetings, class meetings, extended pedagogical coordination team meetings, project group meetings, city childhood councils and inter-council meetings, commissions, public city meetings, national and international conferences, study groups, innovative projects such as the city ateliers, and initiatives with the paediatric, and mother and child wards of the hospital… the pedagogical coordinating team with the diffused pedagogical system (who accompany the year's structure).

It is also of particular value to consider the presence of different professional roles co-participating (teachers, cooks, pedagogistas, auxiliary staff, parents, Reggio Children staff, citizens, dialogue with experts…) who bring different areas of learning to a broader vision of the issues and emerging points, to describe an idea of conjoined professional growth.

The commitment is to make a map of connections between places and ideas emerge, a map of strategies and procedures, and not only the map of the times in our diaries.

Therefore, we are not focusing on the number of the places, but on flows between ideas that connect different contexts, how not to stay on the level of mere professional development and what can be done so that information becomes material to argue and that really takes contribution from others. To give partial visibility to this level of connections we imagine the monthly calendar to be a useful structure, which the Documentation Center will take of, and which contains the part detailing centralised initiatives, but awaits completion with the initiatives of each infant-toddler center and preschool.

The strategy we propose seems particularly appropriate for welcoming each person's questions and interpretations. In order to be truly advantageous these meetings require us to behave in a way aimed at being more effective and capable: what we intend to talk about should be clearly identified, how we are going to talk about it, emerging aspects which seem relevant should be noted down, and it would opportune to leave the meeting with at least some common issues to take up with the children, and/or with colleagues.

In this sense the meeting is an "informed meeting", of inter-dependence between different competencies and different professional roles in the collective and/or groups of classes. These competencies allow us to engage our thinking, our thoughts and to extend our arguments; they bring us closer to an attitude of research.

We are also working to give an open-ended form to the writing of the professional development project, a form that is capable of welcoming introductory reports presented in contexts such as the extended pedagogical coordinating team, as well as documents "in process" tracking the process-nature of the journey and the notes of each collective. A form that will remind us of the possibility of consultation which not necessarily is linear and progressive.

We know journeys are beginning in specific ambits, but not separate -management/political, pedagogical/political – conceived as part of a unifying strategy and thought that will help to outline the declaration of intents of each infant-toddler center and preschool.

A the same time political and management reflection has begun on the sustainable quality of our network of services, attentive to possible action for greater rationalisation of costs, possible updating of types of facilities, and has gone as far as looking at themes of family access and contributions (time for inter-school council meetings, school council meetings, commissions and class meetings should be included) and pedagogical political reflection on choices in the design of curriculum and daily life.

Other opportunities of equal validity are connected with these macro-zones of thinking, and are re-offered as areas of professional development; we are thinking of national and international study groups, birthdays in centers and schools, the work sites….

During the second part of the year, starting in January, this vision will be extended out to certain deeper explorations, areas of research that will undergo synthesis and implementation with the active participation of the Documentation Center, which will work to re-signify certain professional development projects realised in recent years and make them accessible.

2012- 2013

The professional development project will be highly centralized during the first part of the year, and then updated after January including a projective and interactive dynamic in the changes.

Regarding professional development journeys, we are proposing choices that take account of the different critical notes and suggestions that emerged last year in various evaluation situations as work was proceeding: evaluations to do with both strategy and content relates to the experience of each infant-toddler center and each school.

As Paola Cagliari has underlined, the specific quality of our educational services, i.e. the infant-toddler centers and preschools

- is in their nature of being workshops of management, policy, culture, education and pedagogy, in a relation with the International Center and the city, with ways of seeing that are open to national and international dimensions. It is in this vision of being political and pedagogical workshops, with a declared and explicit attitude of research, that we position our choice of reflecting on the idea we have of curriculum and the idea of curriculum we are capable of expressing, from infant-toddler center to preschool, projecting towards primary school.

The invitation we are making is to manifest and join curriculum with the research attitude we know to be a pervasive and focal point of design thinking. We would like to make this attitude more explicit and try to redefine our indications, make the choices of the educational project more explicit in terms of work with the children, professional development of staff, the educational environment, daily life and aspects of management and organisation.

An objective of the institution is increased awareness of specific qualities in the curriculum of our educational project, and we have certain professional development objectives:

- an increase in the attitude of problematizing and arguing connections between different [areas] of knowledge, in order to renew our mental imagery and generate ways of putting learning and practice together (…) We are speaking of an idea of situated knowledge, knowledge on the move, where the specific object of knowledge is placed in context and seen in a more complex situation. This attitude stimulates us to go beyond what is generally proposed in traditional schooling which works with knowledge in disciplines and prevalently references principles of organisation such as accumulation, separation into disciplines, juxtaposition of information;
- increase our capacity for circulating educational, cultural, management and pedagogical intents with parents, with the city, and on a more general level in a national and international panorama.
The parts involved include all infant-toddler centers and preschools, the pedagogical coordination, the diffused pedagogical system (mentor teachers, systems resources). Times and strategies will see each infant-toddler center and preschool operatively working internally in September and October to understanding how they are situated in relation to a specific chosen content or conceptual aspect, belonging to an experience they have realized and which is either documented or documentable, and which can offer times for exchange, argumentation and discussion, with the intention of getting possible re-launch to emerge (…)

Each person should understand how they are positioned in the professional development project. This might mean including some inter-collective update meetings during the initial months, in which each center/school's closer focus on certain particular qualities of its existence can be shared, with renewed possibilities for exchanges of points of view with other interlocutors.
This work dynamic has been intentionally proposed on several occasions over recent years and has always been appreciated. Seeing and discussing material which is "in progress", in a conjoined way with other professional profiles, requires each center/school to focus more clearly on interesting issues for themselves and others, issues that have perhaps only been partially investigated, and identify possible proximal zones, possible aspects to explore more deeply.
In November a meeting is planned, reserved for the system and perhaps in the form of a conference, related to internal choices in the infant-toddler center/ preschools system, and this will be an occasion for sharing choices, desires, priorities and re-launches that each center and school has identified through a mapping and re-reading of its own experience, and seeking to underline qualities we believe can give shape to curriculum in Reggio Emilia's infant-toddler centers and preschools.

It is our intention to make a journey of professional development starting in September, shared by the Pedagogical Coordination and the diffused pedagogical system, taking documentation from the late 1980s, and documentation still in the initial stages of interpretation, in order to re-analyze the structure of their design and identify possible proximal zones and re-launches for today.
We can already imagine certain traits that are part of our way of doing school and making curriculum:
- central importance of the idea of "situated" knowledge – because knowledge we reason about in infant-toddler centers/preschools takes also considers the context and reality of which it is a part - and how we argue this knowledge
- what we understand by inter-disciplinarity, and trans-disciplinarity, how we make it part of our findings, and their relation with the hundred languages.
- the central importance of adults proposing an attitude of teaching/learning, which is a responsibility we enact every day in our educational work; an adult capable of asking questions

about how children learn, and about learning to learn; an adult capable of making manifest their hypotheses, choices, and changes in knowledge.

- ways in which we are capable of interrogating the issue of time, how each child's learning changes over the year, over three years, in the relation with their group, how we are capable of keeping track of this

- what idea of documentation we practice and how we are capable of arguing it. What we entrust to documentation: it is memory, narrative, communication, map of concepts, it is a tool for evaluation and self-evaluation.

The *Istituzione* of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers is entrusted with the governance and co-ordination of the city's 0-6 educational policy/politics, and therefore with the Integrated Public System.

The *Istituzione* must therefore give particular attention to actions aimed at promoting horizontal and vertical continuity.

We propose the idea of CONTINUITY as a space of public debate leading those involved to make explicit their cultures, their reference values and strategies, their expectations and objectives, to name them and explain the reasons for them. It is an idea of continuity not as standardization or adapting one to the other, but rather as a culture of dialogue and the exchange of viewpoints; an idea of continuity capable of causing "border-crossings" and shared good practices and references

Attachment B3
Degree Course in Primary Education Sciences academic years 2007-2016
The Approach of Reggio Emilia's municipal scuole dell'infanzia/preschools

The participation of parents and the city: a continuous dialogue
Participation is the value and strategy describing the way children, educators and parents are part of the educational process, generating and informing feelings and a culture of solidarity, responsibility and inclusion. Indications of the Municipal preschools and Infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia

In Reggio Emilia's experience of education, the infant-toddler centers and preschools are conceived as contexts of permanent interaction between three protagonist subjects: children, educators, families, where each person brings their own expectations and their own rights, and who find listening, welcome and the possibility of development in the educational services, in an intense weave of formative and participatory relations and processes.

Participation is an opportunity offered to all parents. Through participatory occasions each parent can be more informed about their child, feel they are part of a group sharing an experience of education, have more knowledge about the infant-toddler center/preschool and projects underway, also through their direct involvement.

Participation is a way of experiencing education in the school's daily life, it is an educational strategy that becomes constructed and lived in reciprocal welcoming, in encounter, and in communication, day after day.

The daily experience of learning and cohabiting which children live out in school is most certainly important for reinforcing the idea that education is a commons in the family: because it is a non-renounceable condition for the exercise of the fundamental rights of the person, because it is for all.

Participation is a responsibility every parent is invited to take, as a caring for educational experience on different levels which amplify out from individual educational facilities into city politics.

Parent participation already begins with the opportunity to visit the spaces of infant-toddler centers and preschools during the enrolment period, an occasion when initial dialogue is opened and activated with teachers and context, where projections, dreams and desires can be compared with others.

After a place has been assigned, before the child begins to attend, parents have an individual conversation with teachers and a meeting with parents who will make up the class group.

Here a world of relations, participation and exchange opens up with teachers, cooks and auxiliary staff, with the other parents, opening up to the possibility of knowing and understanding the educational project of the infant-toddler center and preschool, and of weaving it with the family's educational project.

The first participatory and group dimension offered to children and parents is the class, where meanings of rules of life and school can be constructed together or shared, and this allows people, adults and children, to feel part of a group, In dedicated spaces presented at the beginning of the school year teachers in each class construct and display a plurality of forms of daily communication aimed at parents and families, as tools for deeper communication with their children and for being informed.

In class meetings and individual conversations with parents, the experiences with children are recounted by teachers and included in a broader context of project journeys, which are enriched with parents' contributions.

In every infant-toddler center and preschool a City Childhood Council is active: a participatory body made up of parents, teachers, pedagogistas and citizens, democratically elected every three years, and which each year becomes renewed through the interest and willingness of new parents.

The role of parents in the City Childhood Council, together with teachers, is to be promoters of initiatives, meetings, and projects which have the intent of involving everyone frequenting the infant-toddler center/school, and to offer the local territory and the citizenship an opportunity for meeting with the culture of childhood and the educational services.

The City Childhood Councils find a place for connection, exchange and the shared design of projects in the Inter-Council meetings.

Inter-Council meetings are convened and presided over by the President of the Institution who together with the city directors and political leaders, informs and consults parents, citizens, and school workers on choices related to the city's educational services.

Participatory Occasions/opportunities
Occasions that can be enjoyed individually:
- the daily communication that takes places on the teacher's part simultaneously with managing her class group of children
- individual conversations it is possible to request of teachers at any time, when possible outside direct working hours with children
- displayed documentation

Occasions aimed at all families, for growing together in educational competencies
- class meetings
- work afternoons or evenings
- theme evenings for deeper understanding, with experts, or people bringing experience
- festivities or entertainment (usually connected with themes of children's work)
- meetings in small groups of parents for exchange and comparisons of points of view on the themes of education and care
- theme meetings or events open to the public
- occasions promoted by the International Center
- exhibitions and displays

Occasions for parents expressing their willingness to enter the City Childhood Council
On the level of single school/centers
- meetings of the City Childhood Council
- meetings of Work Commissions or on the deeper examination of certain themes
- participation in welcoming study groups coming from different countries around the world to visit Reggio Emilia's educational experience

On the level of the city system
- city-wide Inter-Council meetings
- meetings of commissions for the deeper exploration of themes
- meetings of the Dialogue on Schools Group

A further possibility for participation on the city level is offered by Dialogues on School - a group of citizens, parents and teachers promoting initiatives related to school and educational policy/politics

The testimony of parents
The question was asked: "Why participate? What do we take home with us as parents?"

- The infant-toddler centers and schools are places where ties are created, where it is possible to play a protagonist role.
- One of the few possibilities for interacting and doing things together.
- In this sense participating is an opportunity.
- Participation is an exception to the mechanism of delegating, this is a space where one can do something more.
- For parents there may be experiences of dissonance at the beginning between their expectations and what is offered, however it can be affirmed that only by participating can participation's value be understood.
- It is the school's responsibility to construct a cultural debate where each person, by participating, is at the same time both tool and beneficiary.
- But it is the responsibility of each person to cultivate participation over time, to make it grow, and to give it continuity.

Panda municipal infant-toddler center

The Panda municipal infant-toddler center opened in August 1979 in a purpose built center constructed by Reggio Emilia municipality, based on an architectural design shared with Loris Malaguzzi, architects, pedagogical co-ordinators, teachers, and parents.

Certain variations were introduced compared with infant-toddler center built with similar structures in previous years (Arcobaleno, Alice, Bellelli) and these represented significant innovation in the architecture of educational services for children aged 0-3 in the 1970s.

The Panda infant-toddler center is characterised by visible circulation and visual interaction between spaces; a centrally positioned atelier and kitchen which declare a non-hierarchy of value and organisation between the spaces dedicated to care and to education; an internal garden underlining a strong continuity between indoors and outdoors; connections between classrooms and other spaces coherent with the idea of small children who from the earliest age are interested in and capable of constructing relations with spaces, materials, variations in environment, people, adults and children.

Currently the Panda infant-toddler center has 70 children divided into 4 groups (by their age in September)

11 children in the youngest group aged 3-9 months

15 children in the second group aged 9-18 months

19 children in the third group aged 18-24 months

25 children in the fourth group aged 24-36 months

School hours

7.30-16.00 with the possibility of extended time from 16.00 to 1830 for parents requesting this for work reasons.

The center is open from 1 September to 30 June with two weeks break for Christmas holidays and one week at Easter. The teaching and auxiliary staff begin work one week earlier in order to care for the curating of spaces, interviews, and a meeting with new families. They finish their working around the first ten days of July in order to take care of re-ordering the center spaces.

All educational staff (eleven educators) work a 36 hour week of which 31.5 are frontal with children and 4.5 are for preparing materials, designing (the day and the curriculum) professional growth, and participation.

The auxiliary staff includes a cook and two auxiliaries with a 36 hour week and one with a 27- hour week, of which 33 hours are dedicated to specific tasks and 3 to professional updating, social management, and integrated activities.

For the extended time (16-18.30) there is a part-time educator (or two, or three, based on the numbers of children). Afternoon cleaning is entrusted to three people working 18 hours per week (15 + 3)

The school was identified by the municipal pedagogical co-ordination because it is representative of the network of infant-toddler centers and preschools of the Istituzione of the municipality of Reggio Emilia.

Diana municipal preschool

The Diana municipal preschool was opened in 1970, inside the public park in Reggio Emilia's historical old town.

It welcomes 78 children divided into three classes of the same age: 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds.

Each class or "sezione" is made up of 26 children and two teachers who are simultaneously present for work during a large part of the school day.

The school work group is made up of two teachers for each class, a support teacher in the three-year-old class to welcome a special rights child, an "atelierista" (teacher with an arts background, not education, who works across the school rather than with a specific class), one part-time teacher for the extended afternoon time, a "pedagogista" (pedagogical co-ordinator who also coordinates other centers), a cook, two cook's helpers, and three auxiliary workers for care of spaces and environments.

School hours go from 7.30- 16.00 and up to 18.30 for parents requesting this for work reasons.

The school calendar runs from 1 September to 30 June.

All staff work 36 hours per week, of which 31.5 are frontal with children, and 4.5 for preparation of materials, curriculum design, professional growth, and participation; the exception is the part-time teacher (15 + 3 hours per week) for the extended time (1600-18.30).

Working hours of auxiliary staff are 36 hours per week, with 33 for their specific tasks and 3 hours for professional growth, curriculum design, and participation.

This school was identified by Reggio Emilia's municipal pedagogical co-ordination because it is representative of the city's network of services, of infant-toddler centers and preschools of the Istituzione of the municipality of Reggio Emilia.

REGGIO EMILIA- SECTION II:

THE MICRO LEVEL – INSIDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON IN-SERVICE PD

Introduction

Our reading of the interviews has tried to identify *key nodes of interpretation* contained in individual interviews of a pedagogista, teacher or formative (mentor) teacher.

The result of this reading is a synthesis of interpretations that maintain the subjective quality of the individual interview in order to give value to the different points of view in the different narratives. In fact often we have conserved the integral words of the person interviewed and, at the same time, proceeded with a synthesis on a meta-level.

Key nodes of interpretation.

The interview with the Director of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia (Paola Cagliari), highlights some interesting aspects related to the system of continuing professional development for ECEC professionals in Reggio Emilia already described in the previous sections and its peculiarities (key-elements).

The quality of professional growth, for all staff and during working hours, integrates the local and the global, between self-growth and growth, with outside contributions.

External speakers are integrated into a process of professional growth which is already taking place.

Something typical of our professional growth is that there is not a distinction between theoretical acquisition and implementation, but a strong connection and reciprocity.

Annual design of the professional growth project is developed by the Pedagogical Coordination. This process of professional growth almost always seeks to arrive at a documented and communicable synthesis of concepts, capable of producing knowledge in the system through metacognition, and a culture of childhood in the city.

Some turning points in professional growth:

- late 1980s, a clearer focus on a design-based strategy of work generated a re-think of professional growth as a circular strategy

- mid-1990s, the attempt to get a closer focus on children's knowledge processes (mini stories) influenced the way of thinking about educational relations.

- late1990s, research with Harvard on the theme of learning in groups (socio-constructivism).

Some professional growth focuses: learning in groups, male learning, female learning, the approach to reading and writing, everyday contexts of learning, graphics [mark-making and drawing] and narration, *resonances* [sound and movement], nature and digital.

We believe that professional growth is a right of teachers rather than a need.

As with the children, a professional growth project starts with the interests of teachers.

Everything that happens on a level of national politics reverberates on professional growth, and sometimes orients choices of strategy in projects for professional growth.

Historically speaking, all the research conducted took place with the intention of defining the specific identity of infant-toddler centers and preschools, recognizable in civic society.

What was particularly innovative, in an absolute sense, was the way of seeing children, their competencies and their intelligence and therefore as a consequence, schools which know how to be with children, and a different profession role for teachers with social and professional status recognized in the city.

The flexibility of professional growth, as in educational work with the children, is based on journeys which are not pre-defined beforehand, but which are constructed by those participating, as they go along.

Challenges for the future: making the nido as a learning context more visible, and continuing to testify to the fact that the *scuola dell'infanzia* [3-6] is not a *pre*-school.

The President of the Loris Malaguzzi Center – Reggio Children Foundation (Carla Rinaldi) helps us to outline the history of the pedagogical roots in the system of PD for ECEC practitioners in Reggio Emilia.

The inspirations for our educational project are highly contextualised in the historical, political and cultural era of the 1960s and 1970s.

The history of professional growth for educators and for teachers starts with a precise identity in the educational services which are places where citizenship and culture is created. Investing in childhood is not only to invest in services for families, but in a different quality of community.

One focus which guides professional growth is the emphasis on the child and the Hundred Languages. The theory of the Hundred Languages is a metaphor for knowledge, an epistemology of knowledge.

An important strategy in professional growth is documentation [understood] as democratic form, a situation o encounter and of exchange of viewpoints.

Professional growth, because it is a learning process, is also self-professional growth.

In our children's services we have substituted the idea of need with the idea of rights, this is where the definition of "children with special rights" comes from.

All praxis is a theory taking shape, and all theory is praxis reflected upon.

Atelierista mentor – Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia (Mirella Ruozzi) is another key-voice from the field. As she indicated in the interview, our network of [educational] services is a system that is sensitive to the needs of different professional roles trough a project of professional growth closely connected to our experience with the children. This is non-individualised professional growth based on documentation. In the documentation we try to re-signify experiences realized with the children in order to create a communicable synthesis of the concepts.

The gains in professional growth, that come from meta-reflection on experiences, are produced inside infant-toddler centers and preschools and also at the level of the more overall system (the network od centers, the International Center, the city).

The interview with the Teacher mentor working in Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia (Lucia Colla) expresses her viewpoint regarding the professional growth system and its traits/elements of *innovation*.

Professional growth that works with certain key words continuously, renewing them:

-idea of the child

-idea of school

-role of the adult teacher.

Highly contextualized professional growth that starts with the needs and desires of the teachers, that marries theory and praxis, that develops in a framework of continuity 0/6, that pursues the exchange between several points of view and different professional roles.

The effort to contextualize is one of the innovative aspects of this professional growth. The importance of maintaining a meaningful exchange with other fields of learning in order to be capable of intercepting complexity.

Educators' voices.

Marika Lorenzani

Educator - Panda Municipal Infant-toddler Center

Some key words for defining professional growth

-passionate-making

-change

-complexity

Non-frontal [transmitted] professional growth with continuity from 0/6

Professional growth as the exchange of viewpoints between different professional roles.

Professional growth which has as its objective teachers' competencies for arguing [their point of view] and self-reflection.

Professional growth which rather than provide answers, generates questions that support research.

Professional growth that marries together human and professional components.

Professional growth that continuously influences actions.

"Diversity" belongs to our educational approach in that it is an *ecological* approach.

Reflection on today's new families is something we feel necessary.

The importance of constructing a culture of education together with families through shared language.

Silvia Zecchini

Educator – Panda Municipal Infant-toddler Center

Three key words for professional development

- evolution
- change
- vitality

Professional growth is conceived in terms of 0/6 and is the professional growth of a system.

All forms of meeting are based on an exchange of points of view and hold together theory and practice, stimulating implementation in infant-toddler centers and schools.

Update meetings are included during working hours once a week, but in reality we could speak of daily updating between colleagues.

In recent years there have been very interesting agglomerations of different projects into "central themes" involving several infant-toddler centers and preschools together.

In these journeys an innovative aspect is given by the continuous weaving together of languages.

The CARE project, which requires evaluation and self-evaluation, has been a severe and important testing ground.

In general, being able to re-see oneself in documented experiences (for example in videos) is highly formative because it solicits a critical and constructive evaluation and self-evalaution.

Lorena Grandi
Educator – Panda Municipal Infant-toddler Center
Three key words which describe professional growth
- comparison of viewpoints
- exchange
- sharing

The most important professional growth takes place in the field through daily discussion which generates continuous learning.

An awareness I have matured could be espressed in this way: "No, I am not here to teach anything, but I am here together with you to better understand the children's proximal zones".

In fact an aspect that runs through the different professional growth projects is the pertinence of adults to children.

Disadvantage means difference.

The experience of professional growth has made me responsible, in seeking to understand knowledge processes and in fine-tuning adequate tools for observation, it has refined my way of dialoguing and of recounting, diversifying based on my interlocutors. I have appreciated the importance of listening and silence.

Today I feel a need for deeper exploration into scientific thinking and in particular numbers in 0/3 year olds

Giusy Ronchelli
Teacher – Diana Municipal Preschool
The importance of daily professional growth deriving from the exchange of points of view with colleagues. The decisive role of co-presence of two teachers in the classroom.
Three key words for in-service professional growth:
Contemporariness
Collegial work
Exchange of viewpoints

The collegial nature of work is the basis of organisational and educational culture in the infant-toddler centers and preschools.
The collegial nature of work is given by a comparison of viewpoints and by exchange, which generate a mentality of dialogue and openess.
Contemporariness means keeping up with ideas in education today.

Type of meetings and update sessions inside the school:
-meetings in small groups designing curriculum
-meetings of the "collective" involving all workers in the school
-classroom meetings
The role of the pedagogista consists in a meta-reading of the experiences realised with children.
Meetings with experts are always marked by exchange.
One of the highest situations of professional growth is "transversal" in character [runs through everything] and consists in requesting workers to express their own point of view, to argue what they are doing and, by re-interpreting them, re-read their own experiences with children,
Professional growth is not strictly pedagogical, but spans themes of general and contemporary culture (self-professional growth).

The most innovative aspect of the different professional growth projects is it is never transmitted training. It is growth that offers you tools to be contextualised in single local situations through choices and evaluations on the part of teachers.

I feel the need for an exchange of viewpoints on what it means to do education today.

Emanuela Paglia

Teacher – Diana Municipal Preschool

Three key words for in-service professional growth:
- culture, enrichment on a personal and group level
- exchange of viewpoints, situations for exchanges of ideas and experiences
- contemporariness, choices connected with life, with the needs and characteristics of today's children

Exchange of points of view is the aspect of professional growth that is most generative of new learning, and it runs through all the different types of meetings.

Today there is a great need for exchanges of points of view on educational principles and on how we think of education, exchange which must also involve families.

The theme of inclusion has been dealt with in a specific way related to children with special rights, but our educational project sees this as one of its founding principles.

Difference (subjectivity) is a criteria we always have very much in mind when presenting learning contexts, so that every child can find a way of expressing themselves based on their own resources and characteristics.

A very important experience of professional growth has been in connection with the central theme of "Nature and Digital" which chose a highly topical subject and a point of view that is original and coherent with our way of doing education.

Forms of technology are used as a resource for the undertaken by children. A way of seeing digital from the point of view of children who manage it as protagonists in their daily life.

Annalisa Rabotti and Paola Strozzi

Pedagogistas – Istituzione of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers

From an analysis of the first interviews some central nuclei emerge:
- professional growth as an integrated system of attitudes working towards a culture of organisation (the responsibility of making a contribution, an active attitude…), conditions, internal and external resources, tools and strategies, the process of professional growth is itself a content of professional growth (reflexive and meta-cognitive dimension);
- the close relation between network meetings (situations of sharing between infant-toddler centers and preschools, the role of the systems resources and the International Center) and internal meetings. The involvement of all professional profiles in both internal meetings and network situations. An organisational structure and working contract which includes professional growth during the weekly working hours,
- professional growth characterised by participation, circulation, design strategies. This means not making distinctions but an integrated process of deeper exploration/research/acquisition of contents and dissemination/ generalisation/implemention in infant-toddler center and preschools, which are connected parts of the same professional growth journey, supported by documentation. Increased

reflective and self-reflective capacity and awareness in all workers. Research as an attitude of daily life in children and adults;

- communication with the public as a form of synthesis and verification (first among these is the dimension of meetings with families) and integration between professional growth of staff and professional growth spent on a national and international level. This dynamic is conducive to an increase in argumenting capacity;

- a diffused pedagogical system which gives value to the different professional roles present in infant-toddler centers and preschools (cooks, auxiliary staff, atelieristas, teachers) and gives them greater value through a relation with mentor teachers, the resources of the systems resources and with pedagogistas. The role of outside experts enlisted as "equals" in dimensions of dialogical and participatory professional growth. Contemporary culture as clues to interpret with teachers and children. An approach conducive to interdisciplinary educational work, through exchanges between ways of seeing from different disciplinary viewpoints.

- A system of infant-toddler center and preschool archives in a centralised Documentation Center which is conducive to circulating and giving value to the learning produced.

ITALY- CASE STUDY 2

SECTION I. THE CASE OF MILAN

Fostering innovation in a big city: continuity and change

Introduction

In this section we provide a description and contextualization of the case of Milan - a *key enabler context* for anticipated innovation – and its Municipal ECEC system. In the first paragraph we describe the city, its context, its ECEC system and the current system of in-service professional development in Milan. In the next paragraph we provide a general overview of the "innovativeness" of the in-service system developed over the past 40 years with insights on the conceptualizations and discourses regarding the link between in-service professional development and ECEC quality which is currently under debate in Italy. We will briefly describe the evolution and transformation of this innovative framework for in-service PD over the past decades from a diachronic perspective. An in-depth description of a key-program of in-service PD (*the Milano Bambini* project) developed in recent years and selected as a "focus example of innovation for our study conclude the section.

CASE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

The city and its Municipal ECEC system

Milan, the capital city of Lombardy Region, is a city with a population of 1.3 million people (3 million including the metropolitan area) and one of the two cities in Italy with over a million inhabitants (the other is Rome, with 2.867.143 inhabitants[7]). Milan, if we consider cities with over 500.1 inhabitants (Napoli 960.000, Torino 870.000, Palermo 655.000, Genova 583.000), is together with Torino and Genova, one of the three cities called the "industrial triangle" and of these ones in the city which has invested more and more regularly in Municipal ECEC. It is the most important industrial city of Italy, with many different industrial sectors. It is situated in the most populated Region in Italy (Lombardia), with about 10 million inhabitants, the highest per capita income in Europe and the highest rankings on school results by international comparison. Milan also shows a higher women employment percentage compared to other large cities. In Italy (In Italy, the percentage of working women is around 47,5%. Milan metropolitan area is 60% plus[8]; over 85%[9] of women with young children[10]. Other cities: Roma 54,4%; Torino 56,0%; Napoli 24,9%; Genova 57,17%; Reggio Emilia 58% plus)[11].

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[7] Data source ISTAT (demo.istat.it) November 2015, Assolombarda CGIL, CISL, UIL "Il lavoro e Milano e Lombardia 2014" on EUROSTAT data. Comune di Milano & Urbes, 2015 on ISTAT data.

[8] Data source ISTAT (http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_TAXOCCU) 2015.

[9] Data source ISTAT (http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_TAXOCCU) Maggio 2016.

[10] Data source Comune di Milano, Milan Municipality (http://dati.comune.Milano.it/dato/item/111), 2014.

[11] Data source ISTAT (http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_TAXOCCU) 2015.

Today the city offers an extensively diverse/differentiated system of early childhood and educational provision for children 0-6 widespread in the city area with a major Municipal engagement, a low number of State schools and a large number of services made available by different providers. This diversity is a major challenge for a mainstream provision of regular professional development.

Milan offers full time coverage for a percentage of more than 98% of children from three to six and more than 26% (c.a.) of children from zero to three, percentage close to that of the Lisbon goal (33%), including *Sezioni primavera*, private and part-time provisions (Istat, December 2015. Urbes Rapport)[12]. Its Municipality currently provides 510 ECEC services, of which 330 directly (65%) provided: 104 infant toddler centers (*asili nido*), 39 centers for 2-3 children (*sezioni primavera*), 175 preschools for 3-6 children (*scuole dell'infanzia*) and 12 centers for 0-3 children (9 Time for Families/*Tempi per le Famiglie,* 4 *Centri prima Infanzia*, 2 play-groups). In addition, other 36 ECEC services for children 0-3 (34 infant toddler centers and 2 *Centri prima infanzia*) provided by cooperatives and other no-profit organizations offered to families at the same costs and standards.

There is a number of company infant-toddler centers (often connected with the Municipality with a percentage of places offered to families resident in the area at Municipal costs) and of private (profit) ECEC services. The Ministry of Education provides further 29 schools for children 3-6. Each ECEC service produces and reviews yearly a *Carta dei servizi* (Public Service Charter, an official document regarding aims, teaching and caring guidelines, organization, opening hours, regulations of access, relationships with parents, rights and duties).
In Milan a total number of 31844 children is currently attending Municipal ECEC services (year 2015-2016). Within the city, 0-3 children attending *Nidi* (directly or indirectly provided by Municipality) are 9.131 (of those 3.148 with an immigrant background and 6271 attending Nidi directly provided by Municipality), whereas 3-6 children attending Municipal *Scuole dell'Infanzia* are 21.834.

ECEC practitioners working in the Milan Municipal ECEC system

A total number of 3370 practitioners (educators for children aged 0 to 3 and teachers for children aged 3 to 6) and 80 pedagogical coordinators are employed within the ECEC services of the Municipality of Milan. Staff employed within the Municipal services also include educators working at the *Tempi per le Famiglie* (Centers for Children and Families), named "*educatori*" (educators) or "*animatori*" (animators) depending on their entry qualification. Pedagogical coordinators, named "*responsabili*" or "*posizioni organizzative*" (P.O.), qualified figures with pedagogical and management responsibilities, work to improve the ECEC quality and are responsible for a number of 3-4 ECEC services, within a number of 9 city-zones. They are key-figures of the integrated zero to six pedagogical approach that characterizes the city of Milan.

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[12] The attendance rate of the youngest participants in the Italian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, children below the age of three, is 20%, while the attendance rate for children between three and six years old is almost five times higher (98%). The percentage of children attending Nido in other Italian Municipalities is: i.e. Trento 20,1%, Torino 30,9%, Roma 27%, Reggio Emilia 40,34% (data sources 2015).

In Milan, a large percentage of 0-3 educators have an education-oriented upper secondary diploma or a vocational secondary school diploma, with an increasingly high number of educators with a bachelor degree (25%). Although this qualification is not required by all Regions, it adds points in the recruitment procedures for public (Municipal or communal) services (see D 3.1, Jensen et al., 2015, pp. 78-92). Milan is facing, in the last decade (and will face in the next one), a major turnover with the retirement of the professionals which entered in the 0-6 system in its expanding years and this is a further challenge for PD.

ECEC management-system

As with many other Italian Municipal programs, Milan has developed its own system of administration of this large number of ECEC settings: regulation, funding, pedagogical and organizational management are the responsibility of the *Assessorato all'Educazione* and managed at a local level by a Director and a group of pedagogical coordinators (with pedagogical and management responsibilities and a pre-service profile) who supervise a group of Municipal *asili nido, scuole dell'infanzia, tempi per le famiglie* (Centers for children and parents). They, as a group, report to a head administrator working at a centralized level. The pedagogical coordinators (or PO) are the Milanese version of the "*pedagogisti*" in Reggio Emilia and other Italian towns, although they are related to specific services they also work as a team or in sub-teams.

The responsibility for planning and organizing CPD falls to the public-local administration in a centralized perspective based on an interactive extensive process of working in collaboration with the city and its actors at many levels: with the field, the families, the Universities, the local associations. The pedagogical coordinators play a crucial role for ensuring the quality of the in-service professional development initiatives. Within this system, policy makers, directors, practitioners, pedagogical coordinators, researchers, experts from the field, families and children work together within a community-based approach aimed at improving the quality by enhancing practitioners' professionalization and development of new compretences. This organization has been modified several times over the past 40 years, due to political changes in the administration and the attempt to adapt the pedagogical/organizational management of the system to fast changing needs and challenges from the field. On the other hand, it is stable over time and constitutes the backbone of the Municipal system: this is an example of "continuity in changing and discontinuity".

Nevertheless, investment in the professionalization of the ECEC practitioners by ensuring systematic and regular opportunities for in-service PD has always been a priority in the Municipality of Milan in a time of increasing lack in financial resources. The tension has always been to find a good balance between the development of a coherent system and an in-service common framework for the entire ECEC workforce employed in the city, and the need to develop the peculiarities or specificities of each ECEC service.
In the next paragraph, we provide a description of the current system of in-service professional development in Milan.

Today, systematic, situated and systemic opportunities of in-service professional training are guaranteed for the ECEC workforce employed in Milan Municipal settings in various forms and at many levels. During a school year, practitioners are usually offered regular opportunities for in-service professional training. Some are developed and offered to single settings on specific requested topics; others address strategic themes and are offered at groups of sites also mixing schools, *nidi, sezioni primavera* and child and family centers; others are at zone or city level and can be open also to parents. Within this system, ECEC practitioners experience a variety of forms of training: conferences, workshops, group supervisions, teamwork, co-constructed projects, action research processes, seminars; specific training on issues related to specific themes that the PO have assessed with practitioners as needed in particular sites (i.e. early education, child's development, adult-child relationship, school-family relationship, parents' participation, space and materials, curriculum, language, learning, organization, and so on). In most cases, the staff working at a service is involved *as a group* in these practices of professional training (staff, educators or teachers, coordinators, etc.).

Within each centre, regular in-service training can range between 120-200 hours per year and are built into the contract as paid-time. Specific hours within their daily-hours per week are saved for this task (see D 3.1, Jensen et.al. 2015, pp. 78-92). Being actively engaged in these activities is therefore conceived both as a "duty" and a "right" for each professional. This reflects the wider Italian discourse on in-service professional development (*formazione permanente),* particularly strong at Municipal level, as we have already described in the Report D3.1 (Jensen, et.al. 2015). In Italy, the concept and the word used for teacher's training is "*formazione*": *formazione di base* (pre-service training) and *formazione in servizio* (in-service training). The word conveys a very different meaning from the English word "training" (Nigris, 2007, International Encyclopedia, p. 1145). The concept comes from *forma* (structure, to shape" and is intended in the sense of "taking rather than being given a form" (International Encyclopedia, p.1146). This requires investment at many levels, within a bottom-up/top-down participatory conceptualization of professional development as a dynamic-multimethod approach of reviewing practices within a community of learners.

The assumption is that in-service professional training is a key component of ECEC quality. The core idea is to promote critical reflection, more than transmitting theoretical knowledge with no connections with practices and to encourage group's practices of learning by doing within a community of practices and of learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Continuing professional development is conceived as a "collegial process of observing, planning, documenting, reflecting, preparing and planning work with children and families" (Rinaldi, 2001; 2006) that requires reflexive and flexible methods and procedures based on the analyses and the observations of the practices and on practices of sharing. Teachers' competences and their capacity to renew practices by developing and learning within a life-long learning perspective is a main assumption of this system. "Teacher's professionalism", as stated in the National Curriculum Guidelines (drafted by the Ministry of Education in 2012) "is acknowledged to be an essential quality component". Expectations of Milan's ECEC workforce are in fact high and include in-service professional development and improvement. Planning and guaranteeing continuing professional development to such an extended, fragmented and diverse system is a challenge in term of organization, quality of trainers, resources.

Scale is therefore a major issue in Milan and makes it necessary to count on extensive training resources, both on terms of funds and of human resources, which cover all ECEC sites over a two/three years span of time.

In order to fully grasp the implications and recent professionalization policies and approaches for the in-service development of ECEC workforce in Milan, we will start our analysis by acknowledging of the innovative character (a key context that "anticipated innovation at many levels") of the in-service approach that characterized the Milan Municipal system. In the next paragraphs, we will illustrate the "innovativeness" of the in-service system developed over the past 40 years within the city with insights on the conceptualizations and discourses regarding the link between in-service professional development and ECEC quality which is currently under debate in Italy.

THE INNOVATIVENESS OF THE MILAN'S IN-SERVICE PD SYSTEM

A key enabler context for anticipated innovation

Milan is a "key context" – a *key enabler context* for "anticipated innovation" - that has always functioned (and still does) as a site that "anticipates innovation" in the ECEC field at many levels: pedagogical, organizational and managerial. Many experiences developed on these three levels over the past years can be defined as "hotbeds of innovation", as they were both aimed at enlarging ECEC provisions (the case of the *Tempo per le Famiglie*, as we will explain in the historical part of this report, which is an example of this experimental attitude) and to promote and design new forms and methods of in-service professional development. Milan can be considered a leader for many innovative actions. Educational innovation, cultural innovation, as well as innovation at the organizational level, have always *overlapped* in the development of this pluralistic, dynamic, fragmented but still coherent system, as we will further describe below.

Although many outstanding experiences in the field exist in Italy (Reggio Emilia, Trento, Parma, Pistoia, etc.), Milan is to some extent "unique". The size of the city, its demographic density, its sociocultural complexity and intrinsic plurality, the large number of families with children under the age of six requesting full-time education and care, the fast-changing sociocultural and educational needs, the increasingly high number of immigrant families, the new types of immigration (second generation, refugees,...), the high turnover of educators, have always required multiple solutions and many efforts on the part of the Public Administration to provide the city with a high quality ECEC system.

To describe our case, some key-characteristics of *innovation* within this wide, dynamic system could be outlined as follows:

I. the capacity to develop "non-episodic" opportunities for in-service professional development for ECEC practitioners within a long-term framework of *formazione permanente* (life-long learning);

II. the link between ECEC quality and sustainability. The city has always been aware that good quality costs and requires innovative solutions to face the quickly increasing challenges from the field. This has led to creative use of the already existing resources available within

the city area (non-profit organizations, research centers, Universities, theatres or cultural associations, public libraries, and so on), thus strengthening the connection between ECEC services and everyday life in the city;

III.   the connection with Universities and research centers, both at a National and local level. There has always been a close collaboration between the Milan Municipality, the two Universities with a focus on Education, and other research centers within the local area. The assumption here is that continuing professional development has a greater impact when strictly connected to research (i.e. action research, participatory research, ethnographic research, designed-based research, evaluation processes regarding quality through research practices);

IV.   the link between pre-service and in-service training, since the inception of degree courses in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria* (5 years) and *Scienze dell'Educazione* (3 years) at the Milan Universities with a focus on education (University of Milano-Bicocca, in the late 90s, and Catholic University of Milan). Mutual exchange between the two Universities and the ECEC services has always been a key feature of this system. The two Universities have cooperated to pool different competences and resources, rather than compete and this is an example of the pragmatic style of the city. The connection between the University courses and the ECEC functions as a "learning/training device" both for the host teachers who cooperate with the University to supervise and evaluate the students' internship, and for the students themselves. The result is that while students learn in the field, the host teachers have the opportunity to enlarge their own competences by being actively involved in supervision and evaluation of practices and processes (see D 3.1, Jensen et al., 2015, pp. 78-92);

V.   the 0-6 system (the incorporation of educational services for 0-6 children under the same structure) involves pedagogical coordinators (PO) as "multipliers" and key figures (guarantors of continuity despite the split system) in promoting professional development for teachers, again in collaboration with Universities and other research institutions;

VI.   the focus on *formazione dei formatori* (training teacher trainers) is part of the investment in these figures as "engines of innovation" for good quality ECEC services (which started in the late 70s with preschool directors);

VII.   the conceptualization of in-service professional development as a dynamic-multimethod approach, in particular: the involvement of the ECEC practitioners as active-learners within a framework of a community of learners and the focus on observation and documentation (in Milan the use of video-observation, video-feedback as a medium to enhance teachers' professionalism and reflectivity on practices has always been part of in-service PD, since the late 70s, and is still used today); the combination of more traditional approaches to professional development with new innovative practices or workshop experiences, the use of ICT (video, website, virtual community of learners, other…);

VIII.   the culture of the school-family relationship/parent involvement as a key component of ECEC quality and teacher professionalism;

IX.   the focus on inclusion at many levels: disabilities, socially disadvantaged children (since the late 70s), immigrants;

X.   the link between the evaluation of quality and continuing professional development within a bottom-up perspective of co-constructing tools for evaluating quality in close collaboration with the practitioners;

XI.   the "experimental attitude" which resulted in the emergence of innovative service models

which were then developed and implemented on a national level: it is not a coincidence that the *Tempo per le Famiglie* experience – the first center for children and parents in Italy - was developed in the late 80s (Anolli, Mantovani, 1983) in Milan in a joint effort between the Municipality of Milan and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation with supervision provided by two researchers from the University of Milan (Anolli, Mantovani, 1983). The *Sezioni Primavera* (bridging ECEC to preschool, located in *Nidi* or *Scuole dell'Infanzia* and supported by the Ministry of Education [MIUR]) were developed in Milan too to offer new services to 2-3 years old children which have undergone interesting PD initiatives.

All the above listed aspects, which meet the criteria for site selection drawn from the literature review conducted in the first part of our study (WP3, Task3.3), have contributed, since the late 70s, to the development of an *innovative* system of in-service professional development that still exists in Milan.

To summarize, Milan is an interesting example of an urban ECEC laboratory of *innovation* for the following reasons: its ECEC system; its history of high quality ECEC services, resulting from a tradition of political investment in early childhood and education through a significant, extensive effort to provide the ECEC workforce with a variety of opportunities for in-service professional training; its extension (large scale) and high number of children and families involved. The aim to invest in in-service professional development for the ECEC workforce has always been a priority, despite the increasing lack of financial resources which has introduced many new challenges along with the fast changing needs from the field. In the next paragraph, we will briefly describe the evolution and transformation of this innovative framework for in-service PD over the past decades from a diachronic perspective.

Tradition and innovation: an urban ECEC lab as an "evolving system"

As we have already stated in the theoretical part of the present report (see Chapter 1), the link between *tradition and innovation* in the field is a controversial issue in the current debate on innovative approaches to PD (Fagerberg, 2003): innovation could produce "expected or unexpected outcomes" and it is always related to the need for efficient and sustainable use of existing resources, involving as many settings and as many professionals as possible. It is a *situated process* of renewing something or changing something that already exists.

Our review regarding innovation within the recent debate on in-service professional training shows the need to consider some aspects which research has not addressed until now, like the *sustainability* of PD efforts, the *intensity* and *duration* required to make PD effective, the role of *contextual variables* that affect training practices (i.e. opportunities for teacher collaboration offered in the workplace, the individual and systemic characteristics of a particular training site and the level of openness to change), the qualities/traits of "trainer-mentors, supervisors or coaches" who can help to develop effective approaches in teachers' PD.

Studies collected during the first part of the WP3 study (and presented in the first chapter of this report) suggest that innovation is a *dynamic situated process* that provides some forms of novelty and improvement (at the micro and macro levels) by engaging staff at various levels (practitioners, directors, pedagogical coordinators, stakeholders) in critically renewing their thinking and practices, in a non-traditional way. But what is traditional or innovative in one context might not be so in another.

We can trace the evolution of the innovative professional development system developed in Milan by highlighting three phases: 1) the establishment of the system, 2) the process of renewing it by meeting new challenges from the field (*consolidation*) 3) *further* implementation (development).
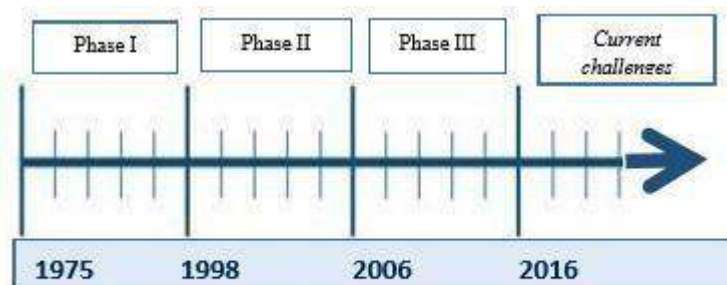

Figure 2. Overview of the changes

Each phase reflects a particular moment and highlights some characteristics of the development of the continuing professional development system in question. It is significant to note that these periods were explained clearly during the interviews with the participants involved in our case study.

Phase 1. 1975-1998: Establishing a CPD system and a management model

The first phase, from the late 70s and the late 90s, was characterized by a massive-extensive effort aimed at providing the Milanese ECEC workforce with a variety of opportunities for professional training in order to establish a good quality ECEC system within the city and a coherent pedagogical approach.

The 70s were characterized by an increasing birthrate, high rates of immigrant families with young children from the South, and an increasing demand for access to early childhood educational settings. At that time, the priority of the Municipality was to meet these needs and to provide access to as many children as possible, while at the same time to enhance ECEC practitioners' competences and professionalism and to promote good quality educational provisions for children and families.

A high number of newly enrolled practitioners characterized this period. This was another important issue that required a high investment to guarantee the development of a sort of "pedagogical stability" within each center, despite the changes regarding the educators. Many initiatives were carried out in that period, involving as many educators/teachers as possible in training courses on various basic issues and quality components, such as: child development, language, family-school relationships, early transition/settling-in (*inserimento/ambientamento*), intercultural education, disabilities, and so on.

Some interesting innovative actions characterized the *dynamism* of this period, acting as *innovation anticipators* at many levels.

<u>The role of the *dirigenti* (managers)</u>

At first, the investment regarded the training of the pedagogical coordinators (at that time called "*dirigenti*[13]") in order to broaden their actions within each zone. The role of the "*dirigenti*" has always been a main foundation of the pedagogical approach to in-service professional development of the Municipality of Milan. Laura Franchi, one of the most important managers of the ECEC system of the city of Milan, created the "*collegio dei dirigenti di scuola materna*" in 1978 in order to invest on their PD as multipliers or key-figures for providing high quality education for all children. This innovative action of involving these key figures, by providing them with specific training opportunities (*formazione dei formatori)* and by encouraging them to develop their work through the involvement of ECEC practitioners as active participants in order to guarantee high-quality educational provisions for all children, is still part of the Milanese model. This reflects the wider Italian conceptualization of the key-role of the pedagogical coordinator for ensuring good quality ECEC and is one of the innovative features of interest for our study.

The *Conferenza dei Servizi* (April, 4-8, 1989) was a highly significant event - of particular interest for our case study - on how innovation is translated into sustainable practices within this context. This event was a significant turning point in the evolution of the PD model for the city of Milan and the establishment of the organizational and pedagogical model for services. It was an interesting example of extended investment which was systematic and sensitive to the variety of services and diversity in the city. The Conference involved the entire staff and many families and it was also a harbinger of those actions of citizen participation in the debate on the quality of contexts for children that would result in in-depth volumes on different themes. As part of the preparatory work for the Conference (1985-86), training processes both in schools and for the central management figures were initiated. These training occasions focused on crucial issues for the services and their innovation, involving educators in the production of documents and materials that were useful for comparing experiences systemically and for defining the programatic-organizational intentions shared at the city level. Issues such as the integration of disabled or marginalized children, scholastic continuity, the relationship with families, flexibility and new organizational models and the integration of local services were at the center of the discussion and the basis for the conference document: the *Linee Pedagogiche per i servizi educativi per l'infanzia* (ECEC Guidelines), from which emerged the plural model of services within the city.

<u>A focus on observation</u>
In the same period a similar effort was done by the CIE, the Center for Innovative Education, promoted since 1975 by Vincenzo Cesareo (a sociologist from the Università Cattolica di Milano and later founder of the ISMU Foundation, *Fondazione Istituto per lo Studio sulla Multi-etnicita*). The role of the CIE was highly significant as it played an important role in promoting innovation from a bottom-up perspective by involving other key-figures: Susanna Mantovani (at that time professor at the Università degli Studi di Milano), Luigi Anolli, Cesare Scurati (Università Cattolica di Milano) and later Riccardo Massa (Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca). A massive effort

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[13] There were two main inspectors (they became six in the later years), each was responsible for a number of zones and each zone included a number of ECEC settings. Within each zone, there was a *dirigente* (manager) who supervised a group of Municipal *scuole dell'infanzia*. These *dirigenti* reported to a head administrator [*assistente di settore*] for one of the 20 zones within the Municipal system, who in turn reported to the *assessore* [local minister]. Until the late 90s, the pedagogical coordinator of the *asili nido* and the *scuola dell'infanzia* was split.

promoted by the CIE in collaboration with the Universities of Milan and its Municipality was aimed at enhancing the competences of the workforce of the ECEC centers by training them to use observation.

A group of 40 supervisors/teacher trainers were trained at the beginning to create a group of "teacher's trainers". Many centers were involved and trained in the use observation as a tool for enhancing the quality of the centers. This approach included initial training in the use of the observation followed by the experimentation of some projects: this connection between large, massive, extensive training in the use of observation with the "experimentation of some projects" within the ECEC setting was an innovative experience that somehow "anticipated" the innovative laboratorial (experiential learning/workshop experiences) developed in the most recent PD projects at the city level. This connection between observing and planning new strategies and actions in the field was a focus of this approach and a promising PD practice aimed at improving its impact in the field. Training on observation, which still distinguishes Milan's training model, also characterizes professional educators' and teachers' know-how, through the recording and use of videos. The CIE had a dedicated space for editing videos.

The impact of these initiatives was highly significant, introducing important changes in the day-to-day practices of the ECEC practitioners. A systematic use of observation as a basis and criteria for planning (which was *innovative* at the time), accompanied by supervision, group-work and inter-observation (video-based observation) of practices anticipated the discussion on reflective practices, encouraging professionals to improve practices and to update their competences. Many significant publications were produced in connection with this massive effort of providing in-service initiatives for all ECEC practitioners within a systematic approach that still respected diversity. Some are still in use today in the ECEC system. These experiences were to some extent outstanding for that period and therefore became a sort of "*engine of innovation*" for the development of further approaches and initiatives within the city and its system of ECEC services. A path - as Susanna Mantovani wrote in a volume that collects the research/training experiences of the late 90s in Milan - "which can be defined as action-research because the schools involved, at least during the first two years, requested this involvement and they proposed the issues on which to center the attention, and because thanks to those experiences, materials and volumes[14] in which the exchange between researchers and teachers was constant, were created" (Mantovani, 2004, p. 230).

Quality and evaluation

The above mentioned *Conferenza dei Servizi* marked the start of an important series of studies and reflections on the quality of preschools (the Guidelines for State preschool were issued in 1991), on the professionalism of educators and public debate (exhibitions, conferences, documents). Regarding the evaluation of the quality of preschools, and later of the infant-toddler centers in those years, interesting and innovative educational training courses for educators and teachers and managerial figures were initiated (Franchi & Caggio, 1999). The courses were aimed at developing the ability to observe quality in educational contexts, considering the managerial, organizational, pedagogical, didactic and relational aspects simultaneously. The co-construction of quality assessment instruments was an important training initiative for managerial figures and teacher-educators, starting from preschools and then spreading to infant-toddler centers and pedagogical coordinators who were trained to use SVANI (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 1990; tr. it. Ferrari &

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[14] E.g. Anolli & Mantovani, 1983.

Livraghi, 1992). Many experimental approaches were developed within this idea of continuously improving the quality of the services by investing in the professionalization of the workforce, according to the idea of participatory bottom-up evaluation rather than measuring the outcomes. For example, the experimental use of the evaluating scale (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) and the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1990) and their use as staff development tools, as well as using other qualitative instruments to improve professional competence, contributed to developing a support system not only for children and parents, but for the ECEC practitioners as well. These instruments/tools were built in the field with the participants in an action-research project and acted as stimuli to enrich the possibility for discussion and dialogue (forerunners of today's widespread idea of *valutazione formativa* (formative assessment) (Bondioli & Ferrari, 2004).

Documentation Center
The foundation of the Center for Educational Documentation was another important action within this process that mirrored the overall idea of promoting a system of professional development practices based on the collaboration between many actors and resources. Documents, projects, exhibition materials and initiatives from the individual services were collected, as well as advice and support available to educators and teachers who requested it in order to design and document what was achieved. The Center was a significant place to share projects, ideas, tools, and opportunities for specific training by using the local resources within the city. Exhibitions and initiatives that gave visibility to local experiences were organized, such as the numerous publications testify.

Experimental Services
Another example of this process of renewing the quality of the ECEC services and of enhancing the professional profile of the ECEC workforce by providing *experimental innovative* programme was the *Tempo per le Famiglie* experience developed in the late 80s (Anolli, Mantovani, 1983) in Milan, in a joint effort from the Municipality of Milan, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the University of Milan (Mantovani, 2001). It is an example of the development of an experimental program that gave an important contribution to the professionalization of the educators involved in these new experiences and the development of a new conceptualization of the need to improve in-service initiatives. It is of interest here to note that the educators involved in these centers were both 3-6 teachers and 0-3 educators, working together for the first time and benefitting of the same PD. The experience at that time was a "laboratorial/experimental experience" to train staff, who could return to full-time child care service with greater flexibility to work with the parent-child pair and support their relationship or lead parents' groups (Mantovani, 2001). The first six years of this experimental service ended in a protocol which not only set the organizational requirements, but also the requirements for the establishment of new centres and a continuing PD regime. This experience was then implemented at a National level: today more than 400 Centers for Children and Families are widespread in many Italian Regions as emerged by a recent research conducted by the ISTC (CNR, Rome, Tullia Musatti) in collaboration with our University (Musatti, Mantovani, 2013; AAVV, 2014; Bove & Di Giandomenico, 2015).
Something similar happened with the *sezioni raccordo* experience, another interesting example of how the city responded to the need to provide new opportunities for children (aged 2-3) and at the same time workshops for in-service professional development for 3-6 teachers and 0-3 educators together.

The second phase started in the late 90s, along with the increasing lack of financial resources. This period was characterized by a gradual decentralization of the professional development system and initiatives that combined the role of managing with the promotion of quality and professional development. Within this new approach, the *Ispettori* (inspectors with management responsibilities) assumed a more important role in selecting and providing in-service opportunities for the staff, initiatives more closely connected to the local needs for professionalization. During this period, the inspectors/managers were responsible for selecting and promoting in-service initiatives for their ECEC settings depending on the perceived needs in the various zones of the city. This guaranteed, on the one hand, the shift to a more situated model of professional development.

At the same time, a difficult time began due to the economic crisis, political instability, emerging new social needs, mainly immigration, which elicited highly controversial responses and a redefinition of ECEC in terms of public responsibilities and the greater externalization of services to cooperatives. Resources for professional development were reduced and dispersed into many channels leading to a less regular organization of professional development and higher fragmentation in projects, themes and providers of PD. Despite this crisis and rapid changes, the connection with local Universities guaranteed the development of significant action-research projects that had a great impact in terms of professional development; among them two are of particular interest for our study:

a) in 1997 Milan was selected as key-site, along with other Italian large, medium and smaller cities such as Reggio Emilia, Parma, San Miniato, Trento, in the cross-cultural research on home-school relationships: "The Sociocultural construction of Home-School relations. The case of Reggio Emilia and Contemporary Italy"[15], coordinated by Rebecca New and Bruce Mallory (University of New Hampshire) and funded by the Spencer Foundation. The study involved Milan and Reggio Emilia as *key-cities* to study local interpretations of *parent involvement* and *participation*. The study involved several ECEC settings widespread in both cities and was carried out in collaboration by the University of New Hampshire (USA), the University of Milan (Susanna Mantovani), Reggio Children s.r.l. in the late 90s. (New, Mallory & Mantovani, 2001; Bove, New, 2009);

b) more recently (2003), Milan was again involved as *key-site* in the *Children Crossing Borders* study coordinated by Joseph Tobin (at that time working at the Arizona State University) and aimed to study how preschools were facing the challenge of the increasing number of immigrant children in five cities (Milan, Paris, Birmingham, Berlin, Phoenix). This research was an example of *video-based ethnographic research* that was well connected to the need to improve the professional competences of the practitioners involved. It began in one preschool and then involved many other preschools in Milan within a participatory study based on video-cues and multi-vocal ethnography. (Tobin, 1989, 2009; Tobin, Mantovani, Bove, 2010). A Municipal preschool was selected as a key-site for the video of a typical day, and many other schools were involved in video-cued

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[15] 1998-1999. Italian Conceptions of Community, Participation, and Social Responsibility: Child Care as Metaphor. (Spencer Foundation Major Grant – Project Director: Prof. Rebecca New – Co-PI With S. Mantovani - 9/98-6/2000); 1997-1998 The Sociocultural Construction of Home-School Relations: The Case of Reggio Emilia and Contemporary Italy. Spencer Foundation Major Grant (Project Director: Prof. Rebecca New; co-PI with B. Mallory - 8/96 - 8/98).

focus group discussions. More than 60 focus groups with immigrant parents and teachers were conducted in Italy. A large number of ECEC practitioners were directly involved in Milan and the process and results were presented to a much larger number of educators and teachers, offering an opportunity for increasing reflection and projects on intercultural issues. The study started in 2003 and ended in 2009 (*Preschool and Im-migrants in five countries*. AA.VV., 2016, in press).

At the same time, the ISMU (Foundation for Study on multi-ethnicity, founded in 1991 by the Fondazione Opere Sociali Cariplo, see below/finding section) was active in in-service training for educators and teachers in the ECECs and promoted studies and researches (often action researches) with strong connections in teachers'PD throughout Milan. Issues of interculturality, multiculturalism and dealing with diversity were addressed in these training initiatives which had a strong influence on ECEC practices as we will describe in the "finding section" of this chapter.

Phase 3. 2008-2016. Development: a new innovative season

The third phase took place in a time of increasing new challenges: the economic crisis was stronger but so was the interest in ECEC and sustainable practices in PD. In Milan, in-service PD became less systematic, but then found a new balance. An important change in the organization of the Municipality impacted on the development of PD initiatives: in 2008 the 3 *ispettori* (inspectors) and their different orientations in PD contents and approaches were substituted by one central director. In the same year, the coordinators, responsible for 0-3 or 3-6 services, became responsible for 0-6 services, thus assuming a new 0-6 perspective. This theme would become central in the last years of this phase. The new organizational system had great impact on the role of the pedagogical coordinator within an integrated 0-6 system, and as a consequence on the PD initiatives to implement it. The transition from the several management figures (inspectors) in the zones to a centralized direction (one central-director) led to the start of more organic and systematic blended (online and in person) training projects.

The Milan administration was in fact forced to develop *innovative* solutions to guarantee quality professional development and to meet new challenges from the field: professional ECEC turnover, a large number of new professionals with higher degrees and different pre-service training (D 3.1, Jensen et al., pp. 78-92), low resources and the efforts of the Municipal Administration to find new sources in order to face the challenge of maintaining the high-quality PD opportunities in this time of new challenges and tensions. Innovative educational PD projects were developed, in continuity, at a city-level: "*Infanzia Insieme*" (2008-2009), "*Milano Bambini*" (2011-2013), and the subsequent extension of the current "*Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità*" (2016-2017). These projects were carried out in close collaboration between the Municipality, the Università Cattolica di Milano (Prof. P.C. Rivoltella; Prof. Milena Santerini) and Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca (Prof. Susanna Mantovani). They involved several ECEC institutions on issues related to inclusion and citizenship, targeted at *Nidi, Scuole dell'infanzia, Tempi per le famiglie* and *Sezioni Primavera*.

Within these projects, Milan has invested in *formazione dei formatori* (training of trainers) to offer consistent inputs on the strategic themes. In the first project *Infanzia Insieme*, a massive effort in promoting training of trainers and of pedagogical coordinators (PO) was done along with a large investment on distance training. In the project *Milano Bambini* - which we will present in greater detail in the following paragraphs (MIBA project) - expert trainers of the University Milan-Bicocca

have been involved to intervene in 36 services for 0 to 3 year (and other trainers of the Catholic University in services for 3-6 year) and they worked together with educators and pedagogical coordinators. These efforts on *formazione dei formatori* in the recent projects resumes a similar effort done by the CIE (Centre of Innovation in Education) as indicated above and represents one of the recurrences – continuity within discontinuity- in Milano PD policies.

During this period, an interesting experience of "civic participation" and "social innovation" – *May 12 and May 13* - was carried out within the city in strict collaboration between the Municipality, the Universities and other research centers: the outstanding experience of *May 12 and May 13*, which can be interpreted as the implementation of the above mentioned *Conferenza dei Servizi* (1989). Meetings open to families and other citizens were held in groups divided by zones. The PO, teachers and parents, prepared this group together with the experts from the Universities in some cases, aimed at focusing attention on the interests and needs of both staff and families in order to revitalize the cultural debate on ECECs and single out the most important themes for PD. The whole process was also conceived (and turned out to be) an *active formation process* where practitioners, PO and families had real agency/impact on the choice of issues and content. The resulting PD projects were influenced and oriented by these processes. A "*Manifesto pedagogico*" produced between September 2011 and May 2012 was an interesting result of this process.

Milano Bambini (MIBA-project) – selected as a key-example of our case study and described in depth in the next paragraph - is therefore *a key and turning point* of the new season in the professional development effort in Milan and.

For this reason, we have selected it to illustrate how this *culture of innovation* is translated into renewed practices of continuing professional development at a micro-level and evaluated at a city-level.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE *MIBA* PROJECT
A GOOD EXAMPLE OF *INNOVATIVE PRACTICES* IN PD

Description of the project

The Milano Bambini (MIBA project) project was designed in 2011 to respond to an official call for a CPD project proposed by the Municipality of Milan (Fund Law 285/1997) and to enhance practitioners' competences in facing the challenges of working in increasingly diverse ECEC settings. It was developed within a formal collaboration between the Municipality of Milan and the two Universities (Bicocca University and Catholic University of Milan), in continuity with the previous PD project (*Infanzia Insieme*, 2008-2009*)* and represents an innovation in the allocation of resources for PD. It was financed through funds distributed yearly to cities from the Ministry of Social Affairs (Law 285/97), used to promote children's wellbeing and innovative/integrative ECEC services. It cannot therefore be used exclusively for PD and funds need to be allocated through an official public selection process. This obligation/limit makes it necessary to require that the proposed PD projects directly involve parents and children.

The project was assigned after public competition to the two Universities (Bicocca and Catholic), who presented their offer together, developing an approach that went beyond the traditional forms of ECEC PD in Milan, including laboratories/workshops which were experimented and implemented in schools and open to families, as well as other form of innovation, the production of materials and the activation of participatory processes. Five projects were funded within the urban ECEC system in the same years (2011-2013). Each covered the need for CPD of a significant number of ECEC practitioners and produced a wide variety of documentation which are still useful at different levels.

The MIBA project, the most extensive of the five, started in 2011 and ended in 2013. It was developed under the leadership of the two Universities with a focus on Education and lasted two years. It involved 36 Municipal ECEC services (*asili nido, scuole dell'infanzia, servizi integrativi*) spread throughout the city of Milan involving a total number of 300 ECEC practitioners and 12 pedagogical coordinators, plus an additional number of 252 educators, involved in the seminars conducted at the city level in the second year. The main actors of the project were the Municipality of Milan, the 0-6 ECEC system, the Catholic University and Bicocca University and the ECEC practitioners. Families and children were involved too within the workshop phase of the project, based on experiential learning.

Among the innovative features of this experience were the creation of the model and documented workshop experiences in some schools which would later act as professional *development pole (poli di sperimentazione*) for other schools and as community involvement opportunities, which were particularly interesting for our research. The assumption was that by combining "workshops and training with on-site visits and on-site coaching" (Zaslow, et.al.2010, p.54) it would be possible to "enhance educational innovation, aimed at the promotion of practitioners' critical reflection [...] and sustain a culture of mutual learning, participation, and shared understanding" (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013, p. 4). Another important aspect was the creation of opportunities for exchange and dialogue between the infant-toddler centers and preschools in Milan through a specially set up website, in order to share these experiences and the documentation for consultation by on-line

professionals, families and community members. The final product was the definition of City Guidelines for ECECs through a bottom-up process and wide community consultation. The City Guidelines for ECECs were developed and finalized in Jan-Feb 2016 around the following key pedagogical issues/themes: joint responsibility; inclusiveness/inclusive education perspective; children's rights; listening attitude; learning different "languages"; way/possibilities of expression; learning context for experimentation, concentration, play adventure; design and projects of different environment and spaces; intercultural approach; children needs acknowledgement; personality connected and related to the community; 0-6 continuity; olistic approach; connection between social and health services; Ttadition and innovation; sense of belonging; team-group approach; open and mixed curriculum; observation, documentation and evaluation.

Main goals and method

Main goals of the project were:

- the development of an articulated long-term plan of in-service training initiatives for 0-6 educators (within a perspective of continuity) during a period of increasing lack of financial resources;

- the development of *workshops* experiences with practitioners, children and parents;

- the development of new competences to address the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the ECEC settings by exploring new languages, approaches, methods (art, creativity, citizenship, social rules, emotions, reading and storytelling with children and adults, transition/practices, new materials/recycled materials);

- the development of a website as a tool for the development of a community-based process of sharing, discussing, documenting and planning within an extensive system (the construction of a virtual community based on the in-service experiences developed within each site in order to promote a shared model, accessible to as many educators as possible, was a main goal of this website);

- the use of documentation as a tool and an opportunity for continuing professional development.

A multi-method approach was adopted, by combining a more traditional approach to professional development with workshops, experiential learning opportunities and new ways of engaging professionals in order to promote their development (Zaslow, 2009; Sheridan et al. 2009; OECD, 2012). An extensive use of the ICT characterized the project: video materials were used both as a medium and tools for enhancing professionals, for documenting the professional development process and for creating *virtual on-line communities of learners* (Goldman et al., 2007; Tobin, Mantovani & Bove, 2010). This approach encouraged and gave value to an idea of professional development as a team-based, dynamic process based on video-observations of daily practices, critical reflection, mutual exchange, dialogue (Bove, 2009; Braga, 2010), collaborations (CoRe, 2011; Sheridan, et.al. 2009) and a good balance between theory and practice (Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2015; Sheridan, 2009). It was flexible, embedded in the city context and aimed at meeting the need for professionalization of educators working with increasingly culturally diverse families (Eurofound, 2014; Vila, Pérez & Coll-Serrano, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2009).

All the above mentioned professional development approach and practices meet the innovative

criteria identified for our study. In particular: the use of workshop and experiential learning practices; the investment on the role of the pedagogical coordinator; the participatory nature of the project that involved policy makers, researchers, pedagogical coordinators, educators, children and families; the development on three levels: macro, meso, micro.

Main actions and implementation

The project was developed over a two-year period, based on the workshops initially introduced and conducted by the teacher trainers or researchers and then implemented by the practitioners themselves with children and parents. Pedagogical coordinators were involved in all stage of the project and took also part to the selection of the key themes (year 1). The proposed themes were: a) building citizenship among children/social rules of living in democratic society; b) emotions; c) talking, reading, and storytelling with children and adults; d) relation with parents and settling in/home-school transition (*inserimento/ambientamento*); e) exploring and learning through recycled and sustainable materials. Researchers and teacher trainers from the University of Milan-Bicocca were responsible of the PD initiatives addressed to the 0-3 services (infant toddler centers, "*sezioni primavera*" [bridge classes for children between 2 and 3 years old] and *Tempo per le Famiglie*), managing a total of 12 thematic projects. Researchers and teacher trainers coordinated by the Catholic University focused on the experiences within preschools (3-6 year olds) coordinating a total of 24 thematic projects.

The project was articulated in two phases: teacher trainers acted as *researchers* in the first phase (year 1), and *supervisors* in the second phase (year 2).

Phase I.
During the first year, the educators of the 4 settings involved for each zone of the city selected a theme and took part in an action-research project with at least three services in the same area (*Asili Nido, Sezioni primavera, Tempi per le famiglie)*. During this phase, thematic-workshops were conducted by the teacher trainers/researchers within each zone with the goal of improving educators' knowledges and competences on the selected issues.

Phase II.
During the second year, the same ECEC practitioners involved in Phase I conducted *thematic workshops* with children and parents under the supervision of the teacher trainers or researchers. They were responsible for designing and implementing the workshops themselves. 16 workshops were organized addressing intercultural themes which were the object of the project. A total number of 83 (0-3) educators and 107 (3-6) teachers took part in these workshops. Each workshop was documented, audio and videotaped and these materials were used for a website dedicated to the project (http://mibabi.imagoeditor.net/). The main goal of this documentation phase was to offer teachers the opportunity to connect their learning processes to their daily practices and to transfer what they learned to what they *put into practice* as "teacher-trainers".

At the same time, researchers from the two Universities conducted *10 thematic seminars* each of them was articulated in 33-hour meetings. The seminars addressed the ECEC practitioners of the 9 areas of the city: all the practitioners of the 36 services involved in the first and second phases of the project and 1 or 2 practitioners working in other services in the same area, not involved in the

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previous phases of the project (for a total of 252 educators, not previously involved). During these seminars, materials (videos, observations, texts) were collected, to be further developed for the website (http://mibabi.imagoeditor.net/).

The main difference between Phase I and II was the role of the teacher trainers and experts: from organizing and managing the training, to acting as supervisors/consultants (action-research experiences and workshops with children and families). In Phase II, in fact, teachers became *actors or protagonistis* together with children and parents involved as participants. The shift from being users to actors/protagonists was "a key characteristic" of the project. This characteristic was described as one of the main factors "of successful systemic approaches to professionalization. […] [It requires the trainer's] ability to recognize and build on practitioners' prior and every-day experience (i.e. *analyse de pratique*, critical reflection)" (Urban et al., 2012, p. 515). "Applying this approach to the PD, organization sustains the membership of teachers as they become intrinsically motivated to improve their practice and develop leadership skills" (Dikilitas, 2015, p. 112).

Impact and evaluation

The MIBA project was evaluated by the *Istituto Italiano di Valutazione* (Italian Institute of Evaluation) (http://www.valutare.org). An in-depth qualitative analysis, using many assessment tools, was conducted at many levels and involving all the ECEC practitioners. A questionnaire was administered to all the ECEC practitioners and focus group discussions were conducted with the pedagogical coordinators to gain insights and information on the effectiveness of the project.

Evaluation	Assesment tools
Evaluation of Year 1:	- a **questionnaire** administered to all the ECEC practitioners involved in the project (educators, teachers, pedagogical coordinators) - **focus group** discussions with the pedagogical coordinators of the services involved in the project
Evaluation Year 2	- a **monitor form for the coordinators**; - an **evaluation form for the practitioners** involved in the workshops; - **an evaluation form the practitioners** involved in the seminars

Table 1. Phases and assessment tools

In the *evaluation of the year 1,* the questionnaire was aimed at collecting the practitioners' ideas and evaluation regarding the effectiveness of the MIBA project in terms of professional development. (Main sections of the questionnaire were: practitioners' satisfaction, expectations, transferability and so on). Among the issues discussed during the focus group sessions with the coordinators were the strengths of the project, the critical aspects and perspectives for the future.

In the *evaluation of the year 2,* different tools had been used, in order to gather the coordinators' perspectives on the workshops conducted with children and parents at their schools/infant-toddler centers and the practitioners' evaluations regarding their professional development experience, its

goals and potentialities. Self-evaluation also represented an innovative aspect that was greatly appreciated by all the protagonists. "Self-sustaining, self-regulation, self-evaluation" (Sheridan et al., 2009, pp. 383) processes are fundamental characteristics in continuing professional development. "It's clear that responding to the [actual] challenges, […] we would necessitate to share the evaluation of professionals" (Zaslow, 2009, p. 2).

The data collected as a result of the evaluation process showed a good level of satisfaction regarding the expectations, expressed both by educators/teachers and coordinators. Among the targets considered reached, at the end of the 1st year, were: "the testing of innovative practices and experiential working methods" (Source: Synthesis of evaluation results) and transferability of content and activities: "the practices learned during the experiences are transferable to the daily work environment" (Id.). The results referred to the second year of the project show appreciation regarding the involvement of parents in workshops, the collegial reflection on the process, the discussions regarding critical areas and reviewing some organizational and relational practices. The training project therefore had an impact on the practices. In addition, transferability (as a key element of innovative practices of PD) and sustainability (which characterizes current society, Lim et al., 2009) were elements of innovation appreciated by the protagonists.

One of the result of the MIBA project was the development of the "New Pedagogical Guidelines" for 0-6 ECEC settings. It is of interest to note that these guidelines represent for the first time a clear perspective of *0-6 pedagogical continuity*. They were developed at the city level within a participatory process of collaborative sharing that involved policy makers, practitioners, pedagogical coordinators, researchers and experts from the Universities – the same which planned and coordinated the project. They are a synthesis and an example of an approach to professional development by enhancing participation and implementing changes from a context-driven perspective. The *New Pedagogical Guidelines* were officially presented at the National Conference of the Gruppo Nazionale Nidi-Infanzia held at the University of Milan Bicocca in February 2016 (*XX Convegno Nazionale dei Servizi educativi e delle Scuole dell'infanzia "Curricolo è responsabilità"*). During this Conference, which occurs every year with participants from many Italian Regions, previous national findings from the Questionnaire Study of the CARE project (WP6) were presented referring to Milan's participants (Pastori, Bove, Braga, Zaninelli, 2016)[16].

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[16] Professor Katy Sylva (Oxford University), a member of the CARE project, took part to the International Panel (*Curriculum: interpretations and challenges)* of the Convegno.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND NEW PROJECTS

The MIBA project ended in 2013 but it was further developed and extended in the current project "*Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità*" (2016-2017), developed in close collaboration between the Municipality, the *Università Cattolica di Milano* (P.I. prof. Milena Santerini) and *Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca* (P.I. prof. Susanna Mantovani). This new PD project was developed in continuity with the previous one. Three are the key-axes of this new project: (1) a focus on the themes of *well-being, inclusion and learning;* (2) the use of experiential learning approaches and methods to actively involve the practitioners; (3) the trainer of teacher trainers (*formazione dei formatori*).

This new project represents a *second turning point* for the Municipality of Milan and an interesting observatory of how innovation occurs in practices within a culturally situated perspective. Milan's Municipality is currently greatly challenged by socio-cultural, educational and generational phenomena that have an impact on its ECEC professional development system. These challenges are due to the increasing number of children of immigrants and the new forms/types of immigrations (new generation, refugees, etc.); a redefinition of the concept of "inclusion" for all children; the fast changes in family systems and values; the focus on reducing disadvantages and inequalities among children's learning and possibilities by investing in good quality early childhood and education; the need for new investment on children's learning attitudes to face the challenges (and parents' emerging worries) in order to enhance school success, therefore redefining the approach and conceptualization of curriculum; the high turn-over of practitioners (retirement, new enrolment) and the current political debate redesigning ECEC in Italy. *Well-being*, inclusion and learning are key themes for meeting these challenges in contemporary ECEC settings in Milan.

These and other phenomena, together with Milan's recognized vocation to be a forerunner of *realistic innovation* in the country highlight the need to continue to invest in new approaches in the development and maintenance of its human resources, in order to improve them and keep them more connected to day-to-day practices while at the same time producing the necessary changes and transformations in practices to face the new challenges. PD in ECEC has a long history and root traditions but there is tension between tradition and change and there is a need to find new languages and greater personal initiative in staff members, a better use of time and greater involvement on the part of children and families.

The analysis of the interviews conducted with stakeholders and educators, that we will illustrate in the finding section of the present report, gives evidence of the above-mentioned issues, as well as to the need for new active methods and approaches through e-learning experiences, peer support, video-analysis of practices, communities of learners, training of teacher trainers. All of these aspects are needed to maximize the impact of PD resources and to involve practitioners through *innovative methods and tools* they then have to put into action in their daily work with children and parents.

MILAN-SECTION II:

THE MICRO LEVEL – INSIDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INNOVATION IN IN-SERVICE PD

Introduction

In this section, findings from the analyses of the new data collected for the case of Milan are outlined with a discussion of how innovative PD occurs in practice and how ECEC practitioners perceive its impact in the field. Our focus is on the process of innovation and its impact on professional consciousness and motivation in terms of networking, participatory practices and new practices. Our report, in line with the Italian tradition - currently confirmed by the first national evaluation practices - focuses on processes rather than on children's outcomes. The assumption is that professional development practices themselves are complex, social and culturally situated phenomena, involving values, implicit pedagogies, local knowledge, individual competences, relationships and personal histories (Urban et al., 2012). Last but not least, professional development practices affect motivation and energies of professionals in performing their roles (Gorozidis, Papaioannou, 2014) and are embedded in social, cultural, organizational and pedagogical components that influence the definition, impact and effectiveness of these practices (Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013).

In presenting our findings we aim to:

- – deepen the way in which the selected approaches of in-service PD operate in practice, at a micro-local level, in the three identified subcases;

- – deepen the understandig of professional educators' perceptions regarding these approaches, their innovative features and their changes/evolutions;

- – assess/evaluate whether the PD process sustains professional educators' motivation to work with children and families and experiment with innovation; fosters reflexivity to and a sense of responsibility towards children, parents and the city as a whole;

- – assess what teachers think about how PD influences their practices;

- – compare findings with the criteria of innovation in PD we have outlined and emphasized in the previous parts of this report.

Thanks to the voices of teachers and educators (data analyses procedure was presented in the first part *Introduction* of the Italian Chapter) we can outline their experience of continuing professional development and explore the impact of the CPD strategies on attitudes, participation and the implementation of innovative practices in a large city like Milan which faces the critical challenges not only to experiment but also find the best dimension for a relevant and sustainable professional development process. These voices may help determine strategies and orientations for further improvement in CPD.

Key findings in brief:

- teachers and educators[17] agree on a shared perception of how innovation occurs in practice and on the key components of effective, innovative approaches to PD;

- teachers are aware of the evolution and changes of the PD framework developed at the city level and further implemented in each site at a local level;

- techers and educators show a strong sense of identity and belonging to their service, to the Milan Municipal system and to the Italian ECEC system;

- issues of impact, transferability, the development of new competences (soft skills) characterize our sample: there is great consensus regarding which methods promote or impede growth at a micro level;

- there is a high level of consensus between what we have outlined at a macro level by analyzing the documentation and what emerged from the interviews with the participants;

- we found some variations regarding how ECEC practitioners think about CPD, suggesting that it is not just a matter of individual variation and that continuing professional development cultures vary across and within *nidi* and *scuole dell'infanzia*. There are strong center identities which remain through different generations of teachers and which can be considered an aspect of professional development. Some schools and subgroups/teams within schools have developed quite sophisticated and effective professional development learning communities, others had fewer opportunities to do this (due to greater instability among the staff, more turnover among the coordinators, etc).

Some general assumptions shared among our informants are:

- the awareness of being part of an innovative, although at times discontinuous, system of city-wide CPD;

- the idea that innovation in CPD has to do with new approaches, strategies and methods, but also with *active participation* as an "agent of change, more than a subject of change";

- the evolution of in-service PD approaches in past years and the shift from a theoretical way of stimulating learning to a more situated one that has stimulated new practices (workshops, action-research, analysis of practices, video-observations, video-feed-back, documentation, etc.);

- the current challenges of transferability from theory into practice and from center to center (which is a crucial challenge in a large-scale case such as Milan);

- the role of the pedagogical coordinator as a promoter/*engine* of innovation and the main vehicle of transferability in a long-term perspective.

What we have found substantially confirms qualitative/quantitative findings in similar area emerging from the evaluation of the MIBA project carried out by the commission of the *Istituto Italiano di Valutazione*, in which we involved one of the sites we considered in our analysis.

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[17] As we have done in the previous section of this report, we use both the terms "teachers" and "educators" depending on the type of service: 3-6 (teachers) or 0-3 (educators).

INTERPRETING INNOVATION AND ITS IMPACT

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Although thinking on continuing professional development varies depending on the school context, career stage, experiences, individual history and background, most teachers and educators involved in our study felt that some basic components/principles determined the main differences between *innovative* approaches and traditional ones.

For the majority of our participants, innovative PD practices were characterized by:

- – a good balance between theory and practice;
- – the possibility to experiment new practices under an expert's supervision;
- – a strong connection with research (the link with Universities and research centers);
- – an inquiry-based learning process and the use of dynamic methods;
- – the active involvement of practitioners in all stages of the process;
- – the value of teamwork and collegiality in order to promote long-term processes of improvement and changes;
- – the ability to meet local needs;
- – the crucial role of the coordinator in promoting or impeding growth (impact);
- – the need to improve the use of ICT to facilitate new processes of peer learning, distance learning, shared learning.

Within a general consensus which points out the strong and permanent sense of identity of Milan's professionals, some differences appear between younger teachers at an earlier stage of their career and more experienced teachers. Younger teachers claim a stronger connection between theory and practice and are eager to transfer theoretical knowledge into new practices and behaviors. More experienced teachers sometimes seem to accept the changes on one hand and see these connections with greater ease, while on the other hand they also show some resistance to innovation based on nostalgic feelings about the "golden years" or they show fatigue, disenchantment and diminished energies. They claim that in the years before the last phase (2008-2016) they had "less or discontinuous PD", although in terms of hours, this is not true and seems in a sense to disregard professional development implications of workshops, which they accept as a positive experience.
The interpretation of innovation varies depending on the position of the informants in the field. While stakeholders interpret innovation within a long-term and systemic/macro perspective and within a politically oriented framework, teachers and educators help us to grasp some nuances of interpretation at the *local* and micro levels.

Recent changes in CPD. Being part of a system.

The informants recognize the changes in the recent in-service PD approaches compared to previous professional development courses. Educators and teachers consider the most recent courses more

effective and impactful on their practices because they address local needs, offer a good balance between theory and practice and use new approaches and methods. "*While previously courses were more theoretical*" - as an educator told us during an interview – "*in recent PD courses there is a good balance between theory and practice (..) methods have changed (...) today PD courses are embedded in our contexts*" (Ed., 3, Nido Paravia, p.2). This interpretation confirms what is largely recognized in the current international and national debate (Zaslow et.al. 2009; Oberhuemer et al., 2010; Lazzari, Picchio & Musatti, 2013). The variety of in-service training opportunities offered to ECEC educators in the past 10 years has been described by our interviewers as *innovative* thanks to active participation and a good balance between theory and practice.

When we asked the question "*since the beginning of your experience, have you seen changes in PD proposals or modalities?*" many educators made clear how the actual forms of PD (contexts, number of participants, methods, intensity and duration, approaches) had changed over the years in the case of the Municipality of Milan (as we described in the contextualization of our case). Recent professional development courses and PD projects/programs are based on experiential learning processes, observation, supervision, analysis of practices, rather than on the theoretical transmission of knowledge or traditional learning approaches (characterized by a more passive role on the part of the educators or teachers involved). Recent courses/CPD projects, as our interviews revealed, "*are well connected to our practices*" (Ed.2, Paravia, p.10). This aspect represents a change from the "traditional" idea of professional development (and the traditional idea of the process of learning and teaching) as a transmission or course-led model of how teachers learn. PD approaches today show a "*good balance between theory and practice, and this is what I expect from good quality professional development practices*" (Ed. 3, Paravia, p.2). The most recent training proposals thus appear more "balanced" in terms of alternating theory/practice and this, according to respondents, is an *innovation* and a welcome change compared to the earlier in-service training courses, which were mainly theoretical and uni-directional (trainers-educators).

> "*Before [25 years ago] there were theoretical seminars, 4 of us had to leave the center to attend them (...) they were held in big auditoriums. I remember the tiers: you sat down, took notes [...]. There was a subject, you took notes. It was a theoretical lesson. Maybe there were slides… and then you were left to yourself*" (Ed. 1, Paravia, p. 1)

> "*Today we need a different theory, situated in today's society. We need a theory that refreshes us.*" (ed. 2, Paravia, p. 4)

Another element of change that emerged from the interviews was the transition from training targeted to many services, each represented by a few teachers (2-3 per school), to the involvement of fewer services, involving the entire staff. The teachers described how - in the case of training courses addressed to few teachers/representatives - there was also the problem of the "transferability" of the knowledge/skills learned in the training center. The current training courses, involving the entire staff, seem more effective, facilitating the transfer/sharing of competences.

> "*At the beginning I recall there were training courses for all the schools: 3 or 4 teachers went on behalf of the entire staff. But the problem was transference to the others. Maybe you told a colleague, but that was all. It was frustrating because your ideas were dispersed and it felt like time was wasted*" (Ed. 1, Paravia, p.1).

Current PD opportunities are characterized by the active involvement of educators and teachers through a variety of methods such as: workshops/experiential learning, video feedback, video

observations, peer learning. ICT and new methods have progressively replaced a more traditional approach to PD and learning. As an educator clearly explained:

"*Among the most significant changes in the PD methods and approaches developed in the past 10 years in our city, new technologies are highly significant (...) If I go back, I remember when expert-trainers used transparencies (...) the technological -revolution is part of our work even at the daycare center (..) teacher trainers and experts use technology. And this made PD more attractive: it is one thing to be engaged as a listener in a seminar, another thing is being involved as viewer watching a video…. Maybe clips videotaped in another ECEC center or Preschool*" (Ed., 4. Bicocca, p.12).

A key component of these new approaches is the possibility, as many teachers said during the interviews, to be actively involved, emotionally involved, and at the same time "*to be actively engaged in dialogue*" with others at many levels. "*Video materials*" - as an educator clearly stated in the interview - "*are an opportunity for us to share and discuss our professionality/way of working. Observing, for example, play interactions among children or between us and children and then discussing what we saw with others is very different from listening to a description of a play-activity*" (Ed., 2, Paravia, p.5). The use of ICT (video, interactive tools, computers and so on) encourage "self-sustaining, self-regulation, self-evaluation" practices(...) and "the capacity to create a self-sustaining network" (Sheridan, et.al., 2009, pp.380-388). "*The possibility to share and to be actively engaged in processes of sharing [with an expert-trainer] is not only 'a way to evaluate/verify the process' but it is how you acquire an educational mentality" (*Ed. 1, Bicocca, p.6*)*. These changes towards experience-learning based on sharing were valued, although they were also considered challenging, with no significant differences between the younger and the more experienced professionals. These findings are consistent with the history of our case and its evolution, that we have already described in the previous section of this Milanese chapter, on the basis of the existing data collected in our case study.

Innovation and impact. Implications for actions

The awareness of the link between innovative approaches to CPD and the implication for actions/new actions characterized our sample: educators and teachers were aware that when PD practices are poorly conceptualized, they are less effective in producing long-term improvement and learning. They showed a great awareness of the need to develop PD processes by which they develop skills over time and achieve a deep understanding on what they do in practice. The need to implement learning beyond a single PD course is highly shared within our sample. Today, the process of translating knowledge into renewed practices in ECEC setting is more systematic. Professional development courses and their impact are not considered as independent components of innovation. Professional training practices require a strong link with issues of transferability, changes, improvement in practices. The underlying assumption – as our informants made clear - is that "learning" is more effective when it is conceptualized as a dynamic top-down and bottom-up process of learning:

"*Theory is fine if you know how to put it into practice; practice alone is not enough because if you don't understand why you do something, the practice remains meaningless" (*Ed. 3, Paravia, p.2*)*.

"*Training for the entire staff is the most effective, because it relates to that context (…) and it is discussed by everyone*" (Ed. 2, Paravia, p. 3).

The transition from general training to specific interventions in the context of each school is also associated with a greater involvement of personnel, both in practical/workshop activities and in courses aimed at methodological training (i.e. storytelling techniques; games on music education

etc.). The trainer variables (supervisor, mentor, coach) and the time spent in each service (beyond the training sessions) are also central in reflecting on the impact of innovative models in a broad sense. The possibility to continue the learning process thanks to contact with the trainer even after the end of the experience seems to be an important element that increases effectiveness. The teachers talk about the processes of "mutual accomodation" between trainers and educators, between the training proposal and its translation within the service. When these processes last longer than the PD experience, they could have a greater impact on changing practices.

The connection between theory and practice. The need to develop new competences/skills

Teachers and educators underlined the need to develop new skills and competences to connect theory and practice. When the distance between theory and practice is too vast, impact and transferability are weaker. *"Once the training was far from practical, it was not so enjoyable. One asking questions, the other answering. But the discourse on sharing and reflecting together was less "useable". Today [instead] there is dialogue"* (Ed. 2, Paravia, p. 5). According to our respondents, developing new competences is a main goal of continuing professional development. Many teachers interviewed said, that today they feel pressured to develop a high level of professionalization (expectations are higher). They indicated their needs for "interdisciplinarity" (soft competences) and, in particular between psycho-pedagogical and socio-anthropological inputs to face the multiple challenges of promoting high quality education for all children and families. *"We need to extend-expand our knowledge"* - said a teacher during the interview - *"the PD courses we had with a cultural mediation were highly significant. He gave us the anthropological knowledge that was really useful for our work"* (Ins.1, Narcisi, p.7). One of the pedagogical principles on which innovation is based is "interdisciplinary teacher collaboration" (Zaslow et al., 2009). "They require interdisciplinary team teaching" (Zaslow et al., 2010, p. 53). In fact "educational reforms require innovative professional development initiatives […] Learning interdisciplinarity could be a tool [for these]" (Lynd-Balta, Erklenz-Watts, Freeman, & Westbay, 2006, p. 23). The need for interdisciplinary was also highlighted by the teachers and educators as an important component of innovative PD practices. This seemed to us particularly strong in the ECEC settings, with a higher number of immigrant children and families. In brief, intercultural challenges could be seen as stimuli to renew ways of thinking about CPD on the part of our participants.

Addressing local needs. What is local?

Addressing local needs was perceived as a key theme by teachers involved in our study. Innovative approaches are effective in determining "improvement and changes" (in practice) when the needs of the field are met. A key characteristic of successful approaches to professionalization "is their ability to recognize and build on practitioners' prior and every-day experience (i.e. *analyse de pratique*, critical reflection) and to support peer learning and 'intergenerational' learning" (Urban et al., 2012 b, p. 515). Today, as a teacher told us during an interview, *"PD practices are innovative [...] they are strongly connected to practice. We work on videos, we reflect on our practices, we are involved in educational workshops"* (Ed. 2, Paravia, p. 5). Workshop experiences of analyses of practices based on the use of observational tools, as our practitioners underlined in their interviews when referring to their recent experiences (such as the laboratorial experiences within the MIBA project) in our case, are perceived as the most effective ones. In our case, workshops and other practical experiences also allowed parent involvement in new ways and this resulted as particularly important in contexts where there was a high density of migrant families.

Our data, compared to current literature led us to redefine and question the notion of local needs: are these the needs of the single professional? of the team? of the center, including all components (organization, teaching and not teaching staff, etc)? of professionals and specific children and families? Of the area? Of the Municipal system? of ECEC in our country within the political debate? In the words of our informants: personal and individual or team needs often mingle with a wider perception of "local" as it is usually meant in the literature, pointing out the strong political awareness and attitudes which have always been very strong in ECEC.

Who is interacting with professionals to negotiate and determine "local needs"? What balance is there between local (in terms of personal motivation and "pleasure") and system needs if the sense of belonging to the system is strong? Again, coordinators seemed to be key-figures in determining local needs and in the choice and interaction with sensitive expert trainers.

Reflexivity, mutual learning, collaboration/teamwork

Emergent themes from the analysis of the interviews showed the changes toward *innovation* in the continuing professional development field. Today, as an educator made clear during the interview, "*there is the possibility to be engaged into dialogue (on our practices)"* (Ed.2. Paravia, p.3). A key point of innovative PD is the possibility to share learning with others: peers, the coordinator, teachers and educators working in other centers or schools, expert trainers regarding specific projects/courses. Among the competences indicated by our practitioners/interviewees is the capacity to engage in dialogue with others: for example, as a teacher indicates in the interview "*discussion between us (the teachers) and the expert-trainer is an opportunity for dialogue with our day-to-day practices. [..] Today we have the possibility to share common strategies embedded in our educational contexts. We could also debate delicate issues or very emotional aspects of our work*" (Ins. 2, Narcisi, p. 9). Our analysis showed that when continuing professional development is conceptualized as a dynamic process of *top-down/bottom-up* actions of planning, sharing, documenting and renewing practices within a community of teachers as learners, it is perceived as more effective by the educators/teachers involved. Several studies included in the recent Eurofound report (2014) identify "*reflexivity* as a key aspect in high quality, strong impact CPD, that usually includes observation, documentation, action, review" (Peeters et al., 2014, p.68), the combination of different methods/tools in order to enhance teachers' competence (OECD, 2012) and "approaches combining workshops or training with on-site visits training" (Zaslow, 2010, p. 54). The assumption is that PD needs to be "linked to daily practices" of the educators involved in the training.

Sharing *is not enough* to promote change: the role of time and pleasure

Innovative methods and strategies are needed to introduce *changes in practices*. Sharing is not a taken for granted assumption within the ECEC community where multiple perspectives, values, points of view are inter-win. It requires methods and a facilitator capable to provoke and, at the same time, sustain the process of systematic-situated sharing within a community-based perspective. When PD is conceived as a dynamic process of learning within an inquiry-based framework and team-work, the results are more interesting in terms of innovation and of impact/efficacy. Which methods are more valuable in developing competences for engaging in dialogue, sharing, co-constructing knowledge, respecting each other's views and interpretations? And how is it possible to encourage systematic processes of dialogue and sharing among the educators well connected to practices and within a perspective of lifelong learning?

Innovation has to do with pleasure too. When a good balance between theory and practice is met, greater possibilities for learning with pleasure are guaranteed. *"The most recent PD courses had theory and practice, and this united us and [made the training] very pleasant and fun"* (Ed. 1, Narcisi, p. 3). This seems to us a key-point which should be further explored. Eliciting curiosity, fostering talents, offering new expressive, aesthetic and cultural experiences, first to the adults, is a key-factor in communicating and working with children and parents, bringing new ideas and energies. The pleasure experienced by professionals (individually and as a group), a sign of their well-being, is seen as a possible condition for the well-being of children. This is also true in research: when researchers become filmmakers, they experiment the "poetic and pleasure of being artistic" (Tobin & Hsueh, 2007).

Another common theme that emerged from the interviews is the idea of involving practitioners in all stages of the training experiences, since the planning phase. It is clear that when CPD courses are designed with teachers, they are more effective (Literat, 2012, p. 9). Impact itself has to do with the involvement and the active-engagement of the participants. When PD is situated and when it responds to the local needs, the results are greater in terms of activating intense long-term processes of renewing (innovating) practices. In these cases, as our practitioners told us, the PD is *"closer and more useful"*. The assumption here is the need to reinforce, stimulate teacher competences and creative resources by *provoking*, without solving problems (problem solving). The role of the mentor or the coordinator is crucial in this sense according to our participants, especially when new proposals need to be implemented.

Finally, *time as a variable* is another key issue that emerged from our analysis. Intensity, duration and time are key components of innovation and effective CPD. When a PD course is conceptualized as a sporadic-isolated action, it becomes less effective in term of changes, improvement, and learning. This is a crucial issue consistent with our criteria, as some educators clearly pointed out in our study:

> *"PD is significant when it is conceptualized as a process, an experience, a research process"* (Ed. 1, Bicocca, p.14)

> *"The most valuable experiences were the longer ones, meeting PD goals required time"* (Ins. 1, Narcisi, p.3)

With these preliminary, general results as basis, in the next section we will illustrate some examples of *best practices of CPD* that emerged from the three subcases involved in our case study. Once again, the perceptions of our respondents regarding current forms of innovation from within is a central issue of our analysis.

EXAMPLES OF "INNOVATIVE" IN-SERVICE PD PRACTICES

The analysis illustrated in the previous paragraph (presented so far) shows a shared interpretation of *innovation* among educators in Milan. In this paragraph we aim at providing insights on how to move from awareness to action using the descriptions/analysis of three examples of "innovative PD" practices identified in the three subcases involved in our case study: *the Paravia Nido, the Narcisi Scuola dell'Infanzia, the Bambini Bicocca Nido* (already involved in WP2). Each selected example illustrates a key-component/criteria of innovation:

- Example 1. An example of a "workshop-experiential" learning approach (the MIBA) connected to ICT and aimed at encouraging new methods for involving immigrant parents (*rules and citizenships*);
- Example 2. An example of "intercultural" training in connection with a local research center (ISMU) and the role of the coordinator as an engine of innovation and pedagogical continuity;
- Example 3. An example of University-school partnership and research- based/inquiry-based learning and professional development processes.

EXAMPLE 1.

The example of the MIBA project and its implementation within the Nido Paravia

Brief description of the subcase and data
source

Data were gathered in the 0-3 Asilo Nido Paravia, one of the three subcases selected in the Case Study of Milan. The Infant-Toddler Center (Asilo Nido Paravia) is an old and very well known context (it was opened in 1984), situated in a peripheral and difficult area of the city, which is characterized by a significantly high percentage of immigrant families and children, along with a number of non-immigrant middle or high income families. In this area, in particular, many socio-cultural conflicts have characterized recent years, with severe problems of exclusion and racism among the families attending the ECEC services due to the number of low-income families living in the same area of families with higher status. Families attending the *Nido* are still very diverse (immigrant families, non-immigrant families, low-income families and families with higher socio-economic status) and the attendance rate of children of immigrants is still very high (45%), along with a number of Italian families. Many intercultural issues and tensions arose in the past years. It is of interest to note that the Primary school in the same neighborhood was impacted by the recent Ministerial law that established the "number of immigrant children per classroom (CM n. 1, 08/01/2010). Over the past 20 years, the *Asilo Nido* has been involved in many action-research and in-service training initiatives and it is a key site in welcoming student teachers from the undergraduate course in Education Science at the University of Milan-Bicocca.

4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with two experiences educators, and two younger educators. A focus group with three educators, with 3, 11, 15 years of experience, was conducted to explore the implementation of the MIBA project (from 2013 on).

Interviews	Years of experience in the Nido per each educator	Focus groups and number of ECEC staff involved
4 semi-structured individual interviews with educators;	Ed. 1: 26 years of experiences in the Nido Ed. 2: 23 years of experience in the Nido Ed. 3: 11 years of experience in the Nido Ed. 4: 3 years of experience in the Nido	1 FG with three educators with 3 years of experience, 11 years and 15 years in the Nido)
1 semi-structured interview with the ex-coordinator (involved in the MIBA project)	Coordinatrice: 22 years of experience	

Table: Data sources

When we asked the questions: "*What PD experiences have been more valuable and effective in your recent experiences? Across your experience, which ones would you say have been most useful to you in what ways? Which PD experiences have had a stronger influence in your practices?*" the educators interviewed at the Paravia ECEC (Subcase I) said it was the "MIBA" project and its local implementation regarding "Rules and Citizenship".

As already mentioned in this chapter, the PD was aimed at developing new competences (*soft skills)* to work with immigrant families and children, starting with some workshops on the theme "rules" and "citizenship". This two-year experience (year 2011-2013) involved all of the staff at the ECEC, with the educators at the Mar Jonio *Tempo per le Famiglie* located in the same area and the coordinator (the methodological articulation of this training experience – previously explained in the introductory part of this Milanese Section - is illustrated in two videoclips chosen for the videolibrary).

Specifically, the implementation phase of the MIBA-project within the *Nido Paravia* was divided into two parts:

- First year: theoretical training on rules and citizenship in cross-cultural contexts, workshops with educators and parents conducted by experts/trainers, video-recordings of important workshops on rules and communicating with parents, documentation and critical analysis of the workshops experience with the participants;

- Second year: conducting of workshops with children/parents by educators under the supervision of trainers/experts, transversal workshops also open to educators/teachers from other ECECs/schools. At the end, the video materials and texts were collected and published on a website for the dissemination-exchange with educators from other Municipal services/schools.

Why is this project a good example of "innovation" in PD? Views and perceptions of the insiders

The analysis of interviews conducted with educators involved in the project in the Paravia ECEC highlights some elements of innovation that reflect and are consistent with the criteria for innovation raised by the literature review. Among these:

- the situated and systemic project was developed at the city level involving infant-toddler centers, preschools, centers for children and families;

- the participatory character, or the involvement of educators with the children and families (involved in the workshop phase) and the possibility of providing training together with educators from other services in the same area;

- the workshop approach and practical testing of new methods by educators in training;

- the themes of inclusion-interculture and therefore consistency between PD and the needs of the service (which, at this time, are challenged with delicate issues of interculture and inclusion);

- the use of multimedia tools as an aid for reflection and the construction of a city-website that facilitates the visibility, sharing and transferability of training practices to others in a large scale system.

Specifically, to the question "*what do you believe to have been the most effective PD experience*?", the interviewed teachers underlined the added value of workshops, together with the use of ICT (visual methods) for documentation, practice analysis and redesign.

The possibility to observe a trainer/expert in action and, subsequently, to experience first-hand what was seen in a "protected training context" and under the supervision of trainers was one of the strengths of the project. The educators emphasized the potential and the methodological innovation of an approach in which workshops (learning from experience), together with video recordings (as a documentation tool, but also as a stimulus for discussion and reflection, between educators and parents), proved to be particularly useful for activating the review of the processes, video-feedback, reflection anchored on observable behaviors (in teachers and children) and redesign.

The perception of innovation and effectiveness of this method were exemplified in interviews:

> "*[A significant element of the MIBA project was] the workshop. First we did it ourselves, and then we repeated it with parents. The interesting thing was that in this "innovative experimentation/practice" we were supervised [by trainers], we weren't alone. First we did it ourselves: the trainers had [a meeting] with parents [starting from the discussion of a video recorded at the ECEC] and we observed. [...] [In this way] we saw the trainers in action, the answers they gave. [...] And then we tried to do it, but we were always supervised by the trainers. [...] We internalized this method because we first simulated it, then watched others, then did it ourselves ... and still do this in meetings [with parents, following this method]* "(Ed. 1, p. 5).

> "*This [workshop] on how to conduct a meeting with the parents starting from the vision and discussion of a video and making contact with parents through a video was a new thing. [There was a proposal for a different way to use video]: not to show what we do, but to promote discussion. I'll show you how your child behaves when s/he plays, for example, to create broader discussion about rules. [...] This required involvement by everyone. Even for those in greater difficulty [...] I told you, and I showed you [...] Let's start from a fact* "(ed. 2, pp. 9-10).

Traditionally, workshops hinge on some components: first of all, doing or "producing something", concrete/material actions. In this case, however, the doing is played not only or not so much on a "manual" level, but especially in a relational-communicative dimension. The aim of the workshops, in fact, was to promote the development of relational and soft skills (soft skills: Ciappei & Cinque, 2014), in order to improve interaction, communication and dialogue with families, especially in culturally complex environments, where the themes of rules, citizenship, rights and the negotiation/adjustment of limits assume particularly interesting cultural nuances.

In this case, the "workshop" around which the project focused, along with the possibility for supervision by trainers, enabled the teachers to concretely experiment new forms and strategies of communication and relationships with families: "*I will show how children behave*" as a teacher summarized "*and then we'll discuss it together*" (methods based on the observation of children's behavior and the involvement of parents in observing the same). The impact and "long-term effects" of this training approach are demonstrated by the fact that to date (training completed), the teachers continue to design, re-design, put into practice opportunities and different ways of relating with parents, even those with different cultural backgrounds, referring to what they learned and experienced during training

"[In MIBA, the use, in particular, of the workshop] was good because we were able to find a strategy that was appropriate for everyone and could be re-proposed in time. A good combination of theory and practice"(ed. 3, p. 5).

Simultaneously, the systematic use of video recording - both to document the experience of children at the ECEC, and as a stimulus for the focus group/exchange with parents (Tobin, Mantovani, Bove, 2010) - was another element perceived as "innovative" by the teachers involved. The use of multimedia tools for communication and information (ICT) is among the innovative methods for in-service training of educators (Margiotta, 2006) and reflects widespread practices and approaches at the EU and international level (ET 2020). In the case being analyzed, the training model was partly taken and adapted from previous research projects ("*Children Crossing Borders",* AA.VV., in press and *Teacher's Behaviour Analysis in Infant Toddler Center. Instruments and methods for training within a cross national research project",* Braga, Bove, Mantovani & Moran, 2011; Bove C., Moran M.J., Cescato S., Braga P. & Brookshire R. 2014) and the scope enriched by the workshop framework linked to *Bando 285* (as described in the introductory section of this report), hence the MIBA project was developed, finding creative ways to respond to the selection and obtain financing.

From a methodological standpoint, the educators recognized and appreciated some "innovative elements" of the project, including:

- the use of video recording to capture some everyday practices and to observe the complexity of some phenomena, otherwise difficult to address, such as the negotiation of rules with children and families from different cultures;

- to learn a new way to use video (*new* compared to the way the video recordings are normally used by the educators, for documentation purposes), as a "stimulus", an inspiration, an opportunity to create moments of comparison and discussion between educators and families (also from other cultural backgrounds);

- the correspondence between training, and in particular "methodological tools" which the teachers say they were enriched by, and the professionalization needs of practitioners.

Some excerpts from the interviews explain these issues, helping us to grasp the perception of the educators (insiders):

Videoresearch and professional development
"[Within the MIBA project] one of us was filming, then we saw the video [...] This use of video was useful. [...] It's fine to introduce the use of new tools. It was very effective, because it helped to look at ourselves in different ways "(Ed. 1, p. 4)

Video-feedback and inquiry-based learning
"The fact of being in a video in everyday practice that by now has become so automatic ... is like seeing yourself for the first time, as if you were an outsider, with an external eye. It raises new questions and makes you think about the meaning of what you do without thinking about it. It captures your attention and does not tired you"(ed. 4, p. 3).

"The training method that we experienced in MIBA [...]: the use of the camera, the video discussion etc., it works and it's decisive"(Ed. 2, p. 10)

The awareness and effectiveness of the "pleasure" of training that responded to local needs of educators also emerged:

> *"What I liked very much [thinking about effective training courses, which have had an impact] are the proposals that came right when we needed them" (Ed. 1, p. 6).*

The analysis of the interviews also showed the presence of a trainer who acted as a "supervisor", an element of innovation which allowed a longer lasting impact in time. In particular, the presence of researchers and trainers was interpreted by the educators as innovative because it activated them, enhancing the analysis of practices, connecting research with practice. Specifically, the supervision experienced of the training models emerged. This aspect - "innovative" with respect to the previous training courses - created the opportunity for the teachers to feel supported (instead evaluated) and to "experiment" in the dynamic implementation of the training proposals, being able, at the same time, to discuss and review their own actions, the consequences, the possible measures to be included in the pedagogical re-design. The perception is that of a shared participation in a co-constructed path in the dialogue between theory and practice, and not a simple transfer of information from the trainer to the teacher/educator. The multi-vocal testing of a set of innovative dialogue practices with families involved researchers, teachers, educators and families together in a practical renewal process of social participation from the inside. The training as a critical analysis of the practice is, in this case, an element of *situated innovation* that was particularly effective according to the teachers.

> **Supervisor**
> *[In MIBA] "Trainers were always present as supervisors: these practices were innovative. They had never done it this way. They allowed us to creatively review and rethink things we were already doing, that had never come to mind" (Ed. 1, p. 6)*
>
> *[The teacher-trainer-supervisor ensures] "a comparison of different perspectives, [s/he is] a critical eye, not involved with the parents and the educators. [...] [Thanks to their presence] there was less fear of judgment by the trainer, reducing the distance between us and them"(ed. 2, p. 10)*
>
> *"Here [in MIBA] there was a partnership. [...] I've done a lot of training, in my [brief] experience, but it is certain that this training method [with university trainers/teachers] is different from what we do [...]: it's not only a transfer of information" (ed. 4, p. 3).*

The presence of teacher trainers and supervisors and the co-construction of elements are particularly appreciated by the educators, who - not only in the individual interviews, but also in the focus groups - said they received elements of growth and new ideas for the implementation and improvement of their educational proposals.

Was this project effective in promoting change and growth? Insiders' views and perceptions

When we asked the teachers "*What has changed and what was modified in the way you work at the ECEC? What was the impact of the training in terms of change in educational practices?*" interesting data emerged on perceived impact, the transferability of experience or the translation of training into new practices with children and families by the teachers involved in the project. In focus groups conducted with all teachers at the ECEC, some specific questions were addressed to investigate the translation of the experience into new practices in the ECEC context.

The analysis of interviews about this issue highlights some of the strengths of the MIBA project in terms of sustainability and practical applications in daily life at the ECEC, summarized as follows:

- the "methodological" apprenticeship offered by the training experience (for a detailed summary

see the previous section);

- the introduction of a new repertoire of educational practices for working with children and parents on the difficult/delicate issues, such as rules and negotiation in intercultural contexts;

- the opportunity to "open up" and start new educational exchanges with educators/teachers from other contexts (infant-toddler centers, preschools in the area) regarding a common theme (in this case, rules and citizenship in intercultural society).

These are considerations that have to do with the size and impact of the transferability of skills and deserve further study in order to monitor their evolution/stability over time (even in the future and not only in terms of narrative reconstruction, but by observing the new behaviors). If these are "guidelines" that can be envisaged for the future – based on what today, as far as we can tell on the basis of our data, it is interesting to note that the issues highlighted by the educators involved mirror the innovation criteria used in the selection of our study case.

Some excerpts from the interviews effectively synthesize these aspects:

Workshops:
"[Through the workshops used in MIBA and the use of the videos as a group discussion mediator] the theoretical aspect has changed also in relationships with parents. Now when there are meetings with parents one person talks, one welcomes ... methods have changed. Last year we used photos to show the projects concretely..." (ed. 3, p. 4).

Reflexivity:
"We have been thinking about a lot of things, a lot of items you take for granted, so obvious that you end up not seeing them anymore. [...] About rules, for example, [which was our theme], we approached them from how to sit at the table"(ed. 2, p. 8).

Teamwork, collegiality, sharing:
"It's a project that has given me the opportunity to see other colleagues. [...] I was able to see other things ... it showed me how so many of my other colleagues dealt with their difficulties and the ways they overcame these difficulties. [...] Even the exchange with colleagues in preschool [was interesting]"(ed. 3, p. 4)

Exchanges with other educators/teachers and other ECECs:
"[Comparison with other services and other colleges] is interesting because it leads to comparison with other ECECs. [...] Seeing what they do in other services brings up questions [...], helps you see what others do, [and even creates] an exchange of solutions "(Ed. 2, p. 4)

Involving parents:
"[A significant training experience for me regarded the relationship with families]: It was interesting to discuss with colleagues and - through videos - with other organizations"(ed. 4, p.

Creativity, improvement, change:
"[This] is interesting training: doing things differently, never thought of before" (ed. 2, p. 7)
"A significant training experience for me is the one that offers you new material, or at least [offers you] materials with another use [...] and opens creativity, to see how you can use the same things in a different way "(ed. 3, p. 6)

Participatory processes of learning by doing
"The prospective introduced was extraordinary and innovative, wow! In the sense that the entire city participated in what had been done "(Coord., P. 17);

The teachers (demonstrating an interesting meta-reflexive capacity), also focus on other "areas" that are useful to consider because they bring "training needs expressed by the insiders" to light. In

particular, it is significant to note that among the outcomes of the training courses there was, in the statements of the teachers, a greater awareness of the need to have more and more opportunities for in-service training on issues like development, the curriculum, the relationship with the children and parents, interculturalism. In the words of an educator:

> *"I want to deepen the theme of observing children. It's true that it's part of our professional background [...] but maybe there are tools that are a little more 'contemporary'. I need someone to help us recognize, look at modern children, contemporary children and reread them under the light current. It's true that children are always observed, but too many things escape us. You're there with a group of children, but you can't look at everything, perhaps we need to update the lens through which we look at them "(ed. 2, p. 11).*

> *"It's important to focus on the child. [...] I need to work competently with the children because they spend a long time with us... and I have to make sure I do my job with them well" (ed. 3, p. 3).*

Main results and discussion
In summary, all educators agree the project was an example of "good innovative practice" in relation to the tradition of in-service training and previous experience. Today, on completion of course, the teachers say they have learned/consolidated a working method and some soft skills (at the declared level, we have no observational data that documents the actions) for working on sensitive issues such as rules, citizenship, the limits in increasingly complex situations from an intercultural point of view, using the observation of video recordings as a starting point for critical discussions of daily practices.

Among the outcomes of the course, the teachers mentioned:

- the workshop training mediated by video technology facilitated the development of soft skills related to group leadership, intercultural communication, mediation;
- the supervision by researchers-trainers / experts contributed to accompanying the transfer of competences learned from training to everyday practice;
- the consistency between the themes, the content of the training and the needs of local teachers ensured greater impact and greater duration in the ECEC;
- the construction of the web-site made it possible the diffusion and dissemination of materials, experiences, processes at the city level beyond the ECEC involved, generating virtuous processes of exchange, transfer of experiences, transfer of competences;
- the involvement of all educators as a "team" with the coordinator determined the processes of change perceived as more effective than traditional, outside-the-service training mode with the participation of one / two representatives per group;
- the participatory-collaborative dimension that went *beyond* the individual service enabled the initiation of comparison, exchange and collaboration processes between teachers and educators from different ECEC services at the city level. The teachers involved declared they felt they were part of a broader training process, in some way, part of a participatory PD system:

> *"All educators of the Nido Paravia participated in the "Milano Bambini project" [...] [which] served to us to deepen our knowledge and since [the training project] was open to others, our video also served to other educators [...] and we also saw what other educators in other settings do and then we shared what we have learned with our colleagues at our nido"(Ed. 1, p. 5).*

Finally, two years after the completion of the MIBA experience at the Nido Paravia, and also at

other services involved in the same training project (as for example the training with the educators working in the Time for Families *Arsia*), we have seen the consolidation and development of additional workshops that have changed the ways of working with parents and families.

EXAMPLE 2.

Intercultural training, pedagogical continuity and the role of the coordinator as engine of innovation in the *scuola dell'infanzia* Narcisi

Brief description of the subcase

The Narcisi preschool is situated in a semi-peripheral area of the Milan-city with a high number of low-income families and socially disadvantaged children. A total number of 170 children attend the school. The percentage of immigrant children is 63% (the city average is 27.8%). The school has a strong connection with the *nido* and the primary school of the same zone. The school employs 15 teachers with different seniority: 1 teacher has been working for 40 years; 6 teachers between 25/30 years; 3 educators have 10/15 years of service; 3 educators are newly recruited (2014/2015); 1 educator does not have a permanent position. The preschool Narcisi has a tradition of collaboration with one of the most important Research Centers on intercultural issues in Milan (ISMU Foundation: *Istituto di Studi sulla Multi-etnicità*) and with the University of Milan Bicocca. The school welcomes student-teachers from the Undergraduate program of Education Science at the University. In this school, the "pedagogical coordinator" plays a crucial role as an *innovator* within a perspective of pedagogical 0-6 continuity.

In this subcase, 4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with two experienced educators, and two younger educators. A focus group with 5 educators with different years of experience was conducted along with 2 interviews with the pedagogical coordinator.

Interviews	Years of experience in the Nido per each educator	Focus groups and number of ECEC staff involved
4 semi-structured interviews with the teachers;	Ed. 1: 15 years Ed. 2: 9 years Ed. 3: 3 months Ed. 4: 2 years	1 FG with 5 educators (2 around 20 years of experience and 3 with c.a. 10 years)
2 semi-structured interviews to the PO	PO: 16 years	

Table – Data sources

The innovative in-service PD projects: teachers' perceptions

The interviews conducted with the teachers at the Narcisi preschool focused on some in-service training experiences carried out in recent years regarding inclusion and interculture (task.3.3). When we asked the question "*What PD experiences have been more valuable and effective in your recent experiences? Across your experience, which ones would you say have been most useful to you in what ways? Which PD experiences have had a stronger influence in your practices?* the teachers involved unanimously referred to two recent experiences of in-service training:

    I.   the PD project on intercultural education and inclusiveness carried out in collaboration

with the ISMU Foundation (Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity);

II. the PD intervention carried out by the coordinator as *engine*-promoter of innovative *experiences* of zero to six-pedagogical continuity.

Example 1. Intercultural training and inclusion

The first project identified by the teachers of the Narcisi preschool as an example of an innovative in-service training experience which they took part in recent years was a project on interculture and inclusion, carried out in collaboration with the ISMU, an institution very active at the city level, specialized in research and training, and which regularly collaborates with the city, the educational services and the Municipality of Milan[18]. Specifically focused on Multiethnic Education, ISMU conducts research and provides training and information on cross-cultural issues and is active in in-service training for educators and teachers in ECECs and preschools throughout Milan.

The project, which lasted for one school year (2007-2008), initiated while other ECEC settings in the city were involved in the *innovative* PD projects implemented at the city level (*Infanzia Insieme, MIBA, Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità*). It simultaneously involved all the teachers of the Narcisi preschool, the pedagogical coordinator, groups of immigrant parents of children enrolled in the school and children. It was divided into three phases:

- Phase I: thematic meetings with trainers/ISMU experts who proposed to the teachers/coordinator theoretical anthropological and sociological insights on the issue of immigration and welcoming children born to immigrant parents at school. Among the topics discussed, focus was on Arab culture due to a high percentage among children attending school;

- Phase II: introduction of methods, approaches, opportunities for encounter and mutual understanding between "schools" and "immigrant families." At this stage some mothers were invited to share stories and personal experiences from other countries with the children in class. Later meetings were promoted, such as: "*food and memories*" opportunities of meeting each other, creative workshops with parents, celebrations, parties;

- Phase III: definition of new modes of communication and exchange between teachers and immigrants parents (i.e. group meetings in the presence of the intercultural mediator, documentation of projects, the presence of parents at school).

At the same time, throughout the school year, an Arabic language course for Arab origin 5-year-old children by external lecturers (the ISMU Foundation) was offered. This intercultural project, identified by teachers as an example of an innovative in-service training, was conducted in the school in collaboration with ISMU[19].

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[18] Founded in 1991 by the Fondazione Opere Sociali Cariplo, ISMU's mission was to promote studies and research and to carry out information activities, documentation and training on many aspects related to the multicultural and multiethnic transformation of society. In 1993 the Institute became a Foundation, legally recognized as the Fondazione Cariplo per le Iniziative di Studio della Multietnicità. The Foundation's activities, aimed mainly at monitoring statistical resources and research, the dynamics of migratory processes and multicultural changes in society, is closely linked to research and configures often as action research with strong connections in teacher PD.

[19] ISMU has various publications on intercultural topics (ISMU series, Franco Angeli; Quadermi ISMU Osservatori Regionale Observatories per l'integrazione, Osservatori provinciali). The ISMU Foundation published the recent report in collaboration with the Ministry of Education " ISMU Foundation, 2015, Pupils with non- Italian citizenship. Among difficulties and successes. National Report 2013-2014 "by V. Ongini and M. Santagati, Quadermi Ismu , n . 1 ISBN 978-88-9840-9051. In the history of the training model for teachers and educators in Milan, ISMU has played a key role in promoting the development of intercultural skills

Why is this project a good example of innovation in PD? Teachers' view

To the questions "*what was the most effective aspect of the training?*" *and* "*what aspects of the project had the most impact on your practice and why?*", the teachers responded highlighting some key-aspects of innovation consistent with the criteria drawn from the literature review and followed in our case study:

- cohesion between the training program (inclusion/interculture) and the **local needs** felt by the teachers themselves (in recent years the number of immigrant families has increased exponentially requiring them to develop new skills to promote inclusive and intercultural education;

- the **participatory** nature of the project, which included the active involvement of teachers, coordinator and parents; the definition of an innovative bottom-up project, the introduction of new relationship practices with families (through the "practical activities" proposal carried out with the parents at school: parties, workshops, social events, meetings, language courses, etc.);

- the **systemic** dimension of the training program, aimed at teachers, parents and children together. Families were directly involved and invited to school (also on Saturday, by opening the school for families); the children were involved in the L2 teaching-learning paths to foster educational success/reduce the risk of linguistic and cultural disadvantage looking towards primary school (6-11 years);

- the strong **connection between theory and practice**, guaranteed by the action-research nature of the project and the presence of experienced trainers: linguistic mediators and trainers from the ISMU Foundation put their skills and theoretical knowledges *at the service* of the needs felt by educators and the local environment of the preschool.

Was this project effective in promoting change and growth? Insiders' views and perceptions

To the question "*What has changed in the way you work at the ECEC? What was the training experience impact in terms of change in educational practices?*" the teachers' responses emphasized some elements of the project in terms of the transferability of skills in new educational practices:

- theoretical training that was very connected to educational practice expanded teachers' knowledge on cross-cultural issues, language-bilingualism, Arab culture and facilitated the transfer of skills learned into new practices: "[*One thing that really helped me was the training that we did with the linguistic-cultural mediator, because] we started by speaking about the children, the difficulties we have with them. [...] [This] made us [re]evaluate it, it made a greater mark*"(Ins. 3, p. 6). This gave security to the teachers involved as well as work tools, the "*feeling was that there were many elements [...], both in terms of knowledge and of operational tools*" (Ins. 2, p.3);

- the possibility/the ability to use their PD experience to design new ways of dealing with immigrant parents in school and facilitating their participation at school;

- the development of language-workshops with children;

- the potential of sharing (both with colleagues/peers and with trainers/experts). Discussion, exchanges on the everyday situations, intercultural debate were precious opportunities to enrich teacher's views and educational behaviors: "*the ability to enrich themselves thanks to additional interpretations or actions*" (Ins.1, p. 9);

- building a relationship of trust and exchange with the trainer was described by teachers as an "added value", that "made the difference" compared to other types of training (characterized by a more distant/top-down relationship, more a-symmetrical), to which they participated in during previous years.

<u>Example 2. Pedagogical continuity and the role of the coordinator</u>
The second example the practitioners of the Narcisi preschool indicated as an innovative in-service training experience regarded some PD actions put in place by the service's coordinator who has organized - in autonomy from the training provided by Municipal administration - for the construction of networks between services in the same area of the city, in order to build and consolidate a 0-6 (infant-toddler center-preschool) educational continuity, financed and organized using local resources.

As we have already mentioned in the previously part of this chapter, educational continuity is a cross-cutting issue that has always affected all services for children in the city, giving it an innovative character compared to the traditional Italian split system (0-3 education and infant-toddler services and 3-6/6-11 pre-school and school services) which - even with the proposed new law (107/2015) for a "0-6 integrated system" – Italy has been trying to cope with in recent years. This principle is acknowledged in the debate on the quality of services for children and translated into specific local projects in each Region.
The example of pedagogical continuity developed in the preschool Narcisi is a key-example of the innovative in-service PD practices that we are looking for in our study for a few reasons:

- it is a bottom-up project;
- it exemplifies the role of coordinator as *engine of innovation*;
- it is situated;
- it is based on a creative use of local resources;
- it promotes active learning and peer-learning processes;
- it is sustainable: no specific funds were allocated for this project.

Why is this project a good example of innovation? Teachers' views and perceptions
Compared to "in-service training" actions carried out at the local level, the role of the coordinator as "innovation agent/engine" emerges very clearly from the interviews conducted in our case study. The theme of pedagogical continuity, the issue of transition from 0-3 services, to 3-6 preschools and then to primary school (6-11) in a long-term learning and development perspective with an integrated curriculum that can support the academic success of all children, is in fact a point that the coordinator indicated as the most important one. As the coordinator highlighted during the interview, working on continuity means "working on how involving families". And this is especially important in intercultural contexts such as the school Narcisi: "*Our school is a key site for the inclusion of immigrant families in our neighborhood…working on continuity means working on how these families will be welcomed in the primary school*" (Coordinator, p. 7).

The investment on teacher training in an educational continuity perspective was – in the words of the same coordinator - the trigger for the start of the project:

> "[I realized] that the educators of the Nido (infant toddler center) had an idea of the educational service in terms of warm welcoming, staying close to create good relationship and so on, while the preschool was seen a place where children must necessarily grow, teachers were colder, and engaged the children in many work activities. [...] [In contrast] at the preschool there was the idea that children in the infant toddler center didn't do anything. So the exact opposite of what they thought of each other. [...] In short, we had to work on a number of prejudices, in this case aggravated by large number of children from other cultures. [...] They needed a link, so I focused heavily on this in developing the training [...]: I brought materials to read, I tried to be helpful" (Coord., 2nd Interview, pp. 11-12).

> "I have found, in considering the training needs of teachers and educators, the need to link "contiguous", educational institutions creating connections, opportunities and openings between the individual service, other services and the territorial reality where they are located"(Coord., p. 6).

In addition to this "central" dimension mentioned by the coordinator, in offering a proposal based on the consideration of the contingent needs of the local environment, the features of the project on continuity that the teachers identified as innovative, were as follows:

- an opportunity for **enrichment and "opening of one's own point of view",** an enrichment generated, supported and made possible by continued exchange (which was also physical: exchange of teachers from one setting to the other and viceversa) between contiguous educational institutions (infant toddler center and preschools):

> "We are very different institutions [infant toddler centers, preschool and primary school] and there is always a little prejudice and bias [towards other services]; on the one hand, we have always seen the Nido educators as 'too motherly', where the relationship prevails! But they saw us as too scholastic [...] So probably this has led us to re-create connections, especially - with the help of the coordinator - we had the chance to have more opportunities for discussion, dialogue and mutual understanding" (Ins. 2, FG p. 11).

- the **acquisition and consolidation of new skills** (related to the development and learning of children) that - as recognized by the educators - should embrace the entire 0-6 range;

- design and re-design of experiences for children at preschool (3-6) which also takes into account the previous educational reality (0-3) and the following one (6-11), thus placing itself in a perspective of development and continuous learning (which is not limited to the context or terminates with preschool), which promotes the construction of a bottom-up 0-6 curriculum.

> "This training we're doing, together with the coordinator, on pedagogical continuity is important. It's important because the way you approach children, if you are aware of what has been done at the Nido (infant toddler center), means you can continue rather than go back or go forward" (Ins. 5, F.G. p. 11).

The theme of activating peer-learning opportunities among educators and teachers engaged in different services (0-3, 3-6, 6-12) clearly emerged from the analyses of our interviews.

- the **transfer of skills** (sustainability and transferability) is another key-issue emerged from our data. As stressed by the coordinator, to enable these "peer learning" resources is a very important aspect for renewing training and educational practices today, as well as leveraging local resources in a sustainable perspective. Faced with economic crisis (not only in the city but also in the country

and in the global economy), in fact, exchange experiences, dialogue, mutual visits between services and the circulation of knowledge, practices and skills, are key-elements for innovation. "*It would perhaps be wise to invest more today in a sense of "social membership"(to feel part of a "community of professionals and colleagues") that characterized the ECEC services in the 70s and 80s and, more generally the socio-cultural dimension of those years* "(Coord., p. 6). The transfer of skills acquired in training contexts and transferability of knowledge is central to the contemporary debate on the professionalism of educators and innovation. The coordinator interviewed said: "*once the training was part of the package, but it is no longer taken for granted. There is the idea, now, that is not so obvious that we will have it, therefore, we are activating local resources to make them transferable, to make them grow from within* "(Coord., p. 8) .What is missing, and what should be invested in today is the transition "*from the acquisition of skills [on an individual level] to sharing them in the system*" (Coord., p. 5).

If, therefore, on the one hand a decrease in PD proposals "from the administration" is likely to generate a vacuum in in-service training, on the other - because there are fewer proposals from the top - teachers, educators and pedagogical coordinators are required to generate innovation by activating themselves and by developing new-creative uses of local resources or "promotion from within" (Bondioli, Ferrari, 2004).

Main results and discussions

In brief, the analysis of data collected in Narcisi subcase highlights some elements of innovation that our informants identified as significant for effective in-service training interventions aimed at improving the professionalism and quality of services:

- the correspondence between the *local needs* (in this case inclusion, intercultural education, continuity) and training proposals (a mixture of bottom-up and top-down);

- the interplay between theory and practice, where practice provides "problems/situations to ponder" and theory provides tools for interpreting, re-reading and returning (with a renewed and more "informed" look) to the practice;

- the collaborative and participatory dimension of peer-learning, collegial work and opportunities of exchange with experts, supervisors, teachers from other ECEC sites;

- the role of the coordinator as the "*engine*" and "*guarantor*" of the in-service innovative and sustainable training processes;

- the role of research institutions/experienced trainers who can expand and renew teachers' knowledge on practice/in practice;

- the ability to "transform school into an innovative training workshop" through a bottom up participatory-creative process of learning and collaboration.

The example of the ISMU project described in this subcase was developed in 2007-2008, before the MIBA project, which started in 2011. However, we found many similarities between the two initiatives: both projects were related to a delicate issue for the city of Milan – inclusion and intercultural education – and both highlighted interdisciplinarity and transferability as innovative and effective approach to PD. In addition, the coordinator of this preschool is now a figurehead on the PO team, as an expert in interculture and represented Milan in the TFIEY seminars.

EXAMPLE 3.

City-University partnership: The Nido Bambini Bicocca as *prototype* for in-service PD

The *Nido Bambini-Bicocca* (0-3) has been selected because:

a) it has an innovative management structure. It is a Consortium, run in collaboration between public institutions (City and University), non-profit organizations (two cooperatives) and private companies, and it well represents both an example of the integrated system set out a recently passed bill (*La buona scuola* – Law 107/July 15, 2015) and of the effort to put into practice new and sustainable models and links between the local administration and the industrial system, which is typical of Milan and *Regione Lombardia* (the Lombardy Region);

b) it is a prototype of an *Early Childhood Learning Center (Polo infanzia)* also provided for in the new law, where pre-service and in-service PD, research on PD and the dissemination of new practices are combined.

Core *structural characteristics* (in terms of center and group size, teacher/child ratio, level of teacher education, teacher work experience, age range of the children, daily schedule, school equipment…) are not exceptional or untypical. Spaces, materials and costs per child are comparable to those of many good quality municipal centers in Milan. The hours dedicated to PD for staff are standard, although the close contact with research and with University trainees provides stronger and more challenging opportunities than in a common municipal 0-3 Center.

The *Nido Bambini-Bicocca* is a good quality example of the dominant Italian ECEC culture (*cultura dell'infanzia*) in terms of the daily organization and the educational goals and opportunities for children especially the specific attention placed on child/child and adult/child relationships. In Milan, putting good experiences to scale is a constant challenge, and the link between municipal ECEC centers and the two Universities involved in Educational programs has become a permanent strategy.

The *Nido* opened in 2005 both as a company welfare service for University employees and students and as an "experimental infant toddler center". It is attended by a maximum of 64 children: 1/3 are children of University staff and students, 1/3 are children from the neighborood and enrolled following the same procedures as other Municipal centers, 1/3 are children of employees of the two partner companies. The University staff families and students pay the same fees - calculated based on income– as the neighborhood families (i.e. the same fees as in all Municipal centers); the employees of the partner companies have different a fee scale. The neighborhood is mostly socially disadvantaged and many families live in public housing and pay the minimum fee or no fee at all. Therefore, the social composition of the groups of children a mixture at the *Nido* is not unusual in many city areas.

There are 13 educators. The pedagogical coordinator is a researcher from the Department of Human Sciences and a lecturer in Education.

The two cooperatives, partners of the Consortium, *Genera* and *Or.sa*, hire and organize educators, kitchen and cleaning staff and were chosen for their experience in running ECEC services with a good balance between quality and cost control. They benefit from the partnership with the University in terms of prestige but also from being involved in research and PD which they can disseminate in other centers. At present they are among the partners involved in the ongoing project "*Didattica inclusiva* e *flessibilità"* in the city.

The Municipal PO responsible for external partners acts an "inspector", since the *Nido* is partially an externalized city service; she is a stable interlocutor/referent for the *Nido*, guaranteeing compliance with city requirements (adult/child ratio, sanitary and dietary regulations, inclusion procedures for children with special needs, etc.) and working through the complexities and competences of this very special external center.

The Nido was also featured as the Italian "case study" in the WP2. Some reflections about the CLASS proposal will be briefly discussed in the final part of this section (Italy: Conclusion).

A PD workshop and a prototype for *poli per l'infanzia*
Before presenting our analysis, we will briefly outline the professional development pathway that characterizes the *Nido Bambini Bicocca*. It can be considered an interesting case because of its strong links both with the Municipal system and the University of Milan-Bicocca and an example of Milanese ECEC dedication to innovation and experimentation.
The educators working at the *Nido* have an important role in welcoming children and their parents, caring for and offering security to the child, observing, creating good quality environments and spaces for exploration and independent activities, time for well-being, learning, exploring, using creativity and constructing relationships. Educators are the *reference points* and key figures for promoting high quality education for all children and families. For this reason, the *Nido* has made (and still does) a great investment on their professional development. Educators are prepared for a type of *generally indirect intervention*, meaning observations, indirect style, support in a prepared environment (offered in exploring, expanding and offering stimuli to the children).

Teamwork, led and facilitated by the coordinator and conducted – in some cases – by the coordinator herself and at times by other researchers or trainers, plays an important role in terms of professional development for the staff. There are weekly classroom staff meetings, monthly general staff meetings and other group meetings, periodically open to parents. Unlike other university infant-toddler centers in Italy, the *Nido Bambini Bicocca* welcomes not only the children of the employees of the University or of the partner companies, but it is "*deeply rooted in the neighborhood, and [...] open to many neighborhood families*" (Coord., p. 2). This is a main goal of the *Nido*. Other main goals are: to study and experiment with development-friendly approaches to education, able to equip children to develop in an active and autonomous way; supporting parents who work or live in the neighborhood; involving educational personnel in training courses and research projects on methods, tools and strategies to implement their professional growth. The philosophy of the *Nido* is presented in the *Pedagogical Ideas* guidelines where the goal "to create an environment for the experimentation of innovative and sustainable professional development approaches" is explicitly addressed (Attachment).

The activities and experiences in curriculum of the *Nido* influence Municipal PD projects. Themes like "rules and autonomy (the subject of a doctoral thesis which collected data, also in the *Nido*), a

redefinition of the transition from home to the ECEC settings or settling-in *(ambientamento/inserimento)* (Mantovani, Saitta, Bove, 2000; Bove, 2001; Bove, Moran, Cescato, Braga, Brookshire, 2014) and experiences in the scientific atelier (Gambini, Braga, Mantovani, 2014; Gambini, Braga, Mantovani, Acquaviva, 2014; Mantovani, Braga, Gambini, 2016; Gambini, Braga, Acquaviva, Croci, 2015) have become themes and workshops in the MIBA project (the key-example explored in our case study at the Paravia Infant Toddler Center presented in the previous paragraphs, Example 1 and Example 2) and in the on-going PD project "*Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità*".

Nido Bambini Bicocca, like many other city and state centers, hosts Bicocca University trainee students attending courses to become educators and acts as a *workshop* for their training, for action-research on PD and for the promotion of special curricular experiences. The connection with pre-service training for students attending the University is one of the key characteristics of the professional development system of the *Nido* and is linked with professional growth of the staff; namely the educators working at the *Nido* act as "tutors" to the students enrolled in the undergraduate courses at the University. The connection with the trainees becomes a continuing professional development opportunity for the educators who act as *mentors*. Trainee teachers' PD is based on training in observation and documentation, the analysis of practices, discussion, exchange and dialogue between the "student-teachers" and the "expert teachers". This learning process is reciprocal and based on the constant interrogation of educational practices, through reflection on experience. Some of the educators at the *Nido Bambini Bicocca*, in addition to supervising trainees, are currently involved in the on-going city PD project *Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità* as expert trainers. The competence in coaching that the expert educators offer to student-teachers therefore spreads out and becomes available to professionals working in other Milanese ECEC centers.

The *Nido Bambini Bicocca* is also the promoter and hub of the Network of University ECEC centers, acting as a consultant, drawing up feasibility projects for public and private enterprises which plan to open ECEC centers.

For our case study, four interviews with educators, one with the coordinator and one focus group with 12 educators working at the *Nido*[20] were conducted. Two experienced educators and two younger educators were involved. In addition, some key teamwork sessions were videotaped and observed (overlapping WP2-WP3). The educators interviewed were asked to review their professional experience by highlighting innovative experiences of in-service professional development, including CLASS, or situations in which their professionalism was enhanced.

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[20] The group of teachers working at the *Nido* - selected after a training course organized by the Department in collaboration with the ECEC partners - participated in the coordination of the activities and they received in-service training: 150 hours per year, paid for by the Consortium, dedicated to professional development activities, group work and meetings with parents. The ECEC works in a reflective perspective, combining observation, intersubjective observation analysis, documentation and a video-research approach.

Data sources:

Interviews	Years of experience in the Nido per each educator	Focus groups and number of ECEC staff involved
4 semi-structured individual interviews with educators;	Ed. 1: 26 years of experiences in the Nido Ed. 2: 23 years of experience in the Nido Ed. 3: 11 years of experience in the Nido Ed. 4: 3 years of experience in the Nido	1 FG with three educators with 3 years of experience, 11 years and 15 years in the Nido).
1 semi-structured interview with the ex-coordinator (involved in the MIBA project)	Coordinator: 22 years of experience	

Table – New Data Sources

The analysis of the interviews shows some *innovative* components in PD central for our study, as it will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Voices from within

Continuous professional development is not an *optional: "it is embedded in the Nido"*

The first theme that emerges strongly from the interviews is the "*formative nature*" of the infant-toddler center. Training, the educators say, is not an *option*, nor an additional item. It is a constitutive element of the Nido both for educators-in-training, and for expert educators. The idea standing at the core is that working at the Nido is *a professional development experience.* Everyone's experience is constantly observed, questioned, investigated, discussed and revised to promote improvement, change, quality. The training experiences are not considered an extraordinary event related to "specific projects", rather an inherent feature of the Nido's life, to the point that the educators interviewed in our study find it difficult to isolate only some learning experiences. Educators seem aware that the context in which they are working is a particularly significant context in contributing to their learning: their professionalism is conceptualized as a key component of the quality of the Nido and all staff experiments this investment and develops a disposition-attitude of constant reflection and dialogue. In their narrative educators refer to the co-construction of the identity of the Nido as a process of professional development for all the staff involved.

The theme of developing new and innovative ways to support in-service training and professional growth for staff involved at the Nido and for student-trainees was part of the design and development of the philosophy and developing various opportunities for continuing professional development has been a key-feature of the Nido since the beginning.

Not surprisingly, when we asked "*when you think you learned more? What experiences most influenced your practice?*" we often got answers which referred to the entire experience in the Nido as a *laboratory for learning,* a workshop within which educators are in constantly dialogue,

reflection, observation, co-construction of new interpretations. One single project is not more formative than another, say educators, everything is a training opportunity and everything is professional development conceptualized as an inquiring-research process rather than theoretical transmission of knowledge. The shared assumption is the conceptualization of professional development as "constantly interrogating experiences" of reflection on educational practices. In this sense, educators say, the experience at the nido *as a whole* influences their educational practices. Professional development is understood primarily as a *habit* in thinking. The term which was most commonly used by educators to refer to this process of systematic learning is *observation*. Training is not primarily aimed at expand knowledge within a theoretical perspective; it is aimed at develop new skills, competences to analyse what happens with children and to activate learning processes in a development, process of learning characterized by making sense of experiences reflecting as a team. Theory and knowledge become necessary and are requested as an outcome of this bottom up process. "*Everything*" - they say – *is formative*": working with children, teachers, the pedagogical coordinator, researchers, families, students in training. In this sense educators refer to many opportunities to professional growth in relation to the complex life of the Nido and to the many the actors involved, incuding children and families.

The experienced educators interviewed in our study define professional growth as a *"second skin",* a "*habit of mind",* an *"essential ingredient"* to strengthen and improve themselves professionally and the whole system (the *Nido* as a system). This require time and permanent engagement on the part of the educators, pedagogical coordinator and trainers/researchers.

Some of the key-words emerging from the analyses of the interviews are of interest for our study: "*professional development*" educators say "*is a journey, a process, a slow process of co-construction of knowldege, a thought that has evolved over time, a process of sharing, learning with others, learning to learn, discussing, observing, changing, inquiring, working with teachers, children and families".* It is a process that requires time, engagement, participation, meetings, exchanges, reflection, inquiring disposition. Educators underlined the idea that formation is a process of personal and professional growth connected to their daily practices: "*we reflect on some things as they are happening*" (Ed.2., pp.16,17).

> [PD] is a path. [...] There was a big change, but over time" (Ed. 1, p. 14).
>
> "If I think of my education at Bambini Bicocca, it was all a slow process of construction. There was no isolated intervention. There is a whole series of meetings, and then there's the daily work, which is just as formative" (Ed. 2, p. 8).
>
> "I would speak about thought which has evolved, thanks to constant work alongside training. [...] Being a process that takes a long time " (Ed. 2, pp. 16; 17).

Continuity and the awareness that formation is a *process, a path* and not a sporadic training course are among the aspects of innovation that the literature indicates as fundamental for effective professional training (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007). The Nido is a mirror or a theater of a *formative process* that develops over time, and is constitutive for the life of the service. The educators reiterate this, describing training as an extended *journey* through time, something continuous, constant accompaniment in "*becoming researchers in their practice*", a support which impacts over time, effecting their actions.

Systematic training/professional development regarding the system.

Professional development at the *Nido Bambini Bicocca*, interviewers say, regards the system. The Nido is a *"training system in action"* that includes many actors (educators, staff, pedagogical coordinators, student-teachers, researchers, children, families) and different roles, levels, objectives, instruments.

The educators working in Nido that host trainees and have a mentoring/peer supervision role, the job of coaching among colleagues (peer learning/peer tutoring) and teamwork, are in turn supervised by the coordinator and are involved by her with key roles in research experiences. This circular experience is aimed at creating "expert" educators training them to become "supervisors" and educators find it most important for their professional growth. For those educators who have worked at the Nido for a long time, even the initial phase of the *selection process,* aimed at creating the group of educators, was felt as a training experience too, as the coordinator clearly explained to us during the interview:

> *"From selection and the training of educators who wanted to start [to work at the Nido], we started a training and selection process. [...] We met to find out how to set up recruitment, which we wanted to center around observation. [...] From then on, all of our selections and training experiences have always had this focus and three main aspects: 1) settling-in (ambientamento, inserimento) and the relationship with families; 2) the organization and design of spaces and 3) managing the group of children. [...] These were the points around which reflection took place that then allowed us to oversee the opening and running of the Nido. Because ... what should an educator do? She must welcome and relate to parents, organize spaces, materials and situations and manage the group of children, manage themself, because relating to children individually and also in groups is a core competence of educational work" (Coordinator, p. 5).*

Some methodological coordinates that, over time, have characterized the Nido are: anchoring reflection to concrete experiences, exploring aspects related to the development of the child and the cognitive and relational dimensions of learning and to the design/*progettazione* and to all other important tasks including the relationship with parents.

Educators as researchers

All educators say that they feel to have truly become researchers themselves. This attitude with which they approach the Nido is recognized as being a precious training opportunity. Nothing is "*taken for granted*", everything is seen-revised-questioned.

Observation, videotape and discussion: the three key-words for building a dynamic and professional research process. From all interviews it emerges the awareness of working in a context in which training is activated every day on several occasions, and this is what turns everyday experiences into "*research objects*"*:* the range of PD opportunities is diversified but always very connected to daily life, the context, specific needs. It is a situated process of constantly inquiring, interrogating experiences and redefining one's own interpretation through dialogue and exchange with others.

Observation a key-method:

All the interviewers mention the topic of observation as a "*leitmotif of all the training experiences",* one of the ways through which the Nido has developed its identity of professional development workshop, constantly connected to research. "*Observations",* the coordinator says, "*has always characterized how we do training and research (..) from the opening of the Nido. [...]* (Coord., P. 5). The assumption is using observation as a tool for *being* constantly in a position   of

learning and development: observing implies analyse, reflect, share, discuss, understand, promote change and development. In this perspective, professional growth is everywhere. Observing, filming, video-feedback for oneself and others, discussion of the behaviors and design of new ones are ways to "stop the practice" and, starting from it, comparing observations, points of views on what happens in the educational context to design-plan new actions. It is a practice that is activated daily by the educators of the Nido who are constanly asked to share their experiences, prespectives, values using observations as a starting point. Observation materials are used individually to reflect, understand and track the development of children, for the preparation of the context, the pedagogical re-design of the daily life; in groups within and between educators of the same or different rooms; with the coordinator during supervision and training; with researchers during specific projects; with parents during meetings. The result is that each teachers nknows and recognizes perculiarities of each child. Observing always goes along with discussing, sharing, exchanging: group discussion (between educators and the coordinator) and individual reflection are the two other key-elements that accompany observation, consolidating its PD value.

> *"Being seen, watched, observed helps you to see, watch, observe with more attention, curiosity, respect for diversity"* (Ed.1, p.5).

Each room is in fact equipped with "observation booths" to allow students from the University courses to observe in small groups and document as first part of their practice, always with the consent of parents and caregivers; the observations booths are also used for continuing professional development of teachers working in the Nido and for hosting parents during the observation-time. Educators are always aware (and consent or not) to be observed from the booth. The use of video as a tool for observing practices and of learning through observation is a key characteristic of the pedagogical approach of the *Nido*. Educators seem to be aware of the implicit value and the potentials of the booths for their development and professional growth: they are "a powerful, although very delicate, ingredient".

> "*As a university infant-toddler center, we have supported the idea observation booths from the beginning, which we think is a necessary ingredient (powerful, although very delicate): [...] we wanted to invest in the training of trainees, and we knew that the observation booths could be useful, also for training and for guests and delegations. [...] We were also very careful to clarify both with parents and educators that the meaning was not to spy on anyone, the observation booths is a tool that allows us to observe without disturbing, a way to enter into a context with caution, not to spy*" (Coord., pp. 8-9)

The use of video and of inter-professional video-coaching and reciprocal sustain is a key characteristic of the approach developed in the Nido. Video is used at many levels at the Nido, always as a basis of an inter-professional discussion between the educators, with coordinator, researchers and families. The goal is the creation of contexts of transformative dialogues.

> "*We have always used a collaborative training method. Even in recent experiences, such as research with the University of Tennessee, we had in mind a very collaborative research project: we thought of intense involvement of educators, because the research subjects were the teachers, not the children*" (Coord., p. 22).

The working method, established from the early experiences and that still characterizes the design and pedagogical methods of the Nido, is deeply anchored to collaboration, critical review of practices, group exchanges. The dynamic of this method is   based on observation, video recording,

video-feedback, review, discussion, design and re-design/planning, verification, and then all over again, etc. is identified among the strengths that make this environment a lifelong learning context.

The connection with the University and Research

The perception of working in a *research context* emerges from interviews with all the educators, who report, in terms of impact, the acquisition of a "researcher attitude" or "way of thinking", attributing the causes of this acquisition opportunity to participation in different research opportunities. Involvement in these research-experiences is described as a continuous stimulus to be "researchers in their work". The Nido was born as a "research center on training" and that as a "training workshop". University researchers collaborate with the Nido and with the professional development of the group of educators on specific projects or for deepening knowledge on specific topics.

Pre-service/in-service

The educators recognized the role played by the University and the close link between the Nido and the academic world. In-service training is guaranteed not only by the work of the team and periodical meetings with the coordinator, by the presence of faculty/university trainers, but also by the fact that the Nido welcomes students and guest trainees who intend to work in early childhood services. Training is multifaceted and on different levels. The connection between pre-service and in-service training is a constitutive feature of the educational framework of the *Nido Bambini Bicocca*. The peculiarity of the role of trainee and the host educator emerges in their voices and in the words of the coordinator.

> "*I would say that an important part of training is also working on internship, the constant involvement [of trainees] in all activities, not only those related to the Nido but also to the training workshops: [..] seminars, conferences etc. and all this activates them in all these directions with skills, with different workloads and with the close involvement of educators in all of these initiatives*" (Coord., p. 18)

A plural-multifaceted training

Even the younger, less-experienced educators who were not not involved in the early stages of personnel selection and training "from scratch" of the working group, speak of a "plural/multi-faceted" training, on different levels:

- among the practitioners as a group: teamwork emerges from the very words of the educators as a strength and a constant in the Nido. Collegiality, sharing, exchange, social dimension are seen as key-components of their professionalization;
- between senior educators and the younger ones, and between educators and trainees;
- between the educators and the pedagogical coordinator: the coordinator's role is mentioned among the elements that characterize the formative nature of the Nido itself. Key-elements are the welcoming presence, the recall to the observational method, the connection of the training to daily practices, the supervision and stimulating process of inter-observation, discusson, development;
- between educators and researchers;
- with the coordinator, who acts as a 'model': modeling/indirect training, for example in the manner of conducting meetings with parents in the presence of teachers who - for example, as one educators said:

> "*seeing how she handles meetings with parents as answers questions by saying I don't know, I would need to see the child ... we learn a method, we are trained, in relation to the expert-researchers (who come to the Nido and offer their contribution)*" (Ed. 2, p. 9)

Collegiality

One aspect that emerges clearly and unanimously from interviews with the educators is the collegial dimension on which the Nido has always invested in terms of training. The working group/teamwork is also, in the perception of the educators, a resource for learning and continuous improvement. Comparison and discussion, both among peers (peer-learning) and among educators and coordinator/teacher-trainers/tutors are described as key-resources of in-service training, in accordance with what the literature shows also be effective in educational terms.

The search for dialogue/exchange is indeed described by educators as an "*engine*" for personal and professional growth. Without sharing and dialogue there is no professional growth. We see, in the words of the educators, as this aspect is described, highlighting the different shades that it assumes: comparison between colleagues of the same room/class, between several rooms/classes, including senior and junior educators or trainees, practitioners and trainers, in individual and group comparison. They also point out the transformations and innovations that the forms of this *habit of sharing* have had in time: for example, the use of new technologies for "*distance comparison between different educational realities, as in the case of research with the University of Tennessee, or new forms of dialogue, based for example on the exchange of emails as a 'slim/fast' comparison 'solution/strategy' which shortens the distance, both in temporal and spatial terms*" (Coord., p. 8).

> "*It was essential for training, to have exchanges with co-workers or with the trainers/expert teachers. The theoretical discussion has to go along with what we experience on a daily basis so that it does not remain only a theoretical*" (Ed. 3, p. 7).

A specific and peculiar feature of the identity of the Nido, important for our theme, since the very beginning, is the professional development investment on the educators *as a group which could then act as multiplier* to sustain process of learning and training with younger educators.

> "*From the beginning, from the first stages of selection, we wanted to form a group which could then act as a multiplier, and also a driving force for other teachers who would gradually arrive. How did we work? We started with a selection and training process*" (Coord., p. 8)

Collegiality is a key feature of the professionalization of the educators: it is the dimension that sustains collective reflexivity and supports transformative change at many levels, largely discussed in the Italian debate on ECE and professional development.

Professionals acting as supervisors: mutual learning and reciprocity

Some examples help us to better understand how the educators described this aspect, highlighting the strong link with the University and research. Specifically, the first aspect highlighted by the educators concerns the training experience and supervision of trainees, described by teachers as a key ingredient of their career development:

> "*The link with the University is strong and also the investment on training. For example, I remember that during the internship, unlike my companions who went immediately to class, I entered the observatory, I had the opportunity to observe the educators [...], then we gathered the [observational] material and we discussed it together with educators/tutors* " (Ed. 3, pp. 5-6).

The internship as a *"training in action experience"* for all subjects involved: trainees, tutors/supevisors, the groups of educators.

"The internship, both as a trainee and as a tutor and supervisor, is an opportunity for continuing education, because it gives you the ability to continuously exchange with others, compared to what you see and to your questions [...], both individually and in groups. [...] It is training in action" (Ed. 3, pp. 5-6).

"Working with the trainees [who work with the whole class] is an opportunity first of all for themselves, because it is an opportunity to discuss and to improve themselves. I have always felt it as a serious responsibility, a certain commitment that - at the same time – enriched me personally" (Ed. 4, p. 13).

The connection between the Nido and the University emerges in the words of the educators, describing their participation in research projects, in terms of education and implementation of the reflexive dimension, with a view to reflecting on practices and in-practice (see example on talking at the Nido after viewing videos with Tennessee; Scientific Atelier, nature-leaves).

An indirect model of professional development from within (modeling, mentoring, supervising): the role of the pedagogical coordinator

A subject on which the educators linger is the modeling function or "indirect formation" (indirect model of professional development) by the coordinators and other researchers regularly involved in the Nido. The opportunity not only to learn from these "key-figures" at the Nido and the University, but also to observe them (to observe how they move and speak) in the context of the service itself is an occasion, say educators, to facilitate the acquisition of *tools*, more than answers, and thus - paraphrasing Bruner (1997) - for the formation of skills, rather than the mere acquisition of knowledge.

"The discussions with our coordinator and other researchers have always been done in a way that promotes the growth of people, [...] because I have rarely been offered answers like, "Look, do this". Rather, the suggestion was to observe, to film in order to have material to be discussed. [...] So, yes suggestions, but always as an opening" (Ed. 1, p. 5).

The role of the pedagogical coordinator as a key-component of the educators' professional growth is largely shared in our interviews:

"In my case, there was always a great need for sharing with the coordinator. [...] This has always helped me to grow. [...] I remember that, from the beginning, I was periodically in Piera's office [= the coordinator] and she always was available to discuss and accept questions and concerns. [...] I have always needed this close contact" (Ed. 1, p. 4).

A situated approach addressing local needs

The awareness that PD opportunities are always very connected to the professionals' needs (created *ad hoc*, non-fragmented, linked to the daily life of the *Nido*) emerges from the interviews. There is a strong congruence perceived by the educators between training needs and the offer, in an effort to respond to the needs, demands, 'practical' aspects that come from the *Nido*, children, parents and educators. Therefore, if on one hand the training has certain focal points (methodological and thematic) that are stable (like routine, welcoming children and parents and settling-in) activities and the role of the adult (parents' involvement and participation, the relationship between observation and *progettazione*/planning and design, alternation between observation and discussion etc.), on the other hand it attempts to respond with flexibly to the contingent needs of the setting.

The proposed training also meets the criteria of flexibility. Training proposals aimed at educators

are not static, they vary in relation to the experience of individual educators. Themes already addressed by more experienced educators are only offered to "new" ones, while new PD experiences (such as training in the use of ICT) are proposed to more "senior" educators.

The relationship among practitioners, trainer-experts (professors, external/disciplinary experts, coordinator) emerges from all the interviews as crucial element for professional training. The nature of the type of relationship and the reciprocal availability emerge as the main aspect of PD training quality and its impact. Maintaining a relationship and direct contact with trainers and researcher/experts is considered a key component for improving learning and professionalization. This type of relationship seems to guarantee replicability in practice. "*If you learn something within a context of good relationship, it has a greater impact, i.e. Scientific Atelier*" (Ed. 3, p. 6).

The use of ICT and innovative approaches to PD
Closely related to the element of dialogue and comparison of viewpoints was the recognition and appreciation, in terms of educational value, of an aspect often mentioned in the literature on innovation in educational practices: the use of new technologies, both as documentation tools, (especially video recordings) and as a basis for confrontation and discussion at various levels (including with parents) as well as to grow professionally by "seeing oneself in action" and creating the habit of reflecting "in and on the practice" (Schön, 1983).

Technologies are an example "keeping up with the times" to which the *Nido* responds very effectively, adapting the practice of observation, which is one of the fundamental ingredients of the learning experience at *Nido Bambini Bicocca* regarding the development of new means of documentation and communication (visual, digital, interactive).

> "*Technology is everywhere today and [if I think of training in recent years], surely the thing that has changed the most is the use of more and more new technologies that have made some PD experiences more tangible in the sense that it is one thing to listen to an account of something, it is another to see it presented in a video [...]. So it also changes of approach to training on the part of the trainer but also those being trained*" (Ed. 4, p. 12)

> "*We have always used technology to document, but lately we have also taken courses to increase skills in this area, to be updated, for example on how to use a program for video editing, and to understand which tools were more appropriate to use for a certain type of work. [...] For this reason [new technologies and useful training to enhance learning on using them], I believe we are fortunate to work in this setting* " (Ed. 4, p. 4; 13).

Examples of innovative PD experiences in recent years

During the interviews, educators were asked to go through their professional history and highlight specific projects, situations, professional development experiences in which their professionalism had been reinforced. When we asked "*Among the experiences of in-service training which you participated in in recent years, which one was the most important for your training?*" educators made particular reference to three experiences of *research-training* and educational experimentation they believe had a significant impact in terms of professional growth (in recent years): (a) the cross cultural *research* "Teacher's behavior analyzed in two Infant Toddler Centers in Italy and in the USA" (P.I. M. Moran, Knoxville University; S. Mantovani, University of Milano-Bicocca) conducted with the University of Knoxville from 2009 onwards (Braga, 2009; Bove, Braga, 2014;

Bove, Braga, Cescato, 2014; Bove, Braga, Mantovani, in press); (b) the Scientific Atelier started in year 2010-2011 with Prof. Gambini Bicocca University; (c) the experience of being part of the WP2 within the CARE project (CLASS).

Example 1. The use of video to stimulate reflexivity and cross cultural analyses of daily practices

The first example identified by the educators is the research experience that involved the groups of the educators from 2009-2012: "*Teacher's Behvior Analyses in Infant Toddler Center: Instrument and Methods for Training within a cross national research project".* This research involved researchers and educators of two university lab-schools, one in Italy and the other in the U.S. (*Nido Bambini Bicocca* and the Early Learning Center of the University of Knoxville-Tennessee). Main goals of the study were: (1) creating a shared research design for the comparative study of educators' practice in two cultures; (2) developing new models and methods for professional development and models of in-service PD, based on critical reflective practices from multiple viewpoints (i.e. by using the ICT).

Educators in both sites were videotaped in their class and then involved in recursive processes of individual and group's analyses of video-tapes and discussions about their beliefs and ideas (in individual and group settings), based on the use of video as a tool to stimulate and provoke situated reflexivity processes. New methods (video, texts, recursive video-based interviews and focus group discussions, etc.) for supporting professionals' growth and in-service training were developed within the project (Braga, 2009; Bove, Braga & Cescato, 2014) and are still under discussion (Moran, Mantovani, Bove, C., Braga & Brookshire, in press). This project, originally collaborative-action research, is giving raise to initiatives of peer professional development practices through video-technologies which are still on-going at the Nido under the supervision of the pedagogical coordinator (Bove, Braga, Mantovani, in press).

The research brought to light, in addition to the impact and thus the effectiveness/consequences in terms of training, the following traits of innovation:

- the *ongoing* research dimension, that is the extended time it covered, which encouraged the establishment of new awareness;
- the potentials of cross-cultural exchanges and the opportunity to observe everyday life in another ECEC/cultural context by videotaping a typical day in Italy and the United States, which highlighted some crucial issues in the interpreationg of education and early childhood and the role of the teachers/educators;
- the value of discussion, through video-exchange, of cross-cutting pedagogical-themes such as: the role of the adult, directivity/non-directivity, verbal-non verbal communication between adult and children, time and manner dedicated to the dialogue between educators and parents, the more or less frequent use of verbal language to sustain and support the children's experience, talking to the children, conflict management;
- the *potentials of the* use of video and ICT as tools for comparison and discussion between different educational and cultural contexts and as a stimulus for thought, raising new questions about one's practices and those of colleagues, processes of re-interpretation and making meaning.

All the above listed aspects seem to be particularly significant as opportunities for professional learning for the educators involved. Below are the observations of the educators of the *Nido Bambini Bicocca* on this project:

"A significant training experience, for me, was the Tennessee study, where we reflected on the practices and there was a big change" (Ed. 1, p. 14)

"In the study with Tennessee, the use of technology was central: starting from videos shot at our ECEC and in the USA, we were able to observe and discuss some cultural differences that we found at the educational level" (Ed. 2, p . 12)

"Many issues that we addressed in PD came from the study, e.g. research with the University of Tennessee [...which] raised issues of great interest, we felt very involved, and we return to them cyclically. [...] It raised questions related to the way of being with children and their parents, comparing our methods and those in America. [...] Through dialogue and research we were able to analyze all these things" (Ed. 1, pp. 6, 7).

In their narratives, educators refer to many aspects of the project. The coordinator, in particular, highlight the potentials of the intercultural exchange activate by exchanging videos of a "day in the Nido" between Italian and American educators:

"I would say that the central elements of innovation were: intercultural exchange, which was perhaps the strongest element, the use of video and in particular its focus on the behavior of educators, progressively involving them more in the subsequent steps, alternating between moments of observation, self-assessment: giving oneself a score made observation more systematic, so we took more time to review individually. [...] [Other innovative elements [were] multimedia technologies [...]: we used Skype, videoconferencing, both among teachers and between us as research groups, and ... all this for us was extremely innovative and formative" (Coord., pp. 23; 24).

The request of revewing the video individually to give oneself a score turned to be an interesting turning point in providing educators with experiences of learning.

Example 2. A special curricular experience. The "Scientific Atelier"

The second significant experience for educators relevant to innovation was the *Scientific Atelier Workshop*, a project developed at the Nido in collaboration with a biologist (Annastella Gambini, Professor at the University of Milan Bicocca), which consisted of an exploratory interdisciplinary project which involved educators, researchers in biology and pedagogy and that could be inscribed in the field of outdoor education.

Relating to the promotion of a sustainable lifestyle and significant relationships with natural enviroments are still rare in ECEC settings. The goal of the project was to document and to critically reflect on the first phases of a possible significant relationship between toddlers and living things through collaborative activities and exploratory experiences oriented, as the basis to promote curiosity, motivation to explore in depth and over time, discovering biodiversity as a first experience to foster interest and acceptance of diversity, to promote responsibility and finally to start a soundly based science education. The daily documentation consists in videos, pictures, notes and observations of the educators and collected parents' narratives and conversations with children. Opportunities for a continuing educators' professional development are based on reflections and periodical exchanges between educators, coordinator, pedagogical supevisor and biologist. Discussions are focused on how to best guarantee, promote and sustain regular experiences for fostering an early attitude to pose scientific questions in children (Gambini, Braga, Mantovani, 2014).

The aspects highlighted by the educators as innovative are:

- the inter-disciplinary approach, guaranteed by the presence of an experienced teacher, with scientific-disciplinary knowledge about the natural world of living creatures;

- the continuous/non-sporadic nature of the proposals, which - as the teachers said - was an on-going experience (started in 2010-2011);

- the invitation to assume a scientific attitude and to experience things first and foremost themselves before proposing them to the children: first direct experience and learning, and then proposing the experience to children (learning new contents);

- all of the interviewed educators stressed the development/re-discovery of nature and the living world and the curiosity that this stimulates (the natural environment is a constant source of learning).

"An example of significant PD for me was the scientific atelier training (still in progress). On one side was the expert (prof. Gambini) who offered us scientific content, and on the other was a thought that evolved, thanks to constant work alongside training. [...] As an experience over time, we also reflect on some things that are happening in real time" (Ed. 2, pp. 16; 17).

"A significant training experience was [...] the scientific atelier. [...] I'm glad I have a scientific background, because I studied biology, and the constant deepening from different perspectives: pedagogical, biological, psychological. [...] The interdisciplinary dimension was an innovative feature of our training" (Ed. 1, pp. 18; 20).

"The project on the outdoors, on the scientific atelier inevitably led us to need skills that were not ours, [...] leading us to also tap unexplored aspects for us" (ed. 4, p. 11);

- science, scientific atelier and more: curricular intertwinings (language, languages, science etc.).

"During the scientific Atelier workshop, the teachers worked a lot on how to conduct a conversation with the children. We worked a lot on how to talk with children. [...] It's a beautiful journey of exploring plant, fruits, but also - especially - the relationship between children and nature [...] and the construction of meta- skills design, i.e.: how a design a project, talk with the children and so on. It is extremely formative" (Coord., P. 27).

Example 3. The CLASS study at the Nido Bambini Bicocca: overlapping and synergies

The third innovative project that emerges from the narratives of the educators is the recent experience of the CLASS study, conducted at the Nido Bambini Bicocca as part of the WP2 multiple case study in seven EU countries regarding culture-sentitive classroom quality assessment (D2.3 Slot et al., 2016).

The aspects highlighted as innovative are:

- presentation and discussion of the CLASS, described as a tool that partly re-confirmed/re-affirmed a training method which they are used to working with (video recordings and observation), in part adding something new compared to the use of systematic observation: by introducing domains, dimensions, indicators and a *standardized* coding process that makes observation and comparison more systematic:

"The recent involvement in the CARE project [WP2 CLASS] utilized a consolidated method for us, working on videos. At the same time, it was another opportunity for the working group to review the reasons why they do things, to to see themselves with different eyes and through the eyes of others who look at us. Deciding that a video we consider an example of the way we act etc., puts into circulation,

activates the teacher to clarify him or herself to us, the working group clarifies what they feel is important and so this in itself has a powerful formative aspect and this is also the case within the CARE research, both in the filming and in analyzing the videos. CLASS is new to us in the sense that although are not new/is not new the use of observation tools or more structured monitoring, [---]. Systematically we have used certain structured instruments, the Beller scale etc. These self-assessment practices using video are a bit more codified. In Italy we are not very used to encoding a situation with a structured instrument, which partially reduces the complexity of my intervention [...] but on the other hand, it trains us in a method. [...] With respect to the CLASS proposal, I would say that the motivation [of the teachers] was very high, considering all the difficulties that in contextualizing the tool because there were some indicators that were less meaningful than others. [...] But it is good practice [...] it clears your vision, connects with the assessment you give to what you observe, and we return to the element of observation, and so it's very interesting and formative and we clarify what the criteria we use to assess situations are" (Coord., pp. 26-27);

- the cross cultural dimension of observation that opens, widens, makes for a more exciting and in-depth discussion on the practices, raising questions at various levels, such as the significance of the physical educator-children proximity:

"*As with the Tennessee study, the latest CARE project we were involved in [...] gave us the opportunity to open wide-ranging discussions, also between different cultures. I refer, for example, to when we saw clips from other countries*" (Ed. 1, p. 18);

- a pedagogical reflection stimulated especially by some aspects, such as a "positive climate" (and in particular the "physical proximity" indicator), or "behavior guidance", in particular regarding the attitude that the educator can use to strengthen the rules: proactively, rather than by being directive.

"*I have only been at this ECEC since September, I included participation in CARE project as a training opportunity. To me it was very useful to reflect – thanks to the instrument indicators - on some situations that happened to me; I was reminded of the positive atmosphere for example, already the next day I asked myself: "In the hours I spend with the children, for how many of them is there this positive climate, or how often do I have to recall rules and how do I do this?" For example, sometimes [my attitude] is a "no no no, don't do that", then I thought better, maybe I can find another way to get the message across and not be too heavy, even verbally. It was helpful, in this sense, to reflect on the indicators, but also to watch videos*" (Ed. 1, FG, p. 9).

Below, the words of the educators express the PD value of the use of the CLASS as an instrument for observation, comparison (also cross-cultural), assessment and particularly self-evaluation of one's own educational behavior:

"*Thinking about CLASS one thing came to mind, about explaining rules. Seeing the video from Reggio Emilia [made for Wp2] everyone said: "the first thing the children do is throw rocks around." (.) Afterwards, thinking about rules, it was useful to specify them again. For example, when we go to the Square, we sit down and remember what we're going to do there and what the rules are and when they can do what they want. [...] It's something I'm doing and it helps me keep the group behaving*" (Ed. 2, FG, p. 11)

The involvement in CLASS and especially in the extension, as it emerges from the quotation, has also lead to visits and collaboration with Reggio Emilia. In the forthcoming extension of WP2 (D3.2 Slot., et.al. 2016), through the interviews (Pastori, et.al. in progress) together with the appreciation for this experience, considered a natural development of familiar training, research and evaluation practices, key critical points emerge which indirectly highlight the shared pedagogical aims of the *Nido Bambini Bicocca:* in particular the importance of the focus on the group of children and on the context that seem missing in the focus and items of the instrument.

ITALY

CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the study and critical aspects

The presentation of the two Italian cases – Reggio Emilia and Milano- offers only a partial view of the intense, complex and alternating involvement of Reggio Children and the City of Milan in the PD of ECEC staff. Further documentation and the involvement of a larger number of stakeholders, especially teachers, as well as more regular and comparable evaluation processes, would be important for the future.

A general problem/difficulty is for teachers to go beyond the specific training they are involved in and develop the capability to reflect on a metacognitive level and subsequently communicate and discuss the meaning of their work and the link between the PD process with daily practices in order to produce wide-spread sharing of meanings with wider audiences (colleagues, parents, other stakeholders).

Young generations of teachers, while entering their profession with a richer pre-service training experience, including documentation, are not used to discussing their practices and experiences with more experienced but sometimes more nostalgic colleagues: these exchanges need time, and time is a constantly insufficient and precious resource. It is difficult for them to review their experiences and professional capital in terms of the current debate, *in primis* regarding outcomes and evaluation, but also in the context of the extreme diversity of family educational styles.

In Milan, difficulties, "failures" and critical aspects, although part of a continuous effort towards sustainability and innovation in PD, are recurrent and can be linked to the size of the City, intergenerational differences among staff and the rigid use of human and financial resources, typical in the Italian public administration.

The number of centers creates an objective difficulty in finding enough trainers, supervisors and experts, available to work for average/modest fees at fixed times. Experience is not always synonymous with competence, but now it is difficult to find resources for recruiting, orienting and training trainers unlike in the early years (CIE, Milan history of PD, Phase 1, 1995-98). At that time a group of professionals were trained, and although they were involved only part-time or just occasionally in the City schools, they had a good knowledge of the contexts, needs and training experiences. A greater investment in training trainers – although this effort would be productive not only for the city but also for non-municipal services as well - would be strategic.

While professional development cannot be offered at the same time in all centers, is it possible to engage a restricted team of well-known trainers. This results in many teachers feeling that they did "not receive enough training". Our interpretation, based on our interviews and from the analysis of evaluation reports (MIBA) is that this feeling is multifaceted. There is nostalgia for old forms of professional development (twice monthly staff meetings from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.). Older teachers and coordinators are more demanding yet ready to criticize "new" trainers. They feel they already possess the knowledge and professional skills offered and they are suspicious about

organizational and content innovation (e.g. technology, forums, etc.). Younger staff members expressed a need for constant support and to be recognized as professional by their senior colleagues.

As described, "strategic" projects, like MIBA and *Didattica inclusiva*, intensive PD in a few centers for one or two years, disseminated to other centers. In some centers – especially if the coordinator changed or did not actively participate in one of the projects – there was difficulty in carrying out and developing training input independently.

The administrative organization makes it impossible for the time being to use internal resources (coordinators or teachers) as trainers for less experienced colleagues or to share special knowledge and talents - differently from what happens in Reggio. The obstacle to this is mainly union resistance in accepting differentiated policies towards staff, and therefore peer-to-peer experiences are not easy to realize. The hope is to overcome these obstacles and to implement contact and exchange through technology.

The *coordinators* are, as mentioned above, key figures both in positive and negative terms. Their involvement in the training process means they are supporters and guarantors, or skeptical *believers* in the innovation process, and passive or intrusive action on their part is one of the critical points. The *pedagogisti* (Reggio Emilia), the equivalent of coordinators in Milan, play a crucial role in quality, training and dedication.

This becomes clear in the choice of themes and trainers. At times there is tension between coordinators and the direction in evaluating needs and competences of the staff of specific centers and, consequently, in assigning trainers and themes. The success of training, both on terms of observable and permanent innovations in practices according to the project goals and customer satisfaction, largely depends on the competence of coordinators in enhancing reflectivity (awareness of the skills that are both possessed and still needed) and in reaching common goals by implementing projects that stem from the training experience.

Resources for professional development are also a critical point. The creative solution which the *Milano Bambini* and *Didattica inclusiva* projects put into practice regarded flexibility in terms of timing, recruiting experts, etc. A yearly regular budget, enriched by special projects, is strongly needed as well. The new law (107/2015) states that continuous professional development is compulsory and should hopefully find regular financial channels to support it.

In Reggio Emilia, professional development offered also to non-municipal schools is a critical point, because practices, ways of conceptualizing projects and interpretations of the National Guidelines are extremely varied, and this is a challenge and a prototype of the future ECEC integrated system, foreseen by the new law.

Concluding remarks

The cases of Reggio Emilia and Milano illustrate experiences and practices carried out in different developmental niches within a shared background: Municipal engagement and responsibility in ECEC in Italy which has nurtured and promoted a "culture of ECEC" based on city investments in human resources and regular and recurrent PD practices in connection with research. Long before the State presence in ECEC, cities like Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, Bologna, Trento, Torino, Milano and

others, were characterized by a strong municipal tradition (Putnam et al., 1994) and had established their permanent/on-going PD systems.

The two cities we have chosen as examples have been in touch and in exchange over the years through their professionals and researchers as most the most active Municipalities in ECEC (e.g, through the network of the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia*). The first and only conference on Malaguzzi in an Italian University – *Nostalgia del futuro*, 1995 – was organized at the University of Milano (which became Milano-Bicocca in 1998) (Mantovani, 1998).

Reggio Emilia and Milano are different in size and quality of life, but they share many of the key words and experiences which have marked the history of ECEC in Italy. Highlights like civic participation, bottom-up community experience, the idea of childhood as a precious and valuable period of human life, reflective practices, documentation and life-long education for professional growth are characteristic in Reggio but not only. The idea that children have the right to be cared for in neat and esthetically pleasing environments prepared by experts and well-trained professionals reached a peak in Reggio, but is also tangible in Milano and in many other cities where all municipal ECEC centers have their *piazzas*, places to meet with others, coordinators or *pedagogisti* and a deep commitment to engage with families. The ideas that ECEC centers are so-called *experienced neighborhood* places to meet and work together, that caregivers and teachers are models for children and families, that they function based on team work and shared responsibility are common.

Reggio Emilia places high in Italian quality of life rankings in terms of economic and environmental factors, political stability and social cohesion, as stated in the chapter on Reggio Emilia. This variable is an important component of the basic trust in education and in children's potential which guarantees the development of a diffused pedagogy and professional growth as a way of thinking. The steadiness of keeping their own pace, rejecting outcomes based on fast-gained results, has been made possible by political stability, the unquestioned support to ECECs as a community a conquest and capital and a long tradition of fruitful civic participation in city matters - especially regarding ECECs, since the founding years after World War II. Over the years, all this the sense of belonging, the pride in professional work, the sense of responsibility in sustaining engagement and innovation has been reinforced by the international recognition of Reggio's accomplishments.

Innovation is not even mentioned in our Reggio report, but the concept is embedded in the very idea of children's development looking towards the future and in the process of translating this belief in professional practices and professional growth in a shared framework of meaning linked to participation and exchanges between professionals at all levels in a reciprocal process that involves children, families, the whole city.

The Municipality of Reggio Emilia is today the *first and most stable example of an integrated 0-6 system* which has networked and keeps different ECEC educational agencies (State schools, FISM, cooperatives) connected, involving them in direct collaboration and exchanges. This experience anticipated the model of the 0-6 integrated system proposed today for the country by the new Law 107/2015 (*La Buona Scuola*) which is setting the scene for new, more integrated developments in the Italian ECEC system.

Milano is a metropolitan city with a strong international identity, characterized by high mobility, a natural curiosity for innovation, a basic capacity to welcome and mold newcomers and an attitude to

face and accept challenges, coupled with an understated style in showing accomplishments. While Milano is in a lower position in the quality of life ranking, usually behind medium-sized cities, it is well placed among big cities. Milano is the industrial and financial core of Italy, in many respects a European town and an incubator of innovation and well represents both the struggle and the potential of contemporary Italy.

In many documents, as well in the recent Pedagogical Guidelines for ECECs which were published as the result of a PD project described above, Milan is defined as a "plural city", open to the challenge of change and complexity, and as the "Italian *laboratory*" for economics, finance and innovation on many levels. The extensive investment in ECEC dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. It was supported by the Municipality, the Church and a wide network of lay charities (the social responsibility in social and educational areas of influential families and in particular of entrepreneurs has always been very strong and is still alive today. Currently, company welfare has also become a corporate social responsibility (see *Nido Bicocca*), Bank Foundations are engaged in TFIEY, etc). A common saying is that in Milan you are rarely asked "Where are you from?" but rather "What do you do?", showing that the value of work and action are more important than origin and specific cultural traits.

The tradition of civic engagement has lasted despite frequent changes in local administration. This can be seen in ECEC policy as a *fil rouge* beneath the discontinuities but still implementing innovation and quality on a large scale is a main difficult. Milan is still the municipality with the most direct engagement in running ECEC centers in Italy (85% c.a.). The city has been able to maintain a balanced budget without cutting services and PD by looking for innovative sources of financing (see above). The spirit of the city, mirrored in the ECEC style and its organizational variations, is more individual than group oriented but it maintains a back bone of solidarity. The Milan ECEC system shares most of Reggio's values and objectives but with a different level of quality and does not search for "perfection". There is a continuous, although more varied, investment in PD, a strong sense of belonging among staff, a relatively early integration in the coordination of ECEC services, with PD based on reflective practices, especially participatory observation, a constant effort to train professionals to encourage family participation which is interpreted differently from the Reggio Emilia approach, with a stronger emphasis on more personalized practices and transition from home to ECEC.

Reggio Emilia involves, integrates and governs other subjects in its Municipal system, while Milan still struggles to integrate the numerous ECEC municipal services grouped in very different areas - each of the 9 administrative zones widely outnumbers Reggio's whole population, trying to guarantee a common basis for each service through a PD system that combines a strategic, negotiated on-going city project with free choice regarding more local themes; finally Milan favors new ways of implementing ECEC through innovative shared models (see the example of *Nido Bicocca*).

Reggio Emilia creates opportunities for PD and resources through the Malaguzzi International Center - Milan finds new sources for supporting PD in the folds of a financing source which requires the implementation of workshops involving children and parents in centers.

On-going, i.e. non-episodic, projects lasting two or more years are a common trait of both cities, interpreted by Reggio with more freedom, using the bottom-up approach, as projects with children emerge from observation and documentation at their own pace, followed and studied by

professionals. In Reggio Emilia, PD is a process of reciprocity where more experienced or mentor teachers and *pedagogisti* work together and learn from each other and through exchanges between services. In Milan, the scale and the diversity of the city lead to the need to find and coordinate external experts as mediators of strategic projects which are a mixture of bottom up (themes and needs emerging from the field though the *pedagogical coordinator – posizioni organizzative*, PO) and top down decisions (the final choice of the strategic themes), moderated locally through workshops with children and families (see *MIBA* and *Didattica Inclusiva* projects*)*.

Reflective practices are common in the two cities, although with a greater emphasis on intersubjective observation in Milan and on documentation in Reggio.

ICT emerge indirectly through documentation in both cities: Reggio does not even mention them, because these tools have been used for years and are shared in ECECs while in Milan, internet infrastructures are still missing in many ECEC centers, but the use of video documentation and video feedback has a long history.

In both cases, the link with research is strong but has different origins. In Reggio Emilia it is a consequence of worldwide recognition and the curiosity and interest for this bottom-up experience, which has attracted top researchers from all over the world, and in some cases has given rise to common projects. This has been a *impulse* also to create the *Malaguzzi International Centre*, which is both a source of PD for internal professionals and external guests. The relationship with the University developed later, when, after many years of resistance, the University asked Reggio to participate and qualify student teachers. Reggio *holds the reins* and looks internally and externally for research partners.

In Milan, from the beginning, the city asked that local cultural and research sources (Universities, research centers like ISMU, but also theatres, museums, etc.) to be partners and provide inspiration, experience and experts for implementing PD and has been open to many studies proposed by Universities (e.g. Children Crossing Borders, CARE).

The common idea, very powerful, is that professional growth and research are strictly linked, that the approach is participatory (action research) and reciprocal (each partner contributes to the growth of the other), and that knowledge, practices and results benefit the whole system.

The experience of involvement with CLASS was challenging for many reasons:

For Reggio Emilia, it represented a new way to use video documentation, aimed not only at illustrating children's activities and the process of their project work and discoveries, but also to focus on teachers. Educators in Milan, in particular at *Nido Bambini Bicocca,* were more familiar with observation and video-observation focused also on teachers and they were both intrigued by and ambivalent about this very structured and standardized tool.

The process of choosing and discussing the clips generated new types of discussions and thoughts in the teachers and the discussions about the clips – recorded in Italy and also from other countries - shed new light and possible interpretations on daily practices.

The extension process (Pastori, et.al. in progress) has allowed this debate to be deepened and it has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of this instrument from the Italian point of view. In particular, teachers have criticized the timing, the lack of focus on the group of children and on the

context, which are highly cultural variables.

Finally, due to the current debate in Italy on evaluation and self-evaluation in the ECEC field, the first national instrument for self-evaluation, RAV, has recently been issued by *Invalsi* (the National Institute for School Evaluation). It is currently being tested in *Scuole dell'infanzia*. The opportunity for familiarity with CLASS has been appreciated by Italian professionals involved. The process of analyzing the instrument is considered an interesting opportunity for dialogue and making meaning by the teachers and coordinators involved.

Outcomes in both cases are the development and sharing of ideas about children, goals and practices which go beyond ECEC centers and into the city, aiming at social cohesion and shared frames of reference. The idea that children's well-being cannot be promoted by speeding up learning to attain specific results, but rather by following the right pace at a rhythm set by a carefully observed group of children, is a common heritage of Italian ECECs. PD is an important part of this. This vision, together with the universal character of ECEC in Italy, faces new challenges in the curriculum and withstands the pressure for measurable outcomes. Good PD, argues Reggio Emilia, builds a shared emerging curriculum and faith in the curriculum. The *Linee Guida pedagogiche* issued in Milan after a lengthy participated process finally addressed the curriculum as a situated and shared focus for the well-being of all children. It is an example of PD within a community-based process of engagement, civic participation and learning on the part of many actors.

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C.

THE POLISH CASE

An Innovative Approach to the In-service Professional Development of Caregivers in the ŁÓDŹ PUBLIC CRÈCHE NETWORK

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Acknowledgments:

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASES

Introduction

The objective of this report is to present the innovative approach to the in-service professional development of caregivers in *Miejski Zespół Żłobków w Łodzi* (the Łódź Public Crèche Network). The report is part of the deliverable 3.3. of the CARE project - *Report on 'good practice' case studies of professional development in three countries: Report on the three case studies of innovative and exemplary approaches to the professional development of ECEC across Europe*, *including examples of best practice*.

Preview of its structure

The report consists of six chapters. The first part provides background information concerning: the legal and organizational basis for the work of the 0-3 year-old educare sector in Poland, the historical, geographical and social context of the case, the rationale for choosing the case as an exemplary and innovative in the national context. The second part of the text outlines the transformation phase in the history of the Łódź Public Crèche Network and the origins of the innovative in-service professional development approach. The third chapter concerns the framework of the case. The origins, main actors, pedagogical assumptions and the voices of the stakeholders are presented in this part. The following chapter presents the research design and methods used in the collection and analysis of the data. The focus of the fifth chapter is on the results of the research. The findings are presented in reference to three levels: micro (organizational), meso (inter-organizational) and macro (systemic) distinguished in the report *Comparative review of professional development approaches* (Jensen et al., 2015). In the last section of this chapter, the findings are discussed with regard to the possible implications for practice.

CASE PRESENTATION

Legal basis for the functioning of crèche settings

Crèches in Poland are settings providing educare to children aged from 20 weeks up to the age of three. They come under the *Ministry of the Family, Work and Social Policy (previously the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy)*. On the national level the steering document for this sector is the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three*.

The roles of the crèche presented in the Act are: care, upbringing and education. Even though the educational role is included in the regulation, still provision for 0-3 year-old children is not a part of the educational system in Poland.

<u>The profession of a caregiver</u>
Professionals working with 0-3 year-old children are employed on a different legal basis (Labor code) than preschool and school employees (Teacher's Charter of the 26th of January, 1982). There is also a distinction in the terminology, as professionals working with the youngest children are called *caregivers (opiekun/-ka)*, and do not use the title *teacher*, which is reserved for professionals working with children over three years of age.

<u>Regulations concerning the PD of caregivers in Poland</u>
Some of the regulations covered by the Legal Act are the pre-service qualification standards for caregivers and heads of crèche settings. Apart from chosen university programs (nurse, midwife, kindergarten teacher, lower primary school teacher, or school counselor) candidates for caregivers may gain qualifications during professional courses. According to the Act, the courses may be conducted by various public and non-public providers on the basis of training programs accepted by the *Ministry of the Family, Work and Social Policy*. At the end of 2014 there were 147 pre-service training programs approved by the government. The Legal Act establishes municipalities as the authorities responsible for the work of the settings for the youngest children. In-service training is not addressed in this document, which may lead to the conclusion that the regulations in this area belong to the competence of the municipalities. No budget on the national level is secured for this purpose.

<u>Crèche networks in Poland</u>
Local authorities in cities with more than a few settings have come to the decision that public crèches are to work within the framework of networks. There are 17 public crèche networks in Poland. The most numerous one is *Zespół Żłobków m.st. Warszawy* (The Public Crèche Network in Warsaw) which provides over 6000 places for children in 54 settings. *Miejski Zespół Żłobków w Łodzi* (the Łódź Public Crèche Network) is the second most numerous one in the country and includes 30 settings offering over 2500 places for children.

<u>Innovativeness of in-service PD in the Łódź Public Crèche Network</u>
To our knowledge, the term *innovation* in reference to PD initiatives in the field of ECEC practitioners has not been defined under Polish law or in the literature. Nevertheless, a number of institutions of the educational system, such as preschools and schools, conduct various innovative programs. The legal basis for such work is *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 9 kwietnia 2002 r. w sprawie warunkó prowadzenia działalności innowacyjne j i eksperymentalnej przez publiczne szkoły i placówki.* (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Sport of 9th April 2002, regarding the conditions of innovative projects and experiments in public settings). The document provides the definition of pedagogical innovation "...*as an innovative curriculum, novel organization or methodological solutions aimed at improving the quality of work*...", but does not clarify the qualification standards of the teachers implementing innovative programs.

The literature review and comparative analyses of PD programs in EU countries made it possible to formulate the following 'common criteria' of innovative approach to PD: non episodic, systematic, sustainable, transferable, creative, focusing on key figures, bottom up/participatory/negotiated practices, connected to research/action research processes (Jensen et al, 2015). Taking into account the numerous initiatives following the criteria undertaken by the

practitioners from the Łódź Public Crèche Network, it may be considered as setting a national example of innovative approach to in-service PD. Its specific initiatives are presented in detail in the following chapters of the report. Additionally, even though the term "innovative approach" has not been defined, the projects undertaken are considered innovative not only on the basis of externally established criteria (see above), but also by the stakeholders themselves. The Director of the crèche network, Halina Mazur, titled her presentation delivered at the IV National Seminar in Łódź in 2012"*Cooperation with Universities − innovation in the practice of crèches in Łódź"*. Also the caregivers interviewed for the purpose of this report used the term *innovative* when talking about the curriculum and structural solutions implemented in the network and in the particular settings. The description of their daily practice "we share our observations at pedagogical meetings and think about how to improve our work" matches the definition of "social innovation" and refers to the processes of collective idea generation, selection and implementation by people who participate collaboratively to meet social challenges' (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 16). The researcher and academic teacher Lucyna Telka in her book *Przekształcanie przestrzeni społecznej placówki. Studium społeczno - pedagogiczne na przykładzie żłobków*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2007 (*The Transformation of the Social Milieu of the Institution. A Socio- Pedagogical Study based on the example of Crèche Settings*, described her research project in the Łódź Public Crèche Network as a pedagogical innovation (2007, p.216).

CASE CONTEXT

A description of the background context − the history of the city

Łódź, which is situated in the central part of the country, is the capital of the Łódzkie Voivodeship. It is the fourth city in Poland in terms of size. After World War II, the city, which suffered from a significant population loss (450 000 citizens of Łódź were exterminated), was in a relatively good condition regarding its infrastructure. For that reason and due to its proximity to the ruined Warsaw, until 1948 Łódź acted as the capital of the country. The infrastructure of Łódź started to change and develop. The textile industry rebuilt its position in the country and in Europe, new academic and cultural centers opened, including the renowned Leon Schiller's National Higher School of Film (1948). After decades of prosperity and development, since the time of political transformation in 1989, the manufacturing industry started to collapse, which has had severe consequences for the job market. Today Łódź is a relatively poor, post-industrial city, with a high level of unemployment (over 10%). The city is facing the problem of population decline. In 1988 it had 854 thousand inhabitants and today, less than 30 years later, about 700 thousand people live there. Still, Łódź is the third most populated city in Poland.

The history of crèches in Łódź
The history of crèche settings in Łódź may be divided into four periods, which in general reflect the different approaches to the caregiver's profession, the pedagogical approach and the perception of the crèche in the child's development. The first period ends in 1991, along with the beginning of the political transformation in Poland. Dorota Kiela, an experienced caregiver at the III National Seminar in 2012 "*Accompanying the child in his/her development - A reflective caregiver in a crèche*" in her presentation: *"Change of the concept of crèche work from the caregiver's perspective - what has changed in me and around me?"* described her work at the time as follows: *the child was viewed as a person requiring care and nutrition at the time when his/her parents are at*

work....every morning the parent got a tetra diaper and rompers and dressed the child in the lock room. Older children were dressed in aprons with a handkerchief on a long ribbon in their pocket. Then in the "filter"- the place of daily meetings with the parents, I took the child. Between the nutrition activities, I conducted organized games, the child was to learn something.
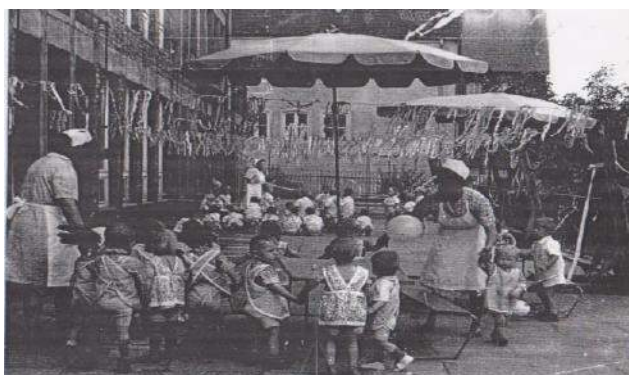

Figure 1. Picture of a crèche, 1954

In 1991 the government introduced the *Act of 30 February on medical care facilities* which was in force until 2011. The Act stated that crèches were medical facilities offering care and health prophylaxis to children up to the age of three. Settings came under all the organizational, financial, supervisory and professional development regulations of the medical sector. The same year had place the establishment of the Łódź Public Crèche Network following the decision of the local authorities. Even though under national regulations settings were of a medical character, their educational role was noticed at the local level in Łódź. The first pedagogue was employed in the network. The role of the person in this post was to observe and discuss with caregivers their work, help them to plan and reorganize it. D. Kiela: *I was able to monitor and verify my knowledge and skills by conducting demonstrative lessons. Those were activities observed by the pedagogue, heads of settings and caregivers. When preparing for the activities, I looked for new techniques and methods of work. All the children participated in the activities, they were encouraged to do different things which they were not always very interested in. Still I find this period very important....I could see what was wrong in this form of professional development* (Kiela, 2009). An important change that originated in that period was involving parents in selected events e.g. celebrations of Christmas, Mother's Day. The pedagogue encouraged caregivers to cooperate with parents, and with time the caregivers noticed that without the parents there is no good quality care in the crèche.

The third period was the time of transformation. The term transformation is used by the stakeholders: professionals and academics in reference to the actions undertaken in the cooperation of the professionals from the public crèche network with Lucyna Telka, Professor at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Łódź. The transformation began in the year 2000 at the initiative of Halina Mazur, Director of *Miejski Zespół Żłobków w Łodzi*. When providing a rationale for her undertakings, Halina Mazur said: "*...we all worked very hard and things went quite well. At the same time, I knew that we should do something more, but I was not sure what and how. That is why I asked my former teacher, Professor Marynowicz-Hetka, for help. She introduced me to Lucyna Telka, PhD at the time. Our further cooperation was very dynamic. The transformation changed our (the practitioners' and L. Telka's) way of thinking about the child and the profession of a caregiver. It changed us all*". In 2007 the approximately four-year process of the intensive work of L. Telka and the professionals from the public crèche network in Łódź was presented in her book

"*The Transformation of the Social Milieu...*"

The last phase in the history of the Łódź Public Crèche Network is a continuation of the transformation phase, as caregivers are building their daily practice on the basis of *pedagogical projects* − documents presenting the framework of work for each setting developed in cooperation with Telka. The presence of the researcher in the settings is very limited now, which makes it distinctly different from the previous phase. Nowadays cooperation with Telka plays a monitoring role. Ten students supervised by Telka conducted their MA research projects in the crèche. The results of their work have served as a source of information for professionals on their day-to-day practice. Additionally, Telka recommends new valuable professional literature to the practitioners. Apart from that, the academic is a consultant, and participates in the national seminar "*Accompanying the child in his/her development*". When describing the present situation of the network H. Mazur said: "*There are still a lot of things that we need to work on, but now we have a solid foundation to do so*".
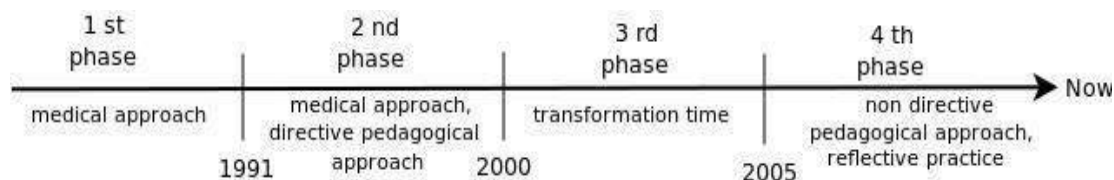
Figure 2. General overview of the changes identified in the history of the Łódź Public Crèche Network

Structure of the Łódź Public Crèche Network

The network consists of 30 settings. Even though these work independently, they are one institution, a community of practitioners sharing the pedagogical approach *Accompanying the child in his/her development*. The settings are of different sizes, and comprise from one up to five groups, with children from 20 weeks up to 3 years of age. The network is governed by the Director. In each setting there is a head. Children stay in the settings for up to 10 hours a day, five days a week, and are offered 4 meals a day. The children's stay in the crèche is co-financed by the municipality and the parents (parents pay about 25% of all costs - about 80 euro per month). Additionally, low-income parents may apply for different kinds of financial support from *Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej* (Municipal Center for Social Assistance). Among the specialists in the network, there are supervisors in the areas of pedagogy and nutrition, who are responsible for monitoring settings in the areas of their specialization.

CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND CASE SELECTION

Formulation of the case

"The concept of PD *(doskonalenie kompetencji)* refers to the actions aimed at developing, improving, optimizing, modifying, and enriching the existing situation with regard to the knowledge, skills or responsibilities of a practitioner" (Telka, 2005, p. 355). The following case concerns processes which brought about practical changes that make work in crèches more reflective, open for modifications and meet the *common criteria* of innovation (for more details see the next paragraph).

Practical evidence of the innovative character of the PD - Rationale for choosing the case

Looking for an exemplary model of PD in the ECEC sector in Poland, we asked several specialists in the field of ECEC about their first ideas concerning desirable in-service professional development practice. In terms of the 0-3 year-olds' educare sector, our interviewees: academics and professionals referred us to the work of Professor Telka and the public crèche network in Łódź. The information gathered was supported by the literature review of the Professor's publications. The data available appeared to be coherent with the WP3 topic of interest − exemplary innovative practices in PD.

In order to acquire more information concerning the case, close cooperation was established between the Polish CARE research team and the network. Analysis of the existing data and the data collected for the purpose of this study confirmed that the in-service professional development initiatives undertaken in Łódź meet the *common criteria* of the in-service innovative approach to PD. Firstly, most of the changes regarding the practice in the settings are based on negotiations among professionals – the **bottom up** perspective. Caregivers reflect the improvements in their work by changing the pedagogical projects − the internal documents of each setting. The implementation of the lifelong learning postulate, which was one of the basic components of the transformation phase, **is of a sustainable and non-episodic** character. Taking advantage of professional development in cooperation with academics constitutes some of the empirical proof of openness to new learning experiences. Apart from ongoing cooperation with the University in Łódź, the network cooperates with the Medical University in Łódź and the University of Warsaw. It is the only crèche network in the country cooperating with academics so closely. To share their experience and build a foundation for national cooperation in the 0-3 year-olds' educare sector, the professionals from Łódź (in cooperation with Telka) initiated the organization of national seminars "*Accompanying the child in his/her development*", which take place every three years starting from 2003 and gather practitioners and academics who exchange their knowledge and discuss their practice. Professionals from Łódź reach their colleagues in other cities by means of their publications: e.g. Internet dissemination of presentations from seminars, and the book *Wspólnie z dziećmi. O wspieraniu rozwoju małego dziecka. Praktyka i teoria*. Łódź 2005 *(Together with children. About supporting the development of the small child. Practice and theory* 2005). In this way they spread their ideas and experience. These initiatives meet the criteria of **networking and transferability.** Furthermore, several **research projects were conducted** in the network, and their results were taken into consideration in planning further work. *"Program poprawy jakości żywienia dzieci w łódzkich żłobkach"* (The program of food quality improvement in the Łódź Public Crèche Network) conducted in cooperation with the Medical University of Łódź and supervised by E.Trafalska, PhD, and the nutrition supervisor of the network, Katarzyna Loszek, is one of the examples of such cooperation. Professionals from Łódź influenced **systemic**, national regulations. The Director, pedagogical supervisor and the caregivers of the network, along with others, consulted the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three*. They were also involved in elaborating the document *Krajowy Standard Kompetencji; Wychowawca małego dziecka* (National Standard of Competences; Professionals working with young children). Some of the empirical evidence of **collaborative work** among professionals from Łódź is shown in the involvement of 146 practitioners who became co- authors of the book *"Wspólnie z dziećmi. O wspieraniu rozwoju małego dziecka. Praktyka i teoria"*. Academics, the Director of the network, heads of the settings, the pedagogical supervisor, but mostimportantly, the caregivers, wrote the first Polish book presenting the practical guidelines for caregivers' work, Authors in a comprehensive way presented also the theoretical background of their pedagogical approach. To

sum up, the in-service professional development practice has been chosen as the case because: it meets the *common criteria* of innovative approach, practitioners from the Łódź Public Crèche Network consider the PD actions that are undertaken innovative, national academics and ECEC professionals (outside Łódź) find it innovative in the national context.

TRANSFORMATION PHASE
The following chapter highlights the key concepts, as well as the process and evaluation of the transformation phase. It was based on the literature review, and revised by Profesor Telka, the key figure involved in the changes which were introduced at the time. The aim of this chapter is not an in-depth analysis of the transformation phase, as it has already been presented in the book *Transformation of the social milieu....* The book was the main source of information presented in this chapter. The reason for including this information here is to provide a more in-depth context for the case, as many ongoing projects concerning PD in Łódź are the consequences of the inquiry conducted by the researcher.

1.1 Key concepts of the transformation phase
The key concept of the transformation process is *Towarzyszenie dziecku w rozwoju* (*Accompanying the child in his/her development*). It refers to non-directive pedagogical approaches and is rooted in the Polish and world educational and social traditions. Telka, presenting the theoretical background of the concept, refers to the pedagogy and philosophy of education represented by e.g.: H.Radlińska, J. Korczak, E. Marynowicz-Hetka, E. Pikler, F. Dolto and M. Montessori, J.M. Barbier. Telka provided practitioners from the Łódź Public Crèche Network with some chosen publications of the authors mentioned (she translated selected texts from French) to broaden their theoretical knowledge. In the negotiation process of practitioners and the researcher, the concept was formulated and its definition for the purpose of the network was elaborated. *Accompanying the child in his/her development* concept has become the foundation of work for the professionals in the Łódź Public Crèche Network. The definition of the concept, which is the framework of the pedagogical approach and the guideline for the practice, driven from the research work of professionals and Telka can be found in the internal document of the network *Zarządzenie wewnętrzne nr 76* (the document presents the guidelines for the pedagogical project in the Łódź Public Crèche Network). The definition specifies that *the actions of an adult are to be focused on supporting the child in his/her development and preventing threats. Practitioners are to remember about the importance of humility while looking for the rationale behind their actions undertaken with the child and for the child, as it allows them (the practitioners and children) to learn. In the climate of respect, trust, freedom, safety, taking into account the individual pace of each child's life, adults learn about the child and themselves in the relation with the child. The practitioner stimulates the development of children by providing them with the milieu which makes it possible for them to learn how to make choices and decisions, and be with other children. In their daily work professionals: support the autonomy of children, which means they stimulate their capability to do things independently; observe social relations built by children and adults; let children know that they are interested in their activities; accompany children, and collectively build the rules of social life; enable parents to participate actively in the setting's life.* In practice caregivers work according to the 'Pedagogical Project' −a written document based on the *Zarządzenie wewnętrzne nr 76.* In the transformation phase, practitioners in each crèche elaborated an original document *Pedagogical project in crèche number ...,* which has been a foundation of the crèche's daily work. It is a guideline for the implementation of the concept of *Accompanying the child in his/her development,* reflecting specific

needs, resources, knowledge and beliefs of the unique community. The project has been evaluated and modified according to different reasons, for example architectural ones, influencing the organization of work, national regulations, parental ideas/expectations. "A pedagogical project is the creation of the social life of a setting, and it reflects collective beliefs" (Telka, 2007, p. 172). One of the aims of writing a pedagogical project is "for professionals to gain the skills which are necessary to search for the theoretical rationale behind the actions undertaken in such a way as to refer to the concept of *Accompanying* and to give up those which are directive" (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006, s. 255). E. Marynowicz-Hetka, writing about the role of a professional in the *Accompanying...* approach, described it as 'being parallel' to a child, 'next to' a child (*Być obok*), not intervening in his/her actions for as long as possible. The professional is to create a stimulating learning environment, supporting the child's development in freedom. At the same time, the adult has to ensure the ethical and moral development of a child (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2005). Caregivers have to stand 'next to' a child to 'be parallel' to him/her in a reasonable way. In the process of the transformation, Telka drew the attention of practitioners to micro events, which at first glance seem to be banal and not important, but may often be hard to cope with for the child. These are for example: the children's taking decisions (choice of activity) or persuading the child to eat. These actions were observed in the settings by the researcher, but professionals seemed not to realize the consequences of their behavior for the child's comfort and sense of safety. The researcher referred to the concept of 'douce violence' (Schuhl, 2000) which had not been known to the practitioners. From the point of view of the practitioners, the term gentle violence (*łagodna przemoc*) was and still is very hard to discuss. MA research projects conducted in the network revealed that some of the professionals do not agree with the interpretation of their behavior as violent, even if gentle. Still, the concept itself with some examples of behavior and ways of dealing with it was included in most of the *Pedagogical projects*.

TRANSFORMATION PROCESS
In the year 2000 at the request of the Director of the network, Telka and her MA students conducted participant observations and a number of unstructured interviews (talks) with practitioners in 8 settings. The following research questions were formulated: How is it? How do the professionals work? The results of the inquiry were addressed in the report. The document presented a holistic picture of daily practice which in general was defined by the researcher as directive. In the report cited, the professionals used the following expressions when referring to their practice: " *we try to feed, we show things to children, we do things for children, we lead activities, we teach children*". This language reflected the way of the professionals' understanding their role and responsibilities, which supported the researcher's conclusions derived from the observations. The report was discussed with the Director and professionals, who came to the conclusion that something had to be done to improve the situation. The need for the in- service PD program was then formulated. The aim of the program was to reflect on the current situation and find ways to implement improvement. It is important that at the time not all of the professionals were convinced if any changes were required, still the Director of the network decided to involve all of the practitioners in the project.

Between the years 2001−2003, Professor Telka elaborated the framework of (*Program of improving the professional competences of caregivers aiming to support the child's development in a crèche*). The program was based on the 'research- action-training' method. It was a dynamic, flexible process, whose aims were continuously reformulated on the basis of theory and actual practice. The

program involved three groups of stakeholders: children as the active subjects of planned and conducted activities, parents as the child is viewed as part of the family milieu, and professionals who are responsible for what happens with children in the setting.

The first steps were observations by L. Telka documented in the institutional diary. Discussions of practitioners in the focus groups from each center accompanied 5-day observational cycles. The aim of the focus groups was to reflect on *How? Why?* and *What?* is happening with respect to different types of the activities observed (play, meal, art activity, organized play, nutrition routines). The result of this part of the program was the formulation of the problems in practice. It was followed by introducing initiatives to promote less directive behavior of the practitioners in their relationships with children. Among the undertaken actions were: workshops of interpersonal communication skills, revision of the theoretical knowledge of practitioners (based on publications provided by L. Telka and the professionals themselves), involving parents by "inviting" them to the crèche ('Open Day'), preparation of the first joint publication *Wspólnie z dziećmi. Opis dziecięcych zabaw realizowany w łódzkich żłobkach,* Łódź 2003, H.Mazur, L.Przybylska, A.Rudyk, M Świercz, L. Telka, B.Wolska (red) (*Together with children. Description of children's play conducted in the Łódź crèche)* organization of the first National Seminar *Accompanying the child in his/her development.* Step three of the program was aimed at, what Telka described: '…a global change of the practitioners' thinking about their practice, transformation of their ideas about their actions' (2007, p. 62). At this stage, representatives of each setting – the head and one caregiver − met with the researcher regularly over a period of two years. The aim of these meetings was to elaborate a common pedagogical approach, a universal framework shared by all of the practitioners of the network. The professionals discussed both with the researcher and among themselves what problematic situations they encountered in their practice, they analyzed the researcher's observations and interviews. At each meeting Telka provided the literature concerning the topic of the discussion. The participants of the meetings shared the ideas with their colleagues in the settings, gathered their opinions and proposals and presented them at the next meeting with the researcher. This back-and-forth exchange resulted in the common understanding and agreement of the pedagogical approach *Accompanying the child in his/her development.*

The joint efforts of the researcher and the practitioners were reflected in the 'Pedagogical projects' of each setting. 'The aims of the process of writing the pedagogical project became: gaining skills for researching the theoretical background for the practices, the consolidation of the activities referring to the concept of *Accompanying the child*..., limiting the directive activities, development of the methodological competence of practitioners as the way of thinking about practice on the basis of the theoretical concept, development of social (inter-personal) skills (symmetric relations, a participatory approach, creation of the social space for exchange), development of professional skills by the collective writing of the pedagogical project' (Telka 2007, p.174-5). Telka described the transformation from the perspective of the actions undertaken by the professionals in the process of innovation. The first two steps were of a more episodic character and involved several meetings with the researcher. For the researcher this time was a period of intensive work of getting to know the settings, professionals and children. The third step − the elaboration of the pedagogical project − changed the proportion of engagement, as at the time the collaborative work of all the practitioners took place in all of the settings at the time. This change was described by Telka in a synthetic way as follows: 'from participants who are the recipients of proposals and the researcher's knowledge (steps 1 and 2) to the participants as authors of their own pedagogical projects' (2007, p.64).

EVALUATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION PHASE

Telka analyzed the pedagogical projects wrote by practitioners from all the settings at the different stages of their cooperation. The table below presents some chosen examples of the expressions used in the following versions of the pedagogical projects reflecting the changes in the thinking and understanding of their work by the professionals. The 'intellectual movement' started from the directive style through the transformation to the pedagogical approach *Accompanying the child in his/her development*.

Directive approach	Transformation	Accompanying
we try to feed	we allow / we give up	we do not restrain
we show/present	we quit / we become aware	the own initiative of a child
we give/pass	we have noticed	play as an aim in itself
we do things for children's	we thought through	free choice
officious	we stopped encouraging	we introduced
we have to do something	we explain to parents	we have slowed down the pace of
it should be	we do things differently	events
the adult makes decisions	we work on changes	the independent action of a child
	we need time	we do not interfere
	accompanying is possible	children invite us
		the child shows what he/she needs

Figure 3. Words showing the transformation of practitioners thinking about the support of child's development (Telka, 2007, p. 200).

With time, the elaboration of pedagogical projects by the professionals of each setting, meetings with the researcher and then staff meetings, ensured the expansion of the theoretical idea of change, shared the understanding of the concept of *Accompanying...* in the field of practice, the co-creation of the practical framework and the symmetric engagement of professionals and the researcher. In conclusion, it has to be stated that not all of the practitioners were convinced about the need of implementing all of the changes introduced. Interviews and MA research projects revealed that some of the practitioners do not completely understand what *Accompanying...* means, while others pointed out that the structural characteristics of the settings (overcrowded groups, not enough caregivers) do not allow the full implementation of the approach.

POLAND-SECTION II:

FRAMEWORK OF PD IN THE ŁÓDŹ PUBLIC CRÈCHE NETWORK AND CASE STUDY

Based on the literature review and the country reports provided by the CARE partners, the differentiation between the three levels of the innovative approach to PD actions has been proposed in D.3.1. The following case study refers to this distinction by grouping the data and findings around the macro, meso and micro levels of innovation. The first level − macro − is the system level and concerns actions influencing the whole sector of the educare of 0-3 year-old children in Poland. The next – the meso level − is related to the cooperation of the network with organizations from other sectors, such as academics or NGO's. The third is the micro level, which involves PD actions within the crèche network, i.e. particular settings, and between professionals of different settings and supervisors.

Origins of the case study

In 2011 the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three*, a new steering document for the sector of educare of 0-3 year-old children was introduced. From the perspective of pedagogy, the most important regulation among those implemented, was joining the educational role to the care and upbringing functions of the settings. This change has had an evident influence on the PD training programs of caregivers, at pre-service levels. Still, as mentioned in the first chapter, no regulations concerning the obligation of in-service development have been formulated. On the national level no budged has been secured for this purpose. One may say that this is the reason for the very limited offer of specialized training programs on the educational market offered to caregivers. Regarding the obstacles, different initiatives of practitioners from Łódź have been noticed by the stakeholders: academics, professionals and policy makers all over the country. However, the nature of PD initiatives has not been examined. That is why the researchers decided to look closer at the organization, types and content of PD activities undertaken by the practitioners from Łódź.

The actors of the case

The diagram below (Figure 4) presents the simplified organizational scheme of the Łódź Public Crèche Network. It is based on the *Załącznik Nr 1 z dnia 11-05-2015 r. do Reg. Org. MZŻ w Łodzi* (Attachment no 1 of 11.05.2015 to the organizational regulation of the Łódź Public Crèche Network).
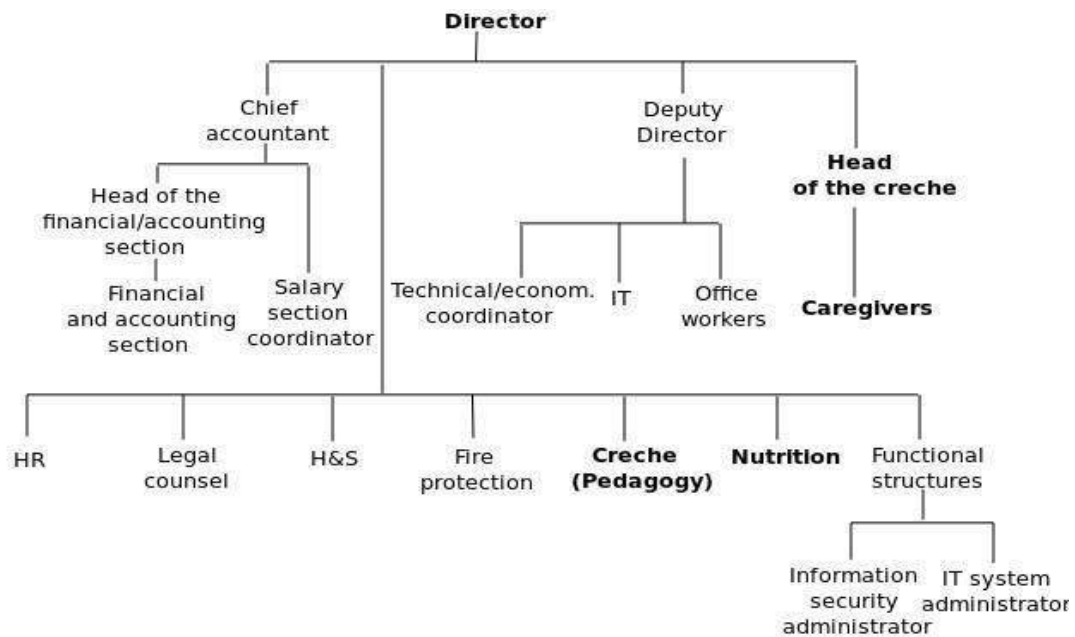
Figure 4. Organizational scheme of the Łódź Public Creche Network

Professionals working in the positions in bold are the main actors of the case on the organizational level.

Pedagogical assumptions

The importance of good quality ECEC provision for children's development and educational outcomes has been addressed in a number of studies (Pianta et al., 2005; Thompson & La Parlo, 2009). Staff characteristics, including opportunities for in-service professional training have been shown to enhance good quality services (Hamre et al., 2012). Telka points out that the expectations toward caregivers are very high, and include professional development and self-improvement (2005). The researcher referred to Delors, who in his report "Learning the treasure within" (1998), highlighted the need for lifelong learning as allowing "to know, to act, to be and better understand ourselves and others". The need for continuous PD is reflected in the internal documentation of the network (Zarządzenie nr 76). Its importance was also highlighted in the interviews with practitioners. As pointed out in report D3.1, the research review by Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle (2010) indicates that collective participation in PD, may reinforce the effects of PD programs (Jensen et al., p.18). Organizational procedures in the network enhance collaborative participation of practitioners in the learning environment of the network. Participation of all of the practitioners from the network in the PD programs conducted in the cooperation with academics was one of the conditions made by the Director of the network for implementing the programs. In the interview, the Director also highlighted the need to implement theoretical knowledge in day-to-day work.

To sum up, there are three pillars to the PD approach: PD has to be considered in a lifelong perspective, PD is a shared experience of practitioners and PD has to involve looking for the theoretical explanation of practice.

The voices of the stakeholders

Several stakeholder groups are involved in the PD of practitioners in Łódź. The practitioners' perspective has been included in the case study by conducting interviews with caregivers, the head of the setting, supervisors and the Director of the network. Additionally, the caregivers' practice has been observed during different types of activities. The external specialists' perspective has been included, as two interviews were conducted with academics cooperating with the network and supervising numerous MA research projects within the last couple of years in the crèches. Very important stakeholders who are directly involved in PD are the children and parents who are recipients of the services provided by the crèches. The children's voice has been recorded by means of observing their relations with caregivers. Parents have been taken into consideration in this case study by analyzing the ways of implementing the changes based on their opinions and expectations (internal documentation of the network- parental questionnaire).

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The following chapter provides the aim of the study, restates the research questions and presents the process of collection and the method of data analysis. The chapter is broken down into three main sections. The first one concerns the research design, research aim and questions. The second part consists of several subsections showing methods of data collection, sample and organization of data collection. This section is followed by the presentation of the data analysis strategy.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESTATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Research design

Yin (2002, p.13) provides the following definition of a case study: "a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context". The author also points out the importance of using various types of data in the case study, and underlines that the most important advantage of data triangulation is the possibility to display the coherence of evidence what makes the findings more credible and convincing (2015, p. 150). This study reflects the theoretical assumptions concerning the research design of the case study method by: providing the context, collection and analysis of various existing resources and new data collected for the purpose of this inquiry and the triangulation of the information. On this basis the authors of the report hope to shed a new light on the innovative in-service PD actions undertaken by practitioners of Łódź Public Crèche Network.

Restatement of the research aim and questions

The aim of the research is to add to the existing knowledge on the nature of the innovative approach to PD in practice. The general question being addressed is: *What are the practical in-service PD actions undertaken by practitioners in Łódź on the micro, meso and macro levels?* Specific questions concerning the organizational level (micro) have been formulated: *How do the caregivers influence each others' professional development? How is the cooperation of the caregivers with their supervisors organized (pedagogical supervisor, nutrition supervisor, head, Director of the*

network)? What are the areas of this cooperation? In regard to the meso level (inter-organizational) the following research questions have been formulated: *What are the organizations which the network cooperates with and why? How does this cooperation influence the PD of practitioners? How is this cooperation organized?* In terms of the systemic level, i.e. macro, the question is: *How have the bottom-up initiatives of Łódź practitioners influenced the educare sector of 0-3 year old children in Poland?*

DATACOLLECTION

Data collection took place between May 2015 and February 2016. It was conducted with regard to the micro, meso and macro levels.

Research methods and the sample

The following methods were used to collect the data:

- semi-structured interviews with the: caregivers (n=5), the head of a selected crèche, the pedagogical supervisor, the nutrition supervisor, the Director of the network, academics cooperating with the network (n=2);

- review of publications concerning the PD of practitioners in Łódź;

- analysis of the documents: MA research projects (n=10); gray literature (internal documentation of the network); presentations from the national seminars *Accompanying the child in his/her development* (n=2)*;* drafts/comments of the practitioners' on the *National Standard of Competences; Professional working with the young children (Krajowy Standard Kompetencji; Wychowawca małego dziecka; number 234202)*, and the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three* (national regulation)*;* projects of cooperation between the academics and professionals; the authored pedagogical project of the crèche;

- analysis of the observational data (video recordings):13 video clips lasting between 2 and 20 minutes registered over two days in one selected crèche.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews and talks with the caregivers

Interviews with 5 caregivers representing one setting were conducted. Participants had already been involved in the CARE project at the time of organizing the case study, as the setting was one of the WP 2 cases presenting 'good practice'. The Polish research team decided to continue the cooperation with the practitioners, as it allowed to collect more comprehensive data by including the video recordings and interviews collected for the purpose of the WP2 inquiry in the following research. Several talks, lasting from a couple of minutes to two hours, took place during 8 visits of the researcher in the setting. Five interviews were audio-registered and then transcribed into English and notes of the other less formal meetings were made. The interviews were conducted around the topics: impressions of the clips, day-to-day organization of work, cooperation of practitioners within the setting/network/external specialists, PD opportunities and pedagogical approach.

Semi-structured interviews and talks with the head of the settings

Several talks with the head of the crèche involved in the WP2 case study were conducted. Two of them were semi-structured interviews, which were audio-registered and transcribed into English.

Moreover, the minutes of other meetings were taken. The talks and interviews were conducted around the topics: impression of the clips, day-to-day organization of work, cooperation of practitioners within the setting/network/external specialists, PD opportunities and the pedagogical approach.

Talks with the Director of the network

Several talks with the Director concerning: the history of the crèche network, the legal regulations of 0-3-years-olds' sector of educare in Poland, cooperation of practitioners, PD opportunities and the pedagogical approach took place. Key information was written down by the researcher in the form of field notes.

Talks with the pedagogical supervisor of the network

The pedagogical supervisor of the network was actively involved in all the research activities conducted in the network, not only for the CARE project (WP 2 and WP3), but also for its extension, the project Quality Matters. For the period of 3 months, which the researcher spent in Łódź collecting video recordings (May-July 2015), numerous interviews with the supervisor took place. The key information from these was written down by the researcher as field notes.

Talks and semi-structured interview with professor Lucyna Telka, PhD

Some talks and one semi-structured interview with professor L. Telka took place. The interview concerned action undertaken by the Professor in cooperation with professionals in the transformation phase. The interview lasted about two hours. The key topics of that conversation were written down by the researcher in the form of field notes. Additionally, part of the interview was video-registered and presented at the CARE plenary meeting in Berlin in December 2014. The following meetings concerned the ongoing cooperation of the academic with the network and MA research projects on different aspects of the crèches' work supervised by Telka.

Narrative interview with Elżbieta Trafalska PhD

One interview lasting about an hour with the academic from the Medical University in Łódź - Elżbieta Trafalska - took place. Also the nutrition supervisor of the network, who arranged the meeting, participated in the interview. The interview concerned: the aim of the program *The program of food quality improvement in the Łódź Public Crèche Network* and the in-service professional development actions which it involved.

Observations

Two days of observations were conducted in one selected crèche (18-19.05). The researcher was present in the setting from 8:30 to 12:20 each day. 13 video clips lasting from 2 to 20 minutes, presenting different activities of the children (meal, free play, routines, art, reading etc.) were registered. Four of the video recordings were earlier included in the WP2 research.

MA research project

10 MA research projects have been conducted in different settings of the network by MA students of the University of Łódź (Faculty of Educational Sciences) supervised by L. Telka between the

years 2011-2013. The topics of the MA research concerned different aspects of the crèches' functioning and involved methods such as: observations, interviews and analysis of internal documents. The dean of the University of Łódź, Faculty of Educational Sciences provided the researchers with written consent for using the MA dissertations in the CARE project.

Internal documentation of the network

The collection of gray literature took place with the great help of the Director, pedagogical supervisor and the head of the crèche. Professionals provided the researchers with internal regulations, photos, booklets for parents and other materials concerning PD and the organization of work in the network and in particular settings. This was done on the basis of back and forth exchange of information. Additionally, researchers got access to the information regarding the cooperation of the practitioners with external specialists and organizations, such as: the draft of suggested changes in the *National Standard of Competences; Professional working with young children (Krajowy Standard Kompetencji; Wychowawca małego dziecka); number 234202)*, and the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three*.

Projects of cooperation between the academics and professionals

E. Trafalska (*Program of food quality improvement in the Łódź Public Crèche Network)* and L.Telka (*Transformation of the social milieu*) provided researchers with brief reports on the organization of PD within their authorial projects.

On-line sources

From 2003 till 2012 there were four national seminars "*Accompanying the child in his/her development*" organized by the professionals from Łódź (the next seminar is planned for November 2016). Some presentations and conference materials from the last two seminars are available on-line, and those were used for the purpose of the following report. Additionally, the web-page of the network was taken into consideration.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Yin (2015) argues that a case may be studied using one of five strategies for analysis. The first one is the personal/individual strategy built for the purpose of the particular case. The other four are general strategies such as: referring to theoretical assumptions, exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Yin, 2015 p. 164). Considering the existing data, the available resources (finance, time) and concern for the quality of data analysis, the descriptive strategy was applied for the purpose of this study, in order to fully investigate the complexity of the case.

POLAND - SECTION III:

FINDINGS

The text is to be a part of the report presenting three case studies from different countries, all of the research teams follow the guidelines elaborated by the leader of the task. It states that research should reflect the characteristics of the case at the micro, meso and macro levels (Case studies; Manual for partners – Attachment A). This approach has been applied by the Polish team. For further investigation, an additional division of levels was applied, various at each of the levels.

MICRO LEVEL

When referring to collegiality, P. J. Bloom writes: the extent to which the staff are friendly, supportive, and trusting of one another; there is peer cohesion and esprit de corps of the group (2014). Little (1982) points out that collegiality is particularly important for continuous professional development. On the basis of her research, she enumerated four types of interactions of practitioners, which are crucially important for PD: engagement of practitioners in the frequent exchange of information concerning teaching practice, observations followed by informative feedback, shared planning, designing and evaluating the curriculum and teaching each other the practice of teaching. On the micro level the data for the present report have been analyzed with regard to these four components.

Engagement of practitioners in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice

Intra-organizational exchange of knowledge, skills and experience involves: caregivers, heads of crèches, supervisors and the Director. According to the caregivers, the most frequent and intensive cooperation takes place between the staff working together with a specific group of children. It comprises especially two types of interactions. The first one concerns the current exchange of information, about what is happening here and now. The caregivers pointed out that the family atmosphere of openness, trust and support, allows them to understand each other by *eye contact*, and ask for help/advice whenever it is necessary. The head of the setting shares the opinion, as she described the crèche staff as: friendly, understanding each other, not envious, not gossiping and creating a trusting climate. The second type of interactions regards day-to-day conversations of caregivers during the children's nap (from about 13:00-14:30). The caregivers stated that it is the time during the day when they talk about their practice, contacts with parents and observations of the children. The head of the setting asked by the researcher if she observes such meetings, said:

Yes. It really is like that. Sometimes they make notes, when they find it necessary.

The caregivers of all the teams also cooperate closely within the whole setting, as they often substitute for each other. According to the *Pedagogical project* meetings of the 'Zespół pedagogiczny' (all the staff of the setting) meet cyclically. But the head and caregivers stated that in practice such meetings do not take place very often. Practitioners claim that it is more convenient to meet in smaller groups during the nap of the children. The reason is of organizational, as during working hours it is not possible to find time when all of the practitioners

could meet in one place at the same time. The caregivers and head referred to the relations among them as rather open and democratic. They claim to exchange critical thoughts concerning each others work. Caregiver:

Sometimes it is the head who notices something and says" it can't be like this'. Then we have to do something about it, and we sit, think and negotiate about what we can do with this situation. We try to change things to make the time in the crèche more valuable for both the children and for ourselves.

Still, the head also said that:

...the barrier (to change daily practice) is sometimes my lack of skills or insufficient skills to share my ideas in a precise way, to convince others I am right.

The contact of the caregivers from one setting with other practitioners of the network takes place on two occasions. The first one are substitutions. When there is a need, the head of the setting asks an employee to substitute for a colleague in a different setting, usually it is a person living the closest to the crèche. All of the practitioners referred to the experience as a valuable one. Caregiver:

We may observe different organizational solutions, materials, and games and learn something that will make our work more efficient or just easier.

The information gathered in the other crèche is shared with colleagues in the setting, so the whole staff benefits from the experience. Nevertheless, one of the caregivers stated that:

From my perspective it quite stressful. We do not know the situation, children, parents, other caregivers and the head. Sometimes the reception is very nice, but it happens that a substitute caregiver has to deal with the situation alone. It is important that children do not know us, and sometimes are afraid of us. They react differently to a strange face.

The other type of caregivers interaction, on the network level, are meetings of the representatives of all 30 settings in the headquarters of the network. According to the pedagogical supervisor, the meetings take place every few weeks. Usually they are run by the Director of the network, and the pedagogical supervisor is present. It is up to the head's decision which of the caregivers participate in the meeting. According to the head of the setting, the choice is based on organizational reasons, but also the individual interests of the caregivers:

For a while the same person represented our crèche at the meetings, and then provided us with information the next day. But it is a bit difficult for the settings. If the meetings were to be organized once a month that would mean that this team suffers the lack of one caregiver quite often. Because of that we have decided to interest more people from other groups in getting involved (i.e. in participating in the meetings).

Caregiver:

Recently there was a workshop on music at the meeting which was conducted by an external specialist. I volunteered, because I am interested in this topic as an amateur musician.

The caregivers who participated in the meetings agreed that these meetings usually do not involve an extensive exchange of information between the professionals concerning their practice.

The following figure presents 6 types of caregivers interactions which may influence his/her practice. The lengths of arrows represent the level of engagement of caregivers from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice (the longer the arrow is the more influential is the interaction on the practice). The model was based on the interviews with caregivers, head, the Director

and pedagogical supervisor. The model was presented to the caregivers who provided their feedback - accepted the model with minor changes of the lengths of the arrows. Due to the very limited contact of the caregivers with the Director of the network (one caregiver every several weeks) the relation between them was excluded from the model.
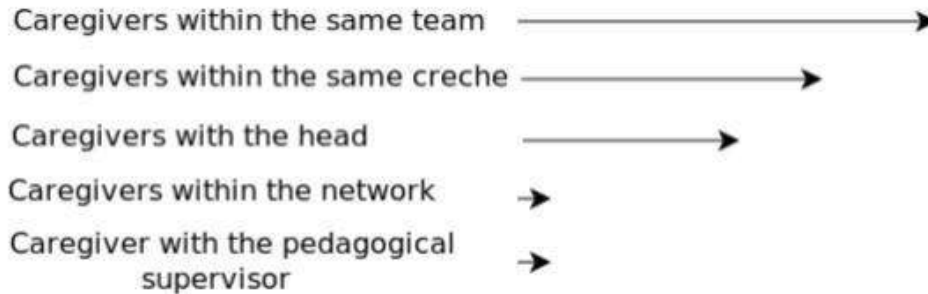

Figure 5. Demonstrative model of the level of engagement of caregivers from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice

The head of the setting mentioned in the interviews that besides learning through the negotiation process with the caregivers in the setting, she often discuses crèche issues with other heads, but ones that do not only concern pedagogical practice but also administration, finance etc. Head:

Cooperation with other heads is a day-to-day practice. When I have a problem, or anyone else has a problem, we always call each other. Sometimes those are 2 or 3 calls a day, when the problem requires that. I use the knowledge and wisdom of my colleagues if necessary.

On some occasions the head asks for the support of the pedagogical supervisor. Head*:*

Recently there was a situation. I was not actually looking for advice but I informed the pedagogue how I behaved in a particular situation, expecting support or confirmation: "yes, this is the solution that should have been applied in this difficult situation".

Additionally, there are cyclic meetings of the heads of all settings organized in the network's headquarters. The Director and the pedagogical supervisor participate in the meetings, and if the topic of the meeting requires the presence of the nutrition or IT supervisors, they are also invited. The pedagogical supervisor described the character of the meetings as mostly organizational. Pedagogical supervisor:

...it happens that we discuss a problem or situation of an individual setting, but usually when the head of the setting needs advice, he/she contacts me or other heads.

The following figure presents 4 types of head's interactions (in the terms of the participants of contacts) which may influence her practice. As in the previous model the lengths of arrows represent the level of engagement of the head from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice (the longer the arrow is the more influential is the interaction on the practice). The model was based on the interviews with caregivers, head, the Director and pedagogical supervisor. The model was presented to the head who provided feedback on the model- accepted the model with minor changes of the lengths of the arrows.
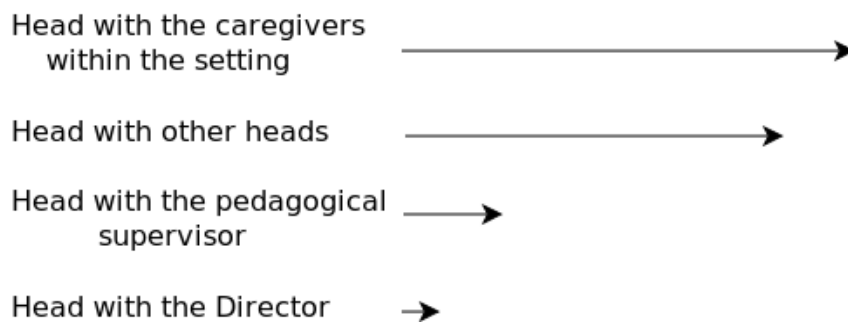
Figure 6. Demonstrative model of the level of engagement of the head from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice

Observations followed by informative feedback

In the internal documents of the network - materials elaborated on the basis of the pedagogical projects conducted by the settings of the Łódź crèche network (*Materiały na podstawie projektów pedagogicznych opracowanych przez Łódzkie Żobki*) we find, e.g. sections concerning observations. The script of these documents states that:

> *The ability of observing the behavior of a young child in the context of his/her relations with an adult is the fundamental tool for the self-improvement of the skills of practitioners... Insightful observations of children encourage the practitioner to approach each child individually and notice his/her success.*

Further information on the approach to the observations we find in the *Pedagogical project* of the selected setting in the section concerning reflection on daily practice. The document elaborated by the crèche staff states that the analysis of practice should be based on: *observing and being observed, gathering information and discussing it; analysis of the information and formulating conclusions for practice in connection with theory*. The document does not specify the organization of observations - who observes whom, for how long, when, according to what criteria. Pedagogical supervisor stated that the practitioners' work is observed by the following groups: children, other practitioners, the head of the setting, parents, trainees, students/academics conducting research projects, the pedagogical and nutrition supervisors (the latter most of all focuses on the feeding process and the way of serving food). The addressed question is: whose feedback is informative for practitioners?

Children observations

Children observe the practitioners and provide them with feedback expressed by behavior and/or language. This feedback becomes informative only for the practitioners who are open, sensitive and attentive to the child's signals. This attitude is described by the author of the tool CLASS Toddler as *awareness- monitoring children for cues* and accommodation of the cues into the appropriate practice is presented as *responsiveness - answering children's bids for attention with soothing, understanding in a timely manner providing individualized assistance and attention* (K. La Parlo et. al., 2012). The four selected clips recorded in the setting, presenting: a meal, free play, reading and art activities were assessed by three qualified reserachers using the CLASS Toddler tool. The two indicators (awareness and responsiveness) of the *Teacher's sensitivity* dimension were scored in the high range by all of them in each clip. The result supports the statement of the caregivers and the head that the feedback of the most important group of stakeholders- the children, is taken into consideration by the practitioners.

The second group of observers providing the practitioner with feedback are their colleagues (other caregivers). The previous sub-section presents a number of quotes illustrating the type of relations between practitioners in the setting. Caregiver:

> _In practice something happens, and we negotiate with other caregivers in the group how to behave in this or that situation._

The head has a high opinion of the cooperation between caregivers (see quotes in the previous subsection), still she referred to a recent situation when one of the caregivers refused to consider the negative feedback of one of her colleagues. Head:

> _The caregiver said "Why should I model on someone else?"._

The head could not clarify how often the criticism of one caregiver of others work concludes with such a rejection, or if her involvement in the mentioned situation caused such a reaction

Head's observations

National regulations do not specify the detailed obligations of the head of the setting. The Łódź Crèche Network's internal document - _Organizational regulation of crèche, appendix 3_ states that: _The head runs the crèche independently and is responsible for its overall functioning...(§13 p. 1)._

The head of the selected setting is a qualified pedagogue and psychologist experienced in the position of a crèche leader. In the interview she stated that each of the four groups is visited by her about twice a week, nevertheless there is no fixed schedule of observations. Head:

> _I usually visit groups for a short period of time. But still I have worked in this business for a very long time and I think that I notice different issues. I think that if I sat there for a longer time, I would somehow interrupt the natural flow. When children go to sleep, I meet with the caregivers and discuss the situations which I saw if I find it necessary. I ask them to explain some situations to me, provide the context or a reasoning for their behavior, on some occasions I ask them to change this or that behavior, always providing an explanation._

The head pointed out the warmth and openness, which allow the staff to engage in a critical and reflective exchange of opinions, as a valuable feature of her contacts with the caregivers. Head:

> _What is important is the fact that I can see people are not afraid to express their opinions, to answer my questions and they do not feel investigated. I don't want to offend anymore._

Sharing knowledge and reflections concerning observations between the head and the caregivers is viewed as a mutual experience. Head:

> _I can also go back to the group and say "I was wrong, you were right".... I often ask for advice from my workers.... it is my priority for the employees to know that they have an impact on what is going on here._

When asked about the value of the head's observations, the caregivers did not provide comprehensive answers, but short comments, such as: _it's efficient, it's valuable etc_. Still, they were all positive and consistent when asked if they consider the decisions introduced in the setting democratic.

The following group who may provide caregivers with feedback are parents. It may be based on their direct observations of the caregivers' work and on their observations of their children outside the setting.

Zarządzenie nr 76 outlines that contacts with parents are supposed to be carried out on a day-to-day basis. The *Pedagogical project* based on the regulation specifies that it is crucial for the practitioners to be informed about all parental reflections concerning the organization of crèche work and in particular with their child. It states that practitioners are to be open and sensitive to comments about what parents appreciate and what they would like to change. The internal document distinguishes several opportunities when parents may observe and discuss the caregivers' work: the process of enrollment, the adaptation period, celebrations organized in the setting, the time when parents bring and pick up the child. In the setting there is a special space, where parents may wait for their children or meet with other parents or caregivers. It has to be mentioned that it is not a common practice in Poland to provide such welcoming conditions to parents (Żłobicki, 2002). Several times caregivers mentioned issues concerning the cooperation with parents and their influence on practice, which on many occasions is considered very valuable. Nevertheless, the conclusion is that this relations are limited mostly to the specific behavior of a child, for example: family rituals concerning feeding, sleeping, favorite toys etc. One may suppose that when exchanging such information, parents and practitioners build a common understanding of the child's needs, which in consequence may influence the practitioners' work, and also the parents' relation with the child. On some occasions the contact with the parents appears to be difficult and the involvement of the head is required to elaborated a compromise.

Parents who sign their child out of the setting before the end of the contract (an agreement between the setting and parents on the planned length of the child's enrollment), may also provide the practitioners with feedback by filling in a short questionnaire concerning their opinions about the setting. However, the head of the setting noticed that the opinions do not influence the practice significantly. Head:

> *I distribute the results to all of the employees at the Zespół pedagogiczny, and we discuss them, but they have not prompted any significant change in our practice.... For our crèche those are mostly pleasant opinions.*

Asked about the reasoning for requesting parents for their opinion, the head said:

> *..it is important to know what parents, especially those who sign out their children out in the middle of the year, think about us. It is, most of all, valuable information for the network in general, as it shows the trend in the parents' perception of our service. Positive comments support the argument that crèche settings are not as bad as some people think. Especially that this is feedback from parents who for various reasons resign from the crèche, potentially those, who may not have been happy with the service.*

The duties of the pedagogical supervisor include monitoring the pedagogical work of practitioners, and advice in this area. The supervisor described the strategy of conducting the observations (one of the ways of monitoring practitioners' work) as follows:

> *I do not have a fixed plan what, when and for how long I conduct observations. I make a schedule for myself, but it has to be flexible, as it is only part of my duties. When I get to the setting, I usually visit one group and observe a chosen element of work. Then I share comments with the head of the setting*

and the team of caregivers. I try not to provide them with ready-to-use solutions. I think that it does not work when I tell people how to do their job, they have to figure it out in the team of people who they work with on a day-to-day basis. Only when it is a shared idea, is there a chance for implementation.

The role of the observation is also strongly underlined by the head. Her opinion is very coherent with the one of the pedagogical supervisor. The head referred to the organization and the value of the observations in the following way:

There are 30 settings and probably about 100 groups, so the observations are not very frequent. Still the supervisor is 'visible' in the setting. She comes to the setting without notice, and observes some aspects of work in the chosen group. When she comes to the setting, she tells me what the plan of the observation is and goes to the group. Afterwards, she comes to me again, and tells me about her suggestions, then she goes to the group and talks with the team. Sometimes she gives some clues and other times she asks caregivers to rethink some elements of their work. Her comments become a starting point for discussion.

In the selected center within the last year there were no students conducting research projects or trainees so observations conducted by these two groups were excluded from the analysis in this section.

The collected data make it possible to draw the conclusion that caregivers are aware of importance of observations for their PD and they consider children's feedback as the most important evaluation of their actions. In addition, they appreciate the most comments of other practitioners, still they are not always open for criticism.

Shared planning, designing and evaluating the curriculum

National regulations do not specify the curriculum. The only guideline is that institutions are to ensure children with an education, care and upbringing appropriate for their age and individual needs. As mentioned in the previous sections, on the network level the issue of the program is regulated in *Zarządzenie nr 76.* The document outlines the areas of the crèche's functioning, which should be taken into account by practitioners in the process of constructing their unique *Pedagogical project*. The areas are as follows: *Day-to-day practice* (the child's enrollment, the adaptation process, play, meals, naps, hygiene), *Cooperation with parents, Reflections on daily practice.* The regulation and the first pedagogical projects in each of the settings were based on the cooperation of the network with Telka (for more information see chapter 2). The pedagogical projects are evolving to meet the changing needs of practitioners, parents and children. The changes are based on the practical experiences of the staff and their reflection on them. The head:

...it is not that there are major changes. Sometimes we have a brainwave that something has to be changed, because now it does not work or we do not work like this anymore.

Even if the need for changing the project does not come up during the year, it is cyclically reviewed and discussed by the practitioners. Caregiver:

Every year the head asks each group of caregivers if there is something that should be modified in the project. And it does make sense, because children are different, and we change as we develop our skills, and we see room for improvement. So the project has to be changed.

In the *Pedagogical project* we find a global daily timetable of each day in the setting. The timetable specifies the times of meals and children's nap, which automatically schedules the time and length of other activities. There is no fixed plan of these activities. According to the caregivers and the

head, the time is organized in line with the children's needs and interests with the support of their independence, and because of that activities cannot be planned in advance in details. Nevertheless, caregivers within each group make some arrangements between themselves about, for example the type of material that will be available for children to play with in the particular day, such as carton boxes, toilet paper, ribbons etc. Caregivers stated also that specific for the Łódź Public Crèche Network is work in small groups, what allowes each caregiver to implement his/her own ideas and at the same time provide children with a wider choice of activities. While visiting the setting, our researcher was able to observe this approach in practice. The dimension *Regard for Child Perspective* of the CLASS Toddler tool, used to assess the clips from the selected setting, *captures the degree to which teachers' interaction with children and classroom activities emphasis children's interests, motivation and point of view* (La Paro et., al, 2012). The four clips that had been registered and evaluated were scored from 4 to 7 (medium to high range) in this dimension, what brings the conclusion that there is still space for improvement in this area. Even though the *Pedagogical project* does not present the specific content, frequency or length of particular types of activities, there are specific guidelines concerning the role of the caregiver interacting with children. For example, the language used by adults should encourage children's independence, the adult should physically be and communicate with a child on the same level (sitting on the carpet, at the table), all the activities should allow children to enjoy unlimited creativity (place, time, materials), children should be provided with a choice of the activity etc. Practitioners asked about the evaluation of their ideas said that it is obvious which activities are mostly appreciated by children, as when children are interested in something they are involved in the activity for a long period of time. Caregivers who often work individually with a small group of children share with each other these positive ideas, to provide all children with most valuable experiences.

Teaching each other the practice of teaching

According to the caregivers and the head, playing the role of the instructor for others (intentionally) happens very rarely. Situations of providing colleagues with knowledge gained from professional literature or different forms of in-service professional training, usually take place during the nap time of the children, or the meetings of *Zespół pedagogiczny.* Other contexts when a caregiver is 'mentored' by other practitioners appear when a new employee is hired. Asked the question concerning mentoring new staff members by their colleagues, a caregiver replied:

> *... definitely. Especially people who are new in this profession learn from more experienced caregivers.*

Reacting to these words, the second caregiver present at the interview (over 20 years of experience) added:

> *We also learn from them.*

The third occasion allowing teaching each other the practice of teaching regards extra activities organized in the setting by external specialists. At the selected crèche there are the following activities on offer: theater- 'Crèche Theater of a Very Small Actor', eurhytmics, sensory motor integration therapy and several times a year a theater performance and musical meeting with the Łódź Philharmonic musicians presenting different types of instruments and music. Caregivers gave their opinion about these activities, which was positive. They mentioned that participation in these activities (as observers) provides them with new ideas regarding their own work, it also gives an opportunity to ask professionals questions concerning their areas of specialization. What is considered as particularly valuable is the contact with a psychologist.

At the meso level we shed light on the cooperation of the network with other organizations in regard to PD. We present the PD experiences of the practitioners starting from their pre-service training as the reference point for further PD activities. The following subsection concerns in-service PD opportunities of practitioners in the current place of work. The next part is about their expectations and opinions on the desired forms and organization of in-service training and finally in the last section we outline the cooperation of the network with chosen organization- Medical University of Łódź.

Pre-service preparation for the profession

According to the current national regulations graduates of number of different specializations (nurse, midwife, child minder, kindergarten teacher, lower primary school teacher or school counselor) are qualified to the work in a crèche setting. All interviewee have a higher school diploma (bachelor or MA) in different pedagogical and/or medical studies (social pedagogy, education, psychology, nursing). Caregivers asked about their reflections regarding the university preparation for the profession were very critical. All of them pointed that it was mostly theoretical (each of them attended different program of studies), often general not focusing on this particular age range. They also see this gap in the current university programs by observing workof the new young professionals. Caregiver:

> *This girls, who come to crèche sometimes have a wide knowledge, I do not want to degrade that. But when they are working, they get lost. They often sit with a single child, and they try to work with the theories that they know and transfer them into practice. But we have 34 children in one group. They miss knowledge and practical experience to work with a big group of children. And they didn't spend a single day in crèche during the whole studies.*

Limited practical classes, when future caregivers could observe and talk with people who work with children on a daily basis, but also participate in the activities with children, were valued the most by all interviewees. Nevertheless, the pre-service training programs which the practitioners were enrolled in did not offer them practical training in the crèche or other type of setting for children at this age range.

Caregiver:

> *I think that practical training in the preschool was valuable and quite close to the requisite experience in crèche, but still the requirements in the crèche are a bit different.*

However the caregivers pointed also the value of some theoretical courses such as: the psychology and pedagogy of young children. One of the interviewees mentioned also about the course which provided her with the necessary knowledge concerning play. Caregiver:

> *Education through play...how to teach, how to implement the most important elements playing with the child.*

All of the interviewees referred to the practitioners who graduated medical high schools, specialization caregiver (all of them had an opportunity to cooperate with them at different times of their career) as very competent and highly qualified. One of the caregivers who before starting the university course attended such a school said:

> *I finished four years of medical high school- specialization caregiver and I have higher school diploma- specialization Primary School Education. I have learned a lot about this particular*

profession in the high school and this is still the basis of my work.

The main conclusion of the caregivers was that the university pre-service training programs miss balance between theoretical and practical training.

Head of the setting also appreciates the graduates of medical high schools. Asked about the procedures concerning internal training of the new employee she said:

I ask them to observe, work close to the more experienced colleagues, especially graduates of the medical high schools.

Still the head referred to the change of the qualification standards (from the vocational training on the level of high schools to the university diploma or post high school specialization course) positively. She reflected on the university programs as providing more in-depth understanding of child's development, the nature of relations between the adult and the child and importance of good quality educare, whereas medical schools were rather focused on care and nutrition. One may say that non of the training systems provide complex knowledge and skills necessary for the profession of a caregiver.

The Director of the network and pedagogical supervisor also have positive attitude toward the changes regarding increasing educational requirements toward caregivers. At the same time the Director said:

At the end it is important what and how do the people learn, not where.

Evaluation procedures of qualification courses are limited to the accreditation of their program (for more details concerning the accreditation of specialization courses and university programs see the report D.3.1. *Comparative review of*…..). Interviewees were not able to refer to the efficiency programs in general. Pedagogical supervisor:

I may only refer to the training programs which our employees where participating in and told me about. In most cases caregivers say that they learn the profession in the settings from their more experienced colleagues. Nevertheless, they find their pre-service training the universityone in most cases, as valuable too, as it provides them with theoretical background, what helps them to understand how we view the child, and on what assumptions the approach 'Accompanying the child in his/her development' is based on.

In-service PD opportunities

The national regulations do not provide any specific requirements concerning in-service training of caregivers. Authorities responsible for the overall functioning of the settings for 0 to 3 year old children are the municipalities, who may, but do not have to, provide it to caregivers. In Łódź no funds on this purpose are secured in the municipality budget, so the cooperation of the network with organizations providing in-service training is very limited. The head:

If we had any founds on this aim it would be much easier. I could send them/ask them (caregivers) to participate in the workshop during the working hours, for the money of the employer. If the training is after working hours and for the money of employees I may just have a nice request, I can just say "Listen, there is an interesting workshop. Please consider participating in it". Usually there is no response.

All of the practitioners considered the financial barrier as the fundamental one in terms of access to

the in-service training opportunities.

Within the last years, the Director to ensure PD opportunities to the network's employees has initiated the cooperation with several academics of different specializations. In her presentation titled 'Cooperation with the Universities- innovation in practice' at the IV National Seminar, Halina Mazur wrote:

The cooperation brings tangible benefits to both sides. Academics gain the proof that theoretical knowledge serves in practice to people, and practitioners find more in-depth understanding and rational for their actions. Researchers get the opportunity to understand details of day-to-day work, and professionals to adopt an attitude of the observer of his/her own actions in the light of scientific knowledge.

The process of cooperation with all academics has alike organizational character. The Director on the basis of her own observations and consults with the employees (cyclic meetings with the heads, caregivers and supervisors) undertakes the decision on initiating the cooperation with chosen institution. This action is a result of a problem and/or a need of an external professional intervention. The cooperation is based on the diagnoses of the situation and formulation of aims of the cooperation. Schedule and character of the actions is consulted with the Director and supervisors (pedagogical and nutrition). For the organization of particular actions are responsible the supervisors (accordingly to the areas of their specialization) and the heads of crèches. In her presentation Halina Mazur listed the most important results of the joined efforts of academics and practitioners.

- Organization of 4 National Seminars 'Accompanying the child in his/her development' in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012 (next seminar takes place in November 2016).

- Two editions of the publication: 'Together with children. Description of children's play conducted in the Łódź crèche' (2003); 'Together with children. About supporting the development of the small child. Practice and theory' (2005). Authors are caregivers, who described ideas for play and scripts of celebrations organized in their settings. Second edition was enriched by the presentations of academics from the first National Seminar 'Accompanying the child in his/her development' in 2003.

- Elaboration and implementation in 2009 standards of work in the Łódź Crèche Network, pedagogical project- "Accompanying the child in his/her development in crèche number...". The project orientates actions of practitioners toward the "Accompanying..." approach. It is a reference for professionals continuously reconsidering their actions, acquiring knowledge, observing their own practice, reflecting on it and implementation of changes.

- Habilitation theses of Professor Lucyna Telka 'The Transformation of the Social Milieu of the Institution. A Socio-Pedagogical Study based on the example of Crèche Settings' (2007). The dissertation is the theoretical base for the training of pedagogues working with the youngest children and the 'record' of changes which had place in the way of thinking and actions of practitioners from Łódź during their work on the pedagogical projects.

- MA research concerning the pedagogical projects and the *Accompanying the child...* approach in practice of crèche. 10 students who conducted the research were supervised by professor L. Telka.

- In 2008 and 2010 cooperation with the Institute of Psychology of the University of Łódź led by professor Eleonora Bielawska-Bartowicz. Sylwia Rydz, PhD and Ewa Marat PhD conducted

series of workshops for the practitioners within the titled:*Project of professionals from Łódź Crèche Network in regard to interpersonal and personal skills in work with young children*.

- Elaboration of a brochure concerning the development of the young child *Young child as a man interested in the world* by the academics conducting workshops. Action was a part of the program conducted by the Department of Social Pedagogy of the University of Łódź.

- In 2012 Initiation of cooperation with the Medical University of Łódź in regard to elaboration of standards and norms of children.

- Apprenticeship of students from Łódź universities in in crèche.

Several talks with the Director revealed that participation of the possibly highest number of practitioners in the PD programs is considered particularly valuable for her, as only shared understanding of the needs for change may actually change the practice.

Expectations of professionals concerning the form and content of PD

Previous subsections provide number of evidence that participation in different forms of PD is considered by practitioners and supervisors as important. Requested for specifying their expectations concerning the forms and content of in-service training, caregivers and the head were very coherent. Regarding the organization, practitioners as the most appropriate time for the training consider their working hours in particular the time when children are asleep. Caregiver:

The best would be if the training was organized in the setting, when we are at work. For people who have families, young children it is very problematic to participate in courses after work or at the weekends. It would be much easier if this courses were organized when children are sleeping.

Practitioners specifically mentioned about one form of training which they find as particularly appreciated. It involves active participation of the caregivers in the training and allows them to look at the conducted activities from the perspective of a child. Caregiver:

I have participated in fantastic workshop of pedagogy of play. It involved activities accompanied by music and concerned contacts with children and caregivers. The participants of the workshop (caregivers) 'were' children, and the trainer was the caregiver. It was fantastic. I still use the ideas I have learnt there.

According to the interviewees this form of training allows for more in-depth understanding of how do the children view adult's behavior. At the same time caregivers observe the model behavior of the adult (trainer) from the child's perspective, they may provide and get feedback immediately what allows for shared reflection, and more in-depth understanding of their own relations with children. In terms of the leading person the training caregivers were also very coherent. They agreed that the trainer who teaches about practice has to have practical experience in working with young children. From their previous PD experiences they know that communication and understanding of caregivers and the trainer is better then. In terms of content several topics were formulated. The first mentioned by all caregivers and the head was the need for cyclic organization of the first aid courses. Practitioners stated that the frequency of organizing these training is not sufficient now. Other mentioned topics were related to: the pedagogy of play, work with children with special needs and cooperation with parents. The last topic appeared particularly important to all of the interviewees. Caregiver:

I think that something concerning cooperation with parents, skills of providing them with different

information. It is a great skill, which you really need to learn and practice to provide parents with a bad/unpleasant information about his/her child, so that the parent would understand the content, and not left thinking that "the caregiver doesn't like my child".

As important pedagogical supervisor found that all of the team members working with the particular group of children (in the best case the whole setting) should participate in the training. The reflection on practice and understanding of what is to be modified, the professional growth, should be the result of the joined efforts of the whole team to ensure the sustainable modifications of work.

An example of the cooperation with the Medical University of Łódź

Children in Łódź Public Crèche Network are provided with four meals per day and stay in the setting up to 10 hours a day. All the meals are made in the settings by cook and served by the caregivers, who place the food on the plates (regulate the amount of particular products which children get). For some children meals in crèche are the majority of food which he/she has during the week, so it is particularly important to ensure them with the balanced diet.

In 2012 at the request of the Director, E. Trafalska PhD, from the Medical University of Łódź analyzed the appropriateness of the diets provided to children in all of the settings of the network. Academic conducted qualitative and quantitative research of the menu of children. On the basis of the in-depth analysis of the collected data *Program of food quality improvement in the Łódź Public Crèche Network* has been elaborated. The project includes: diagnoses, evaluation, elaboration of the program including elaboration on the new research and self-evaluation tools, workshops for the staff, establishing the monitoring and evaluation procedures.

From the perspective of this report's topic the most important are the PD actions included in the program. At the first stage of the training provided by the academic, professionals form each setting discussed the results of the analysis of the menu. Secondly, the workshops for the practitioners were organized. Professionals were provided with materials concerning the rules and most demanded theoretical models for the youngest children nutrition. The recommendations of the researcher (after discussing them with practitioners in each setting) were implemented into the day-to-day practice of each crèche.

Nutrition supervisor, the leader of the program on the network's level, was responsible for the organization of the cooperation between the practitioners and the researcher, and participated in all of the meetings. In addition, the supervisor consulted with the academic the monitoring system of the implemented changes- self-evaluation procedure.

Apart from on-going self-evaluation on the level of each setting, and the evaluation by the supervisor (based on analysis of menu, orders and visits in the settings), after two years of program's operation, it was evaluated by the researcher. The results were discussed with the practitioners (in general the improvement of the quality of services in the area of nutrition appeared to be sustainable).

Parallel to the actions presented above, several initiatives on smaller scale were introduced (in chosen settings). For example workshops for parents have been organized and research projects of MA students of Trafalska have been conducted. In addition, volunteer parents took part in the research on overall diet of their children (research concerned also home nutrition).

Cooperation of the Medical University in Łódź and the Łódź Public Crèche Network is ongoing. Cyclic meetings of the representatives of the University in each setting are organized for parents and staff (talks).

The impact of practitioners from Łódź on the systemic, national regulations regarding PD of caregivers is rather limited. Nevertheless, there are two initiatives undertaken by professionals from Łódź which have influenced the situation of caregivers in the country. The first one concerns the involvement of several practitioners in elaboration of the *National Standard of Competences; Professional working with young child* (Krajowy Standard Kompetencji; Wychowawca Małego Dziecka). The second one concerns the engagement of the Director, pedagogical supervisor and some other professionals of the network in consulting the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three*. It is the first legal document regulating work of the institutional educare for 0-3 year old children in Poland after excluding the sector from the medical supervision in 2011.

Professional working with young child

In 2009 the Director and the pedagogical supervisor on the basis of consults with Telka, and staff of the network (heads, caregivers, lawyer) initiated efforts to introduce new profession *Professional working with young child* (Wychowawca Małego Dziecka) into the *National Standards of Competence* (Krajowy Standard Kompetencji). At the time crèches were under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, and their employees worked according to the regulations concerning medical sector, also in regard to PD. Experiences of the 'transformation phase' brought the practitioners from Łódź to the conclusion that legal changes concerning the characteristics of the profession have to be undertaken. In the document *Information about the procedures concerning establishing new profession- Professional working with the young child* (Informacja o sposobie postępowania dotycząca utworzenia nowego zawodu- Wychowawca małego dziecka) provided to the participants of the III National Seminar (seminars gather practitioners from all over the country) it was stated that the modifications are necessary because:

> *They would contribute to the efforts to increase the rank of the profession. The change will be the confirmation of the fact that young child requires fulfilling not only his/her physical needs, but also psychological and social. It is achieved in practice, but there is no complete understanding of that in the society.*

In the *Information* the topic of the pre-service training of caregivers was arose. The need for the university level preparation of caregivers (bachelor degree) was formulated Participants of the Seminar had an opportunity to comment on the draft of the application prepared by the Director of the Łódź Public Crèche Network and submit their own ideas on the proposal via prepared for this purpose web page. At the Seminar the document was finalized. and submitted and in 2010 new profession was established. One of the consequences of these actions was opening new specializations at several universities in Poland, offering training programs concerning educare of youngest children.

Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of three

The level of engagement of the professionals from Łódź in elaboration of the Legal Act is reflected in the number and complexity of comments, suggestions and analysis provided on the draft regulation. All of the correspondence regarding the elaboration of the document is published on the

web page of the network (both answers of the authorities and proposals of professionals). The evidence of the commitment made by the practitioners to develop comprehensive base for functioning of the institutional educare for the young children in Poland. The Director who was the most involved in consulting the project of the Legal Act said that the final document in a very limited scale considers provided feedback. Many of the ideas were not included at all, and others were simplified what changed their meanings. The Director listed several 'disappointments' regarding the new regulation, three of them considering of particular importance. The first regards not including the new profession- *Professional working with young child* in the document (for more information see the previous subsection). In consequence it might slow down overall increase of the educational level of the caregivers, as the recommended qualifications for this profession according to the *National Qualification Standard* are on the level of the bachelor degree. The next is limiting the role of parent's involvement in the overall functioning of the settings. Instead of proposed cooperation of practitioners and parents understood as building shared understanding and coherent environment for the child's development, there are very general statements such as:

> *Caregivers conduct activities in the setting, cooperate with parents of children especially by providing comments and advising them in regard to work with children (art.19)*

The last concern regards the steering document of each setting. The Legal Act provides only brief information what should it include. Article 11 of the Act states:

> *Statute of the setting includes aims, tasks and methods of gaining them, which take into consideration supporting individual development of each child and supporting family in bringing up the child...,*

The Director pointed that providing above contents, but without information about the philosophy of the center, clear statement concerning the pedagogical approach of caregivers in each particular setting may lead to coping existing statues without any reflection and consideration of available human resources etc.

Even though the impact of the actions undertaken by the practitioners from the Łódź Public Crèche Network on the system solutions in Poland is not significant, it is the most active organization of this type in the country.

DISCUSSION

The following chapter is the summary of the findings presented in the previous sections of the report. The first subsection concerns the findings in reference to the research questions. The next part reveals the possible implications of the findings for the policy and practice in the field of in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners. Thirdly the description of limitations of the study and the recommendations for the further research are described.

Findings in reference to the research questions

The general question which was formulated by the researchers concerned the character of practical PD actions undertaken by the practitioners from Łódź on the micro, meso and macro levels. To allow the readers judging the question several detailed questions concerning each of the levels were elaborated and the answers on them provided in the fifth chapter. Concerning the intra-organizational level, question on the impact of different professionals working within the network on caregivers' practice was stated. On a basis of the interviews, analysis of the documents, grey literature and observations two models were elaborated:

Demonstrative model of the level of engagement of caregivers from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice and

Demonstrative model of the level of engagement of the head from the selected crèche in frequent, precious and continuous exchange of information concerning teaching practice.

Initially researchers planned to focus only on the relations of caregivers. The research revealed though that the head of the setting has got a strong influence on the day-to-day practice, so her opportunities for the PD may also have an important impact on the PD of the caregivers themselves. In the result the second model was constructed. Section 5.1. in detail describes the organization and the area of cooperation of caregivers and leaders- pedagogical supervisor, nutrition supervisor, head, Director of the network. The description provides an answer for the second and the third questions on the forms and range of the cooperation of professionals within the network.

The questions concerning the inter-organizational collaboration of the network concerns the reasoning of initiating the cooperation, choice of the partners, the organization and range of the cooperation of the network and other entities. To answer this questions researchers provide information gathered from academics who are involved in the partnership with the network and practitioners to show how the cooperation looks like from different perspectives. We outline the brief report on chosen program of PD to present all steps of the complex collaboration, of which one is the PD of practitioners. On a basis of PD experiences of practitioners we try to build the characteristic of the demanded in-service training program. Additionally, the report sheds light on the organizations providing pre-service training. They are not the direct partners of the network, nevertheless, have an influence on the professional skills of the caregivers, what may have an impact on further discussions concerning PD.

Lastly we explore the question concerning the impact of actions undertaken by the practitioners from Łódź on the National regulations concerning 0-3 year old children sector of educare. Describing the process of establishing the new profession *Professional working with young child* and the involvement of professionals in elaboration of the *Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for*

children under the age of three researchers tried to capture the nature of postulates formulated by the professionals and their influence on the systemic solutions regarding PD of the caregivers in Poland.

Implications of the findings

Primarly the findings may have implications for the stakeholders involved in the actions presented in the report. Professionals from the Łódź Public Creche Network and the organizations which cooperate with them may use the report to better understand their own enviroment and reflect on their practices accordingly. Leaders (directors, heads) and practitioners working within the systems of similar social characteristics and financial resources (no/extremly limited budget for the PD) may use the knowledge as the starting point for building their own PD strategies. The report provides evidence for the mutual benefits of the collaboration between the practitioners and researchers (experts) of divers specializations. Authors of the report hope that it will encourage Polish and international academics for further exploration of the possible partnership with professionals from Łódź and other Polish ECEC organizations. The last subsection of the *Findings* chapter provides evidence of the system regulations that may be influenced by the bottom-up initiatives, Polish research team hopes that it will encourage other organizations of practitoners to get involved in elaboration of national standards concerning qualifications of caregivers.

Limitations of the study and need for further research

There are number of limitations to this study, but two of them seem to be particularly important from the perspective of the authors. Firstly resources designated for this research were not sufficiet to collect ample data, which would allow for the complex in-depth analysis of the case. Caregivers perspective was presented on a basis of the opinions and experiences of practitioners of only one selected settings. For that reasons research team recommends investigation of professionals PD experiences and a systemic evaluation of the quality of their work in all settings to develop more in-depth understanding of the relation between PD and performance of practitioners. Valuable would be also the more in-depth inquiry of the communication patterns among professionals within the network. This study provides evidence that some relations have greater influence on the day-to-day practice of caregivers than others. More in-depth understanding of these relationships could benefit in designing more efficient in-service PD programs. Data collected using the same procedures in different setting might have revealed an alternative findings. Second limitation is alined with the first one and concerns the lack of new data on the meso (exept of two interviews with academics) and macro levels of actions. . Research on the cooperation of the network with other organizations should be extended and the opinions of the heads and cargivers should be taken into consideration (in the report they provided very limited information on this topic). Professionals from Łódź provided a valuable feedback to the policy makers regarding legal regulations concerning the profession of a caregiver. The answers of the authorities (acceptance or refusal of the particular ideas/solutions) on this feedback is published on the web page of the network, but without a profound explanation. Further investigation of this issue could influence the direction of practitioners actions in terms of developing new policies concerning the 0 to 3 years old children sector of educare.

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IV.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A:
"Manual" for D3.3 partners - Draft

WP 3[1]

D3.3

CASE STUDIES

**"MANUAL" FOR PARTNERS
(DRAFT) PROPOSAL AND
WORKPLAN**

………

Task 3.3.: Italian Team: *Chiara Bove, Susanna Mantovani, Silvia Cescato,* University of Milan-Bicocca, 8 July 2015

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[1] CARE WP3 – T3.3 INNOVATIVE PRACTICES OF PD **Partner Universities:** Università degli Studi Di Milano-Bicocca (UNIMIB), Italy; Reggio- Children S.R.L., Italy; Uniwersytet Warszawski (UW), Poland; Aarhus Universitet (DPU), Denmark.

Attachment A:
"Manual" for D3.3 partners - Draft

Attachment A:
"Manual" for D3.3 partners - Draft

Introduction

This study is the qualitative part of Task.3.3 of the work package 3 of the CARE project looking into *innovative approaches* to Professional Development of ECEC's staff/practitioners. The case study will be specifically aimed at exploring exemplary innovative approaches to Professional Development in three countries: Italy, Denmark, and Poland. To this end, project partners will interview ECEC's practitioners (educators/teachers, pedagogical coordinators, directors). Observations, documentations and videotapes of professional development practices will be provided to complete the cases. The result of this case study will be reported to the European Commission in M30 in the Deliverable 3.3. under the responsibility of the Italian Team (Unimib).

In this document, we illustrate the aim of our Case Study by proposing some preliminary ideas that will guide each Care-Partners to prepare the interview's guide and the data collection procedure.

NOTICE: This Manual intends to provide our CARE-Partners with some ideas on how to conduct their own cases. We wish to remind our Partners that case study method requires us to adopt a flexible perspective. We will proceed guided by some general guidelines and respecting as much as possible the same procedures and deadlines, but each team will put its 'creativity' in the process of realization of its case. Particularly attention will be required to Partners in order to include in the report of the each case a detailed description of the "contextual conditions" of the case, including a 'thick description' of the reasons of each local-choice (case study narrative requires an explicitly presentation of the 'where, how, when, why' data were collected).

In other words, each local team will have 'freedom' within their choices. The case study researcher "faces a strategic decision in deciding how much and how long the complexities of the case should be studied. Not everything of the case can be understood" (Stake, 2005, p. 448). The purpose is not to "come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon (...): the study is not undertaken because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest" (Stake, 2005, p. 445).

1. Premise: the case study method. Basic assumptions.

Definitions of case study abound. Yin (2002) defines a case study as follows*:* "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In order word, researchers use case study method when they want to cover "contextual conditions" believing that they might be highly pertinent to their phenomenon- study" (Yin, 2002 p13).

Case study "illuminates a particular situation, to get a close/in depth understanding of it" (Yin, article, 2004, p.2) by making direct observation and data collection in natural settings. Compare to other methods, the strength of the case study method is "its ability to examine in depth a 'case' within its real-life context" (ib. p.1). A case is a "phenomenon specific to time and space" (Yin, 2004, p. 5)

The case study method is aimed at addressing either a *descriptive question (*what happened*)* or an *explanatory question* (how or why did something happen).

The goal is "seeking the particular, more than the ordinary" (Stake, 2005, p.447): case researchers seek out both <u>what is common</u> and <u>what is particular</u> about the case, but the end product of the research regularly portrays more of the *uncommon* drawing at once from: the nature of the case, particularly its activity, functioning; its historical background; its physical and cultural setting.

The ultimate goal is to provide the scientific community with an analytic report of the case (telling the story), describing it in sufficient detail (comparative description is the opposite of what Geertz called 'thick description', 1973).

Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine
– get a close (in depth) understanding of it – a 'case' within its real-life context.

2. Objectives and Goals of *our* Case Study

With these premise in mind, the goal of OUR CASE STUDY is to investigate three examples of innovative practices and approaches to Professional Development of ECEC's practitioners in Italy,

Denmark and Poland in order to identify what is <u>common</u> and what is <u>particular</u> about the cases.

The goal (as described in the DOW, p. 12) is:

3.3 To identify innovative technologies and dynamic learning approaches to professional development based on a literature review [*literature Narrative Review, Unimib*], focusing on peer-education, supervision and team-professionalism, reflective practice, organizational learning and leadership, technology in professional development (ICT, web-based learning environments), and intercultural issues.

DELIVERABLE and DEADLINES (Month 30th: June 2016).

As described in the DOW (p. 14) at the end of the data collection, each team will draft a Report. *[During the Tønsberg Meeting, Paul Leseman suggested that this draft should be between 25-75 pages*] describing in depth the "good and innovative practices" examined. A final "Total Report" will describe the three case studies of innovative and exemplary approaches to the professional development of ECEC across Europe, including examples of good practices. Together with: short films for the website.

3. CARE partners involved

CARE partners involved are Italy, Poland, and Denmark. Unimib/Italy is the coordinator of this task. The role of Unimib-Italy is to prepare and finalize the methodology, to propose the interviews' guide, to provide partners with guidelines and to write the Final Deliverable (task 3.3.) as well as to provide support to partners during the field-work.

Each CARE partner is responsible for:
-   Selecting the sites
-   Contextualizing the chosen case and justifying the reasons of the choice
-   Collecting data
-   Analyzing data (notice: when doing case studies, researches may need to do data collection and data analyses together)
-   Preparing a report that illustrate the result of the case

Criteria and methodology for the data analysis will be further discussed within our wp-3 team. So far, we can assume that our analysis should contribute to develop "a culturally- sensitive typology of professional development, based on a synthesis of the findings" (DOW, p. 13). It will be the bases "to develop recommendations for innovative and effective professional development and upskilling of ECEC practitioners, contributing to the final conference and overall CARE report" (Ibid.).

4. Selection Criteria

<u>The first step</u> is to define the case that each team will study. We may choose to study a *unique or revelatory case*: we should decide whether the cases are to represent confirmatory cases (replications of the same phenomenon), contrasting cases, theoretically - culturally diverse cases.

<u>A second step</u> is to decide whether to do a "*single-or multiple-case study*" (Yin, 2004, p.5). They both represent two types of case study design. We could also decide to keep our case *holistic* or to have *embedded sub cases* within an overall holistic case" (Yin, 2004, p.5).
Making an holistic case study means studying a case in its totality; building a sub-cases study means studying units or processes embedded in a single case.

For example, our *holistic case* might be about why a city-system (such as Milan or Reggio in the case of Italy) had implemented a certain professional development approach in the last years and the *focal-center (0-3 or 3-6)* could serve as *embedded sub-cases from which we also collect data.*

In selecting our case, we will follow some *common criteria* (drawn from the Literature Review/in progress and the comparative analyses of PD in EU country, Del. 3.1.).

Our concept of *innovative* approaches to PD includes the following criteria:

- ✓ non episodic.

It means It means NOT a sporadic/occasional case. I would say that it means a "process of PD that continues...somehow".

"Innovation is a process, not an instantaneous act, which requires time, and a series of actions and decision" (Isabirye, Moloi, 2014).

For example, the VIDA project that Denmark mentioned in its questionnaire for its case study can be considered a "non episodic" case because it has been developed in 2010-2013 and it has been further implemented in 2014-2015.

- ✓ systemic (macro, meso, micro levels as defined in the TOTAL/DRAFT D3.1
- ✓ sustainable

We could say that susaibility means that if a new idea-or project is not "achievable" it is not innovative. The idea of innovation in contemporary ECEC has to do with "achievability". It it is not realistic-or possible, it cannot' be considered as an "innovative approach to PD".

Each will have to define why the selected case can be considered "sustainable—effordable-

-achievable" (sustainabiliy is a situated-concept).

In the ET-2020 document, for example, it is said that "this concept is related to the need to achieve efficient and sustainable use of the existing resource to involve as many seetings and as many professionals as possible (ET-2020).

- ✓ networking
- ✓ transferable

That it might be used in other cities in the same countries/other ECEC's settings and so on.

- ✓ creative/flexible

That indicates the capacity to use the resources (expecially "old" resources)

- ✓ focusing on key figures (coordinators, supervisors etc.) *that represent key-elements of the systemic model*
- ✓ involving technologies [*If any* - Each team will describe which technologies and how]
- ✓ combination between top-down and bottom up/participatory/negotiated practices
- ✓ connected to research/action research processes (*we are interested in documenting processes aimed at sustaining teacher's competences such as inquiry, observing, reflections, changes in their practices or in the way to think to their role.*

We refer to the literature regarding the need/importance to involve/activate professionals in their PD-processes (when CPD actively involve participants it is more effective).

Each-Team will select its case by meeting at least 2-3 of the above criteria.

The criteria will be described and exemplified with reference to literature and be further developed/integrated with the contribution of each team.

Please, send us as soon as possible any further ideas of new/different criteria to be considered in our site-selection process.

5. Informed Consent. Getting Permission

An *informed consent form* (*see Appendix I),* adapted and translated into the language of the country, will be used to get research agreement from the local authorities, directors of the *focal-*centers, ECEC's practitioners and "stakeholders or other key figures" (coordinators, supervisors, etc.) who will participate to our study. The participants (interviewees, focus group's participants and videotaped educators) should be asked to read and sign the informed consent and return to the researcher.

Notice: We also need to get the permission to use short video clips and audio recordings of *good* PD-practices to be included in our video library (our website). Each team is responsible for this process following local guidelines and practices.

Each Care-Partner will adapt the consent form to the local-national ethical or legal guidelines.

6. Data collection procedure

Case study method is not limited to a single source of data. It benefits from having multiple *sources* of evidence.

We propose to collect our data in three stages/phases:
(1) documentation/reconstruction of the story of the case;
(2) interviews with ECEC professionals (educators, coordinators, directors, stakeholders, others..);
(3) Video documentation [if possible]

Phase 1: Drawing the context (Existing Data and documents)

A *narrative presentation* of the selected case and of its characteristics at the Macro/Meso/Micro levels. The case to be studied is a complex entity located in a *milieu* or situation embedded in a number of contexts background. Historical, cultural, social, political context are of interest.

This presentation should include:
   - A description of the context (history, development, documents, archival records, reports ...)
   - Why has this general case been chosen? Which criteria does it meet? Why is it a *good example* in the national context? Which are the PD practices, which better meet the innovative criteria?
   - A description of the focal ECEC centers involved in depth the Case Study and a discussion of the reasons of the choice
   - A description of the PD approaches/practices in the focal centers

Phase 2: Interviews/focus groups with ECEC professionals/stakeholders

Interviews and focus groups will be conducted with ECEC's professionals and stakeholders.
The goal is to gather information on practitioners views on their PD experiences.

Interviews and focus groups will be recorded (if possible at least some video-recorded) and transcribed. Partners will choose significant excerpts for translation.
Interviews and focus groups synthesis (including excerpts) will be introduced by a brief contextual note(where, how long, who are the subjects, how has the theme been introduced ... critical situation, comments..)

Interviews: The interviews should follow a common *guide* but open to variations and conducted individually and/or in-group.
Some questions should be common to all partners and each team will introduce further specific questions linked to the context if useful.

In each focal-centre we propose 2 interviews with experienced teachers and 2 with younger/less experienced teachers

Focus groups: The focus group should follow a common *moderator*-guide but open to variations.
Some questions should be common to all partners and each team will introduce further specific questions linked to the contexts if useful.

In each focal-centre we propose to conduct at least one focus group with educators and/or pedagogical coordinators/directors/trainers/consultants or other stakeholders involved in the Case chosen and/or focal sites, giving the reasons of their choice

Phase 3: Video

If possible partners should videotape

- example of practices that illustrate the different experiences/approaches to PD. *For example, a*

teacher-trainee supervision or a work-team meeting or a video-session with teachers/educators and trainees, etc.

- video of daily practices that, in the opinion of educators, have been most influenced by their PD experiences (see interviews-guide below).

The goal is to provide clips for documentation (website, video library).

7. Procedures

7.1 Interviewers/moderators' guide

Participants will be asked to complete a "demographic" questionnaire (see Appendix II)

Introductory statement
After the filling of the questionnaire – before starting the interview (questions) - an introduction should be made, to make sure that participants know their rights and the reasons/the objective of the interview (or the focus group).

- *e.g. This study is being conducted for a research (CARE) funded by the European Commission regarding the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of ECEC services in Europe. We are exploring innovative approaches to PD in our country and we are interesting in listening your voices…The interview will be video-audio-recorded.*
The recording will be only used for research purposes and eventually for the website of documentation.

The participants/interviewees should also be asked to read and sign the informed consent form.

DRAFT – TEACHER/ECEC PRACTITIONERS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Collection of *preliminary data - to be requested at the end of the interview: age, years of experience, 0-6 experience, basic training/pre-service training/qualification ….*

Section 1. Professional development experiences
Introductory statement: e.g. This study is being conducted for a research (CARE) funded by the European Commission regarding the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of ECEC services in Europe. We are exploring innovative approaches to PD in our country and we are interesting in listening your voices…The interview will be audio-recorded.
The recording will be only used for research purposes and eventually for the website of documentation.

The participants/interviewees should also be asked to read and sign the informed consent form (*locally defined*).

Please, would you tell me about your PD experience … you've been an educator in this service since…

a) What PD experiences have you had in the course of your professional experience?
b) If you had to say what 'most influenced' your practice, what would you say? Why?
c) Think about the last few years. Do you remember what PD experiences you attended? Briefly describe them … (themes, methods, context, who promoted these initiatives …)
d) Since the beginning of your experience, have you seen changes in PD proposals or modalities?
e) Which of those you described do you believe were the most significant and why?
f) During which PD-experience did you 'learn' how to work more effectively? With children/ families / colleagues / regarding the curriculum / organization / inclusion?
g) Thinking about your experiences with in-service PD, what do you feel has most

influenced your practice? Give some examples?

h) What do you feel you need in terms of PD today? What issues would you consider important? How?

Attachment A:
"Manual" for D3.3 partners - Draft

Section 2. Focal-experience

Now please thing specifically about the XXX experience .... (ex. Milano-Bambini/ Reggio...)
...

a. Regarding the XXX how would you describe this experience to someone who knows nothing about it? (Topics addressed, modes/methods, ...)
b. With regard to this experience, what did you learn? What developed in your practice based on this experience, if anything?
c. Can you identify the aspects, of in-service PD in which you are currently involved, that distinguish this type of training/PD from other experiences you had earlier? What are these issues?
d. Would you repeat this experience, recommend it to colleagues, or other schools?

PEDAGOGISTS, EDUCATIONAL COORDINATORS, OTHERS .....

Introduction .... You are coordinators/directors/trainers/consultants/experts ... involved in this center (...) tell me something about the Professional Development experience offered to ECEC's educators? What do you think about these PD initiatives/experiences? Do you have any documentations about these experiences? Can you show them to me/discuss them with me?

a. Which are the on-going PD perspectives/initiatives in your context? What do you think about them in term of priority, quality and sustainability?
b. Why is it a good example in the national context? Which are the PD practices, which better meet the innovative criteria?
c. In (for example, the City of Milan) specific training experiences were carried out: regarding these, which you consider most interesting and why?
d. Can you think of some examples?
e. There is talk now of innovative, sustainable PD. What do you think about this?
f. Thinking about a specific experience (XXX), are there, in your opinion, elements of "originality" or innovation in this PD initiatives, compared to other PD-programs and, more generally, to the models and practices of in-service training/PD in your country?
g. Do you think this has affected/is affecting the professionalism of the teachers involved? What are the elements you base your answer on?
h. Thinking about the possibility to "replicate" this model, would you recommend it to other schools? There are aspects that you would change? If so, which ones?
i. And regarding yourself and your PD/training? Were there specific training sessions where you feel you learned more than others?

3) STAKEHOLDERS, KEY FIGURES

To be locally defined .

DRAFT - FOCUS GROUPS

Participants:
Educators (see the questions listed *above*)
Coordinators/directors/trainers/experts
Other stakeholders (families, administrators....):

- *You are coordinators/directors/trainers/consultants/experts ... involved in this center (...) tell me something about the Professional Development experience offered to ECEC's educators?*
- *What do you think about these PD initiatives/experiences? Do you have any documentations about these experiences? Can you show them to me/discuss them with me?*
- *Which are the on-going PD perspectives/initiatives in your context? What do you think*

> *about them in term of priority, quality and sustainability?*
> - *Why is it a good example in the national context? Which are the PD practices, which better meet the innovative criteria?*
> - *Please give at least one example of a PD experience that you think has influenced the educators' practice in your context?*
> - *What do you think about the meaning of 'innovation' in PD? Which practices would you consider' innovative' with regard to PD and why?*
> - *What would you suggest for the future?*
> - *Other questions?...*

7.2 If necessary …. suggestions for the videotaping procedure

- ✓ Test the video-camera and MP3 and check the possibility to share your tapes with colleagues (*Remember: some cameras do not allow researchers to exchange video-materials easily. We will have to decide if we will all use high-definition's cameras*)
- ✓ Put the camera in place before you actually start filming in order to reduce the "disturb". Participants need to familiarize with the camera and the videotaping procedures.
- ✓ Try to find a good spot to put the tripod in which you have a good overview of the site/room without disturbing the participants. *Remember: the position of the Camera depends on the goal of the videotape. If we wish to videotape a team-work session, for example, videotaping from a higher position might allow for a more complete and clear overview of the situation, but we will need to use microphone to audio-record their voices (self-microphone).*
- ✓ Do not film against a window or against the light.
- ✓ Do not stand next to a radio, open window or other loud noise otherwise you will have a disturbed audio.

References

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Yin R.K. (2002). *Case study research. Design and Methods.* London, New Delhi: Sage Publication.
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{Creative accidents

The Big Fly and the Little Fly

This long story attests to the enormous ability of children, even very young ones, to maintain the connection between different conceptual and relational levels: the expressiveness of the materials, the plot of the story, the acceptance of their friends' interventions. An individual story becomes a collective story that accommodates the ideas of others and then goes elsewhere, returns and reconnects everything.

"It's black… I like black, it's my favorite because it's black. It looks like a big fly, it has the wings of a fly that's flying, it's buzzing and it goes in the woods and hides in the dark trees. Black is the dark of the darkness. This one writes fat black… and the big fly meets a wolf, but he's good because he's with his daddy." (Lorenzo)

The story *The Big Fly and the Little Fly* reveals something of how images and stories are generated in a child's mind, ranging between visual, tactile, auditory, and linguistic perceptions.

Black is a color, *"my favorite"* Lorenzo ventures to say, and black is a large marker that makes a splotch that looks like a fly, and the pleasure of the game of "It looks like…" seeks confirmation in the wings for flight and a link in the black of the forest that darkens the trees.

"Black is the dark of the darkness": a powerful summary phrase in which the materiality of the black blends with the impalpability of the darkness. In the story, Lorenzo brings another figure on stage that in our culture is prototypical of "black": the wolf.

Black a favorite color; black is a fly that flies around buzzing and goes into a forest and hides in the darkness of the dark trees, where it encounters a black wolf.

Gianni Rodari wrote: "... a word, thrown by chance into the mind, producing waves on the surface and in the depths. It provokes an infinite series of chain reactions and, as it falls, it evokes sounds and images, analogues and recollections, meanings and dreams, in a movement that touches experience and memory, the imagination and the unconscious, and it is complicated by the fact that the mind does not react passively, but intervenes continually to accept and reject these representations, to connect and censor them, construct and destroy them."[1]

Fascinated by such semantic richness, the teacher asks Lorenzo, "What do you think about trying to continue the story of the big fly with your friends?" This relaunch idea communicates to the child the adult's appreciation for the plot of his first story and invites him to explore the possibilities created by being and doing together in a group.

"Zzzzzzzzz the fly was buzzing…" and the story begins again from a sound that, to the ears of the others, evokes the movement of an insect coming into a room, bringing something interesting to listen to, from a verb that Lorenzo chooses to express in the imperfect tense, which projects the

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[1] G. Rodari, The *Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories* (trans. Jack Zipes), Teachers and Writers Collaborative,1996.

children into the dimension of the possible and of
starting a game together.
A sheet of semi-transparent matte plastic on
which to draw offers a refined visual and tactile
perception that Lorenzo interprets with color,
mark, and word:
*"There's fog on this sheet and there's fog outside, too.
It's all gray and I'm drawing gray, but it's not a bad
day, because the sun is out."*
And the story of *The Big Fly and the Little Fly*
continues on a strip of white cardboard that bends
and on a sheet of linen paper that stands up. It
continues with a chorus of voices, with the vivacity
of mental images elicited by variations in the
whites and blacks and by the material features of
the different supports.
Surprisingly, in this research of drawing and
narration it is precisely the sounds of the
movement and of life that are evoked and named
by the children, like a thread around which the
story-poem unfolds and entwines,
made of darkness, of night, of sprays
of water from fountains, yellow
lights of stars in the sky and the
buzzing of flies.
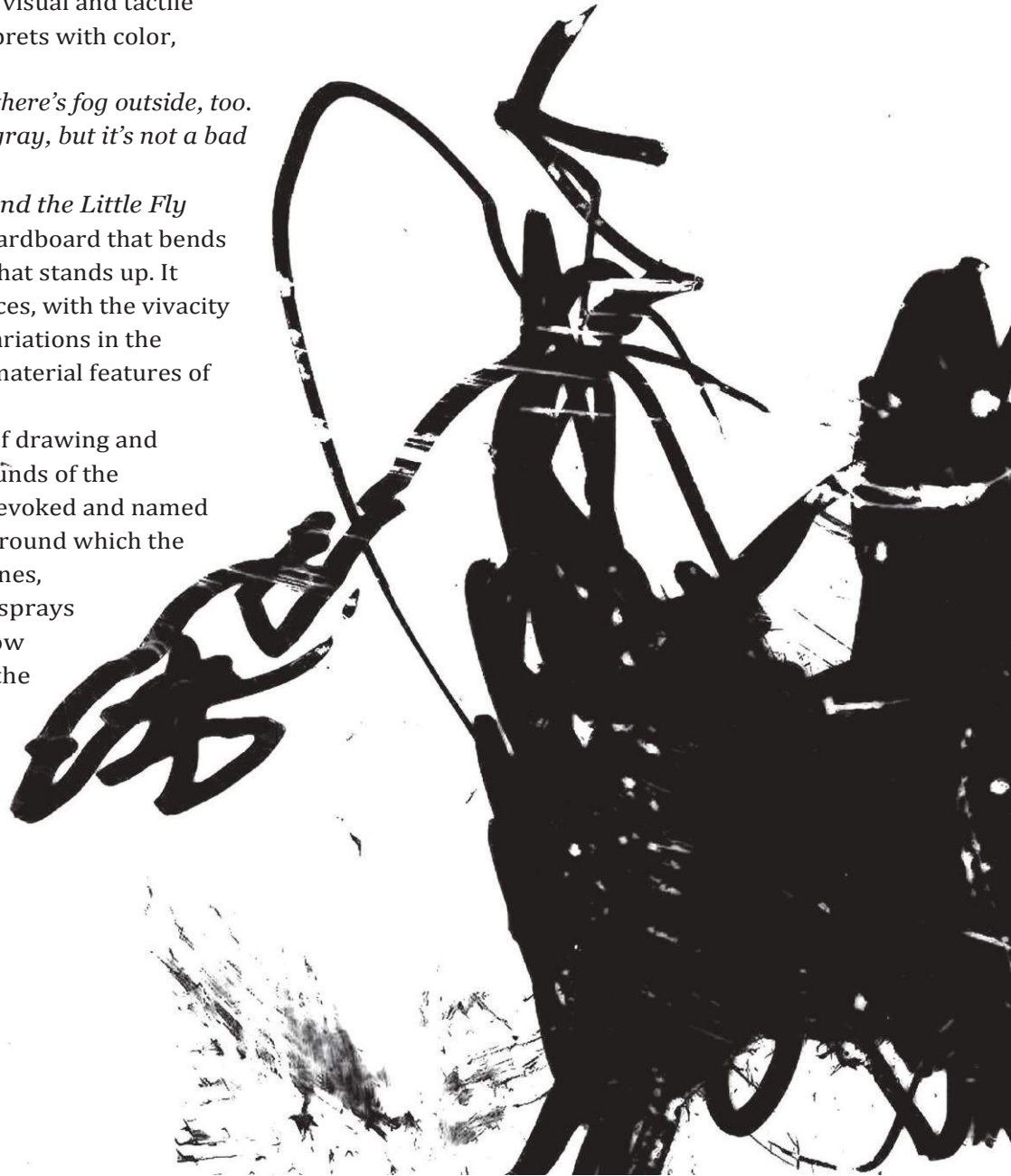
{Creative accidents

The Big Fly and the Little Fly

It's black… I like black, it's my favorite because it's black. It looks like a big fly, it has the wings of a fly that's flying, it's buzzing and it goes in the woods and hides in the dark trees. Black is the dark of the darkness.

This one writes fat black… and the big fly meets a wolf, but he's good because he's with his daddy. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

Little fly

Author: Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Dimensions: 14.5 x 9.5 cm
Technique: water-based paint marker on transparent plastic

Relaunch: "What do you think about trying to continue the story of the big fly with your friends?"

Yessssss! With lots of paper! Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Okay! Andrea, 2.10 yrs
Me, too! Nikolos, 2.11 yrs
Zzzzzzzzz the fly was buzzing. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

Lorenzo (choosing a semitransparent sheet):
There's fog on this sheet and there's fog outside, too.
It's all gray and I'm drawing gray,
but it's not a bad day, because the sun is out.

Untitled

Author: Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Dimensions: 19.4 x 7.5 cm
Technique: water-based paint marker on
transparent plastic

I made a big fly and a little fly...
They're going to school, like us, because
the other little fly has gotten bigger. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
I'm making a cake... for Lorenzo's fly. Nikolos, 2.11 yrs

Untitled

Author: Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Dimensions: 21.3 x 15 cm
Technique: markers on straw paper

{Creative accidents

The Big Fly and the Little Fly

But the story goes on with the fog.
With this white I'm making the fog whiter, because sometimes
there's a lot of fog and sometimes there's less fog. Like here, see?
Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

I got another sheet. I got this one that slips... Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Now I'm getting another one.
This road is shorter (short mark on the paper). *It's a   shortcut.*
Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
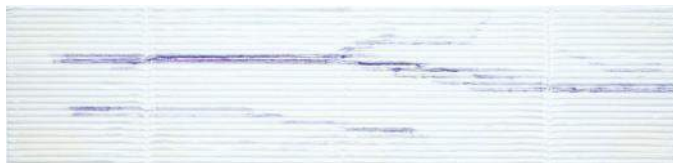
Untitled
Author: Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Dimensions: 33 x 8 cm
Technique: large pencils on corrugated cardboard

Dark made of gray, dark like this? I'm making the long road, it's
dark... to the castle. Andrea, 2.10 yrs

Now I'm using this big one that's like a rug. (linen paper)
It's in a castle.
And the big fly and little fly, too, but you can't see them
because it's dark. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

Untitled
Author: Andrea, 2.10 yrs
Dimensions: 42 x 25 cm
Technique: silver marker on white paper

I'm coming with you, Lollo. In the dark. Are you scared? Andrea, 2.10 yrs

But we can't make any noise in the castle. Otherwise... otherwise... they can hear us. Do you hear this marker on the paper? It's making noise. It makes a soft noise. Andrea, 2.10 yrs

Yes, but now I can't see anything. Andrea, 2.10 yrs
Me neither. We can't see each other, in the castle... Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

*I'm kind of in the dark because it's night.
And they had a flashlight. He's flying, the daddy fly.
And he calls the little fly to come close to him, buzzing zzz zzz zzz, like that, on the paper...* Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

Untitled

Author: Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
Dimensions: 40 x 29 cm
Technique: large pencils and water-based paint markers on black fabric

Yes, but it was real late at night... and you could hear the water of the fountain... the tall sprays and then short sprays... then they grew up... then down, like this... with the sound sh sh sh. But there was one little star in the sky... you need silver to make it twinkle. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
In my story a hunter had a sack with a wolf inside and inside the sack the wolf couldn't see that it was dark outside. And I made the light with yellow. Andrea, 2.10 yrs

Later we can tell our story, if you want. But we need to put it in order, like in the castle. That my big fly and the other fly, they went to see it like we did. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs
But I was there, too, in your castle! Andrea, 2.10 yrs
We were two friends like the big fly and his friends that went to see them with his little fly. Lorenzo, 2.11 yrs

The Ring-around-the-Rosy Game

Though this project was conducted with all the children from the same class, our narrative deals with only part of the story. This episode concentrates on the graphic representations of the Ring-around-the-Rosy game produced by three children: Giulia (four years, ten months), Leonardo (five years, six months), and Giovanni (five years, seven months). The episode is emblematic of the individual learning that is constructed within and with the contribution of the group.

The children play Ring-around-the-Rosy, talk about "Ring- around-the-Rosys," predict the way in which they can be represented graphically, and then draw them.
We will begin by putting together the verbal predictions and the individual drawings of the three children who are the protagonists of the story.

Giovanni: *Drawing a Ring-around-the-Rosy is easy! Because you draw some kids with their faces in front and then… not all of them with their faces, but also with their backs.*
Giovanni seems to have clear ideas about what to do: he identifies the need to draw children from various points of view.

This is the Ring-around-the-Rosy that Giovanni drew after making a verbal prediction of the representation. He comments on his drawing as follows:
I drew a different kind of Ring-around-the-Rosy, with the kids with their heads in front.
Giovanni seems to *make light of his error* by giving a definition of "difference" that can include many things, even a Ring-around-the- Rosy in a straight line.

Leonardo: *I think it's easy to draw a Ring-around- the-Rosy of kids because you draw a round shape like this* (he traces it in the air), *then the kids... then... it's done!*

To Leonardo, the circle seems to be the guiding shape of the whole representation.

Once his drawing is completed, to his great satisfaction, Leonardo comments on it like this:
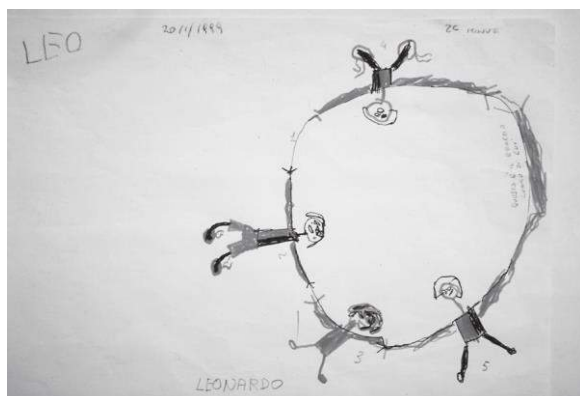
Look what a great Ring-around-the-Rosy! There's an arm here that's a little longer, but otherwise it wouldn't reach!

In his drawing, Leonardo followed the schema that he had previously hypothesized verbally, drawing the circle first and then drawing four children on it.

When the children have completed their drawings, they are called on in groups to comment on their own Ring-around- the-Rosy and those of the other members of their group.

The groups are formed partly following the children's own suggestions and partly under the guidance of the teachers, who take into account the different strategies adopted by the children, both in the way they define the problems and in the search for different ways to resolve them.

The children begin to make their first comments, and then turn to Giulia: *What about your drawing, Giulia? Will you show it to us*? Giulia (leaning her elbows and forearms on her drawing):

No, okay, I know I got it wrong, I made a line, not a circle of children... it's hard!
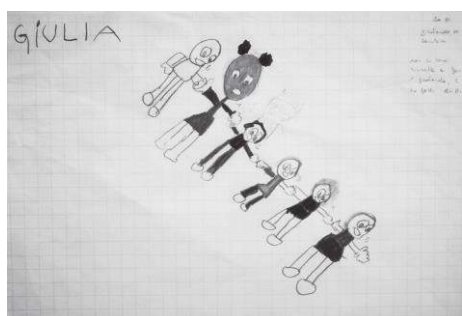
The teacher's assessment is not as harsh as Giulia's, since in her drawing she set the children on a diagonal line across the page. From this layout we glean that she has been asking herself some

intelligent questions and playing with ideas intelligently to convey the spatial situation of the Ring-around-the-Rosy through her drawing.

The teacher elicits comments on all the drawings. Giulia: *Well, they're not really Ring-around-the- Rosys but we did the best we could*

Giovanni: (laughing) *Why don't we all stand like the kids in our drawings?*

Giovanni's idea, which turns around the usual approach of interpreting reality through drawing, appears to us to be excellent; in this way, even the *trip-ups* of the representation can become elements of fun in order to advance thinking. It is an intelligent idea, brimming with questions, trials, and fun. The teachers pick up the idea and later relaunch it to all the children in the class, group by group.

Here we will follow only the work of two of the children we have already introduced.

Giulia: *I want six kids because I drew six!*

She examines her drawing at length and appears to be wondering how to get her classmates to stand in the strange diagonal position she has drawn.

She solves the problem by positioning the children's heads in a diagonal position with her hands.
She also carefully positions her friends' hands and feet in order to make them accurately match the Ring-around-the-Rosy she drew.
Open your arms out, your hands aren't exactly holding each other tight, they're only touching.

Leonardo also calls out the number of classmates he has drawn in his picture (four). Lying down in the position drawn by Leonardo sets off an outburst of general hilarity.

Giovanni says: *In Leonardo's picture he's looking at the kids from above, he's up there and we're down here lying on the floor.*

We are going to see how Leonardo mentally stores the point of view used by Giovanni to *interpret* the situation, and uses it on a later occasion. Very often it is other people who, with their comments and interpretations, make us more conscious of the choices we make.

Leonardo: *To make it into a real Ring-around- the-Rosy we need everyone to stand up!*

One of the most amusing moments is when the children move from lying down to standing up, as requested by Leonardo.

The children do stand up, but they find themselves with their shoulders facing each other in an improbable Ring-around-the-Rosy back to front.

Leonardo: *No, this isn't right. This Ring-around- the-Rosy is kind of small and a little silly. The backs are turned toward the other backs, but the bodies have to face the other bodies.*

Giulia: *But the picture is always still. How can you make the Ring-around-the-Rosy so that it shows*?

Giovanni: *Come on guys, let's try to do a Ring-around-the-Rosy for Giulia, then we can see what we look like, like a photo!*

Through his words, Giovanni seems to be positioning himself from an external point of view in order to get an overall view of the situation. It is important to know how to move through space with your thoughts.

Giovanni: *There are some kids that you only see their backs. I can see Giulia's back, she's looking at Giorgio's face; Leonardo's side* (profile)*, who's looking at Matteo's face.*

Some statements can be seen as generators of thoughts that *enlighten* the mind. Giovanni's is one of these: backs and fronts, then profiles and fronts of human figures who are looking at each other and are positioned in a relational space. This relational situation will become an important aspect of the experience that other children will take up and use as guidance.

Ring-around-the-Rosy 2   At this point, we suggest that the children make a second individual graphic representation of the Ring-around-the-Rosy, and place them in mixed-gender groups of four to six children. The groups are proposed based on the interpretations the teachers made during the first Ring-around-the-Rosy experience. We continue our focus on Giulia, Leonardo, and Giovanni.
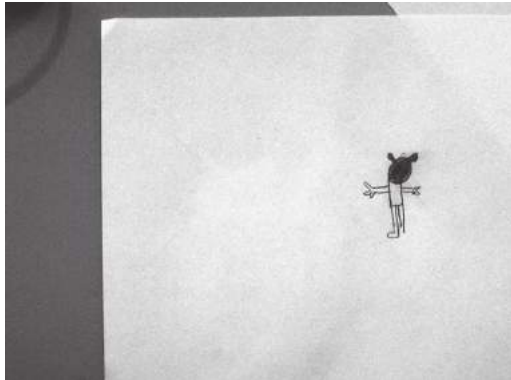
Giulia seems to be the most perplexed: *I'm going to do the kid from the back because you need...* She gets up from the table and holds out her arms to look like the figure she has drawn, thinking and expressing her thoughts aloud.
Okay... I have to draw some kids who are standing like I am right now. I made this girl with her back turned... (she holds her arms out in front of her). *But what about the others, how do I get them to look like they're standing up? I don't know how to draw the kids from this side.*
Giovanni: *Giulia, you have to draw the profile...*
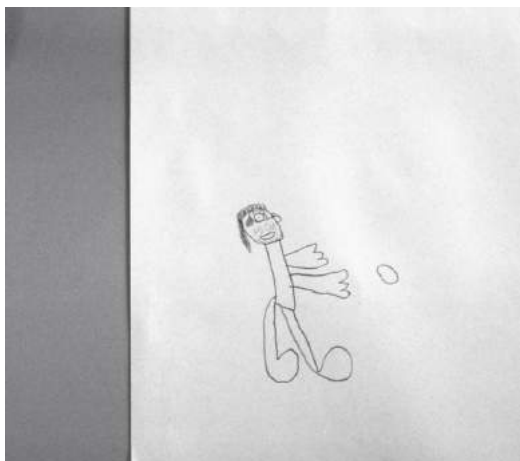
He shows Giulia the first figure he has drawn. The strategic position of the figure is worth noting: the arms are stretched out in front, ready to link up with another figure seen from a front view and one seen from behind. The figure shown in profile is a structural peg of Giovanni's Ring-around-the-Rosy.
This is the profile. Giulia, it's better to draw the profile first because otherwise you keep going on and on and then you can't tell what's going on any more!
This may be what happened to him in his first drawing (the Ring-around-the-Rosy in a line).

Leonardo: *I know how you draw a Ring-around- the-Rosy of kids. First you draw a circle, like a Ring-around-the-Rosy... then*
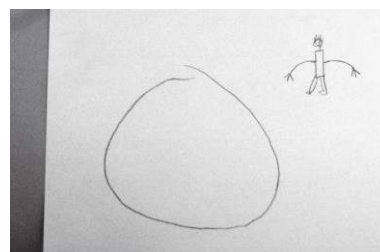
"The Ring around the Rosy-Game"
        you need a kid who's standing outside and
                            looking at it...

Leonardo's initial schema that we saw earlier is still very strong and seems not to have been undermined by the real-life trials of the Ring-around-the-Rosy or by his classmate's comments. Or, if it has been undermined, since a graphic model is a conceptual schema, it will need time to be modified. At times we may notice that the schema we are using is not appropriate, but we do not know how to modify it.
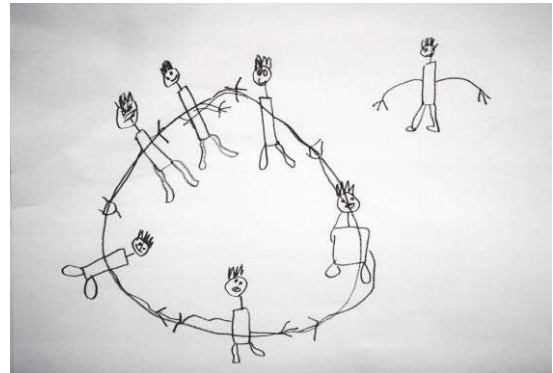
Giovanni: *Hey Leonardo, you can only see your kids from the front! Because the ones you see from the back are always there, always!*
Leonardo: *Okay, then I'll put some hair on this one, this one, and this one.*

Leonardo takes a pencil and covers up the faces of the figures in the foreground.

In this second Ring-around-the-Rosy all the children have chosen to use pencils, a choice that probably shows an awareness of the difficulties involved and therefore of the possibility of modifying the drawing. Error and modification are integral parts of research and learning. It is necessary to accept them as such intelligently and without worrying about them.
Leonardo: *This is okay because... look: this kid is looking at this one, then this one's looking at this one, this one's looking at this one... there, it's done!*
Then, as a final comment on his drawing, he adds:
You can see these kids from above, like this. He stands up and raises a hand, almost as if he were defining a point of view from as high as possible: ... *and from the top they look like they're lying on the ground!*
In interpreting and commenting on his drawing, Leonardo uses two interpretive *readings* that were made earlier by Giovanni: one child who, in the relational space of the Ring-around-the-Rosy, is looking at the face of another child; and the point of view from above.
Here we can see quite clearly how, during the process of learning, continuous loans of knowledge, hypotheses, and points of view are being made among the children.
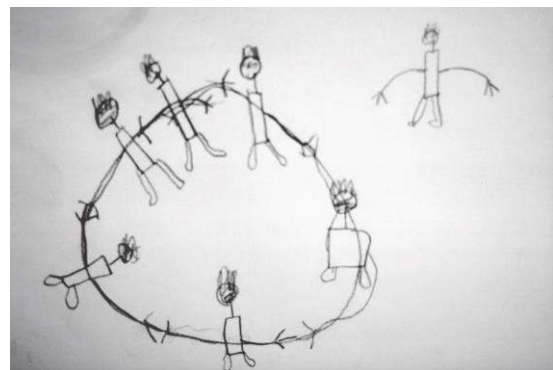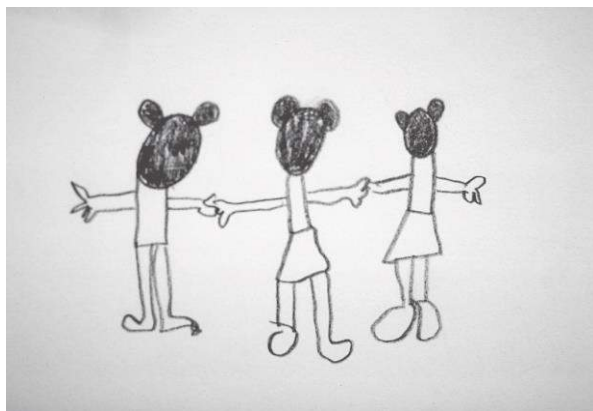
This drawing by Giulia shows three figures seen from behind.

Giulia is still a prisoner of her dilemma. She has understood that it is necessary to draw the children's backs, a conviction that has been strengthened by the dialogue taking place in the meantime between Giovanni and Leonardo. As a result of this, she has added two more girls, who can be seen from behind, but she is still not satisfied.

Turning to Giovanni, Giulia says: *How did you do the ones on the other side* (the children facing the front)*?*

Giovanni (pointing at Giulia's three figures seen from the back one by one): *Giulia, I have an idea! Who are these kids looking at? Who's this one looking at? You have to put in the ones on the other side, otherwise they're not looking at anything.*

Giovanni: *Just look at this, we're doing a real Ring-around-the-Rosy. Guys, come here, let's do a Ring-around-the-Rosy! Okay, I'm looking at Giorgio for a while, then Leonardo for a while, Giorgio's looking at Leonardo, Leonardo's looking at Giorgio, then we go around, and for you who are looking at us, everything changes.*

Leonardo: *Now, Giulia, I'll explain the profile to you... look at me! See? It's like a little line that goes all the way down, like this.*

Finally reassured, Giulia then draws two figures from a side view, but the problem persists: *Yes, but now where am I going to put the other heads? Can I draw some more faces?* Giovanni: *You can see a little bit of the front… not all of it, but you can see it… there's a little bit of room here in the middle to put in the kids who are looking at these ones!*
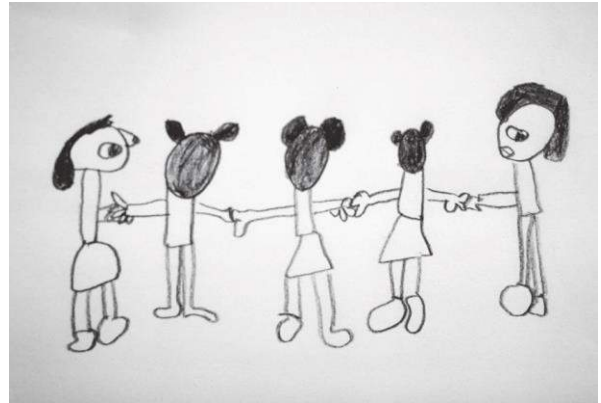

Giovanni: *Look at my drawing!*

After a few more hesitations, and casting a sidelong glance at Giovanni's drawing on the table every now and then, Giulia completes her drawing.

The rotation of the figure seems to have been understood, though perhaps not the representation of space yet, since the foreground and background figures appear to be compressed almost on a single baseline.
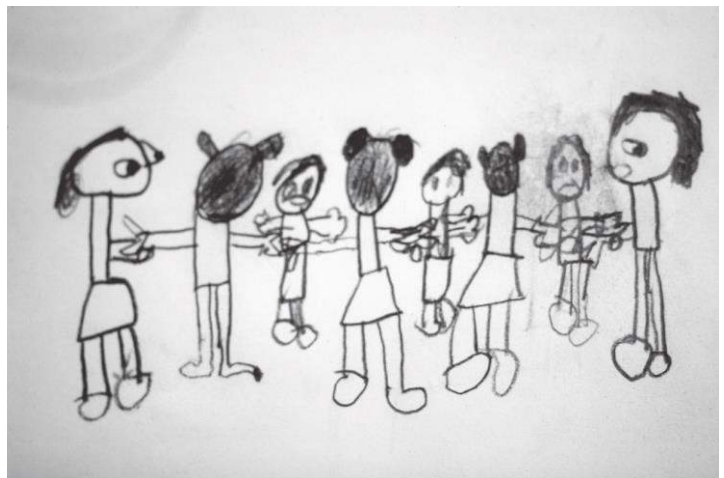
Self-assessment and Assessment

We suggest to the children that they revisit in groups the work that they have done. It is not just a matter of narrating their actions, but of re-thinking the process they worked through, the difficulties they encountered, the doubts, the solutions, and the issues that are still unresolved. This is a difficult process but it seems to us to be important (and we often do it) for developing an attitude of self-reflection about the things we do and our own strategies, supporting and at the same time fueling the processes through which we gain understanding.

The groups have been formed by taking particular account of the diversity of solutions identified by the children in the second representation of Ring-around-the-Rosy.
The children are looking at both the drawings
each one has made.
Teacher: Shall we try and compare the solutions you found? And, if you can, try to explain the changes you made from the first to the second drawing.

These encounters can sometimes seem rather harsh, but assessment is a precious human measuring tool, especially if it takes place within *balanced* situations, among peers, and in a shared context. The evaluations are certainly not easy, since a number of different but equally legitimate points of view come up against one another. First, the point of view of the author of the drawing, who has a certain mental image and is aware that his or her representation is a mediation between what he or she thinks and is able to do, and then the points of view of classmates who often read the situation and the representation in a different way, undermining the mediation reached by the author.

What the children generally appreciate is the awareness they gain of the way their thinking has evolved. This is an important process that elicits a movement toward the possible—what Vygotsky calls the "zone of proximal development," in which the learners advance their understanding.
The teacher's role at this point is precisely to highlight this advancement, however small it may be. The child ought to emerge from these encounters as a *winner*.

Attachment B (2) – Reggio Emilia
"The Ring around the Rosy-Game"

Giulia: *Davide, your Ring-around-the-Rosy is great! The second drawing is a lot more Ring-around-the-Rosy!* Davide: *Yes, I think my second one is really good, too, but maybe I need to change the shape of the circle…*
I should have drawn lots of Ring- around-the-Rosys with different shapes, because when we move in a real Ring-around-the-Rosy, the shape changes, and it doesn't always stay the same round shape!

Davide's drawings

2

1
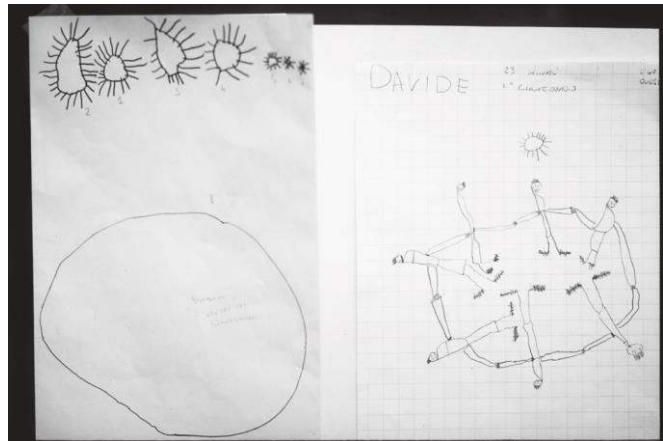
Davide: *If we do this, though* (he lifts the sheet of paper and makes it circle around), *it looks like it's going around.*

The child may not be an expert at drawing, but he has understood very well that the identity and the fun of playing Ring-around-the-Rosy lie in that very circling-around movement.

Right from the very first verbal hypotheses, Davide expressed the impossibility of drawing a Ring-around-the-Rosy of children because it could never really go around. Yet during his work he never gave up trying to find a solution to this problem. Conveying a sense of motion graphically is a very interesting problem; we address it in our follow-up to the project.

Giovanni's drawings

1

2

The Curiosity to Understand

Giovanni: *Oh, it's always good for me to do experiments!*

Giovanni: *See that line? That was my first Ring-around-the-Rosy!*
I did it like that because it was easier. Then, when we tried to do a Ring-around-the-Rosy out there, I understood a lot of things, and then as soon as I got the sheet of paper… (Giovanni is speaking very slowly, as he often does when he is talking about a situation he has experienced, and he always seems to be describing something he is breaking down into sequences.)
I didn't start drawing right away… I stopped for a while… then I started to think… I thought about a Ring-around-the-Rosy… think and think again. (Conscious of everyone's silence and attention, Giovanni exaggerates his narrative style somewhat.)
A Ring-around-the- Rosy came into my mind… oh, it's just that it's like I was seeing it! So, copying from my mind, I got the Ring-around-the-Rosy right! I started from this one who's turned to his side… if I started doing the one from behind, everything disappeared from my mind… instead, I did the one on his profile with two hands like this (held out) *who was just ready to hold hands with two other kids. The second one I did was one from behind, then this other one from the front… then on and on like that!*

Giulia begins to explain directly from her second drawing.
The first thing I found out was that you really had to have the kids from the back. Then, for these (the profiles) *I already knew how to do them because I had already drawn some kids standing like that. But I didn't know that you had to have them in a Ring-around-the-Rosy just here on one side and on the other side.*
*Giovanni explained it to me. Then we tried it out a few times and I understood that you had to have them. The hardest thing was to do these ones that you can see from the front. There wasn't any room left… so I made them small.*

We think there is little need to add further comments and interpretations since, as this case shows, children are able to engage in self-reflection about their own processes with surprising clarity.
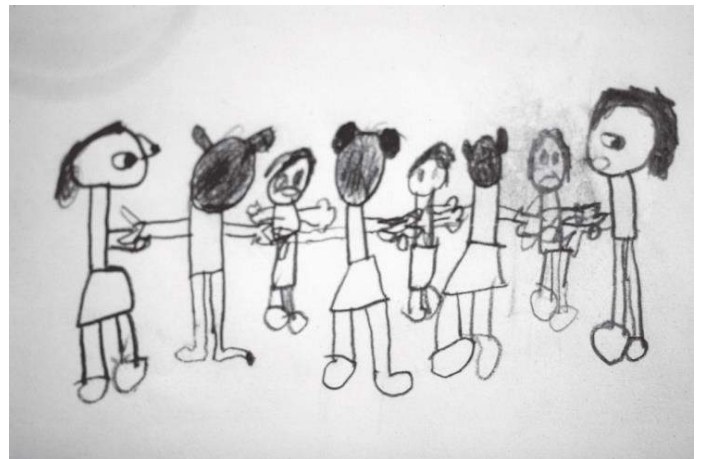This is a valuable ability that requires frequent occasions for reflection, comparing ideas, and practicing your skills.

Giulia's drawings
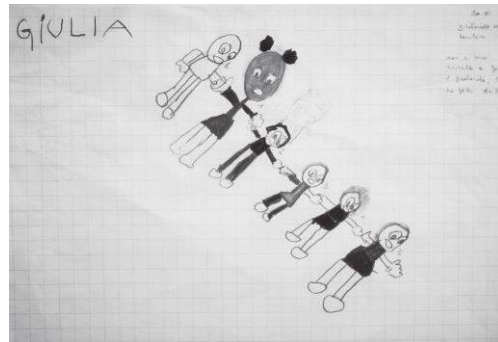
1

2

Relaunching the Problems

The subsequent steps of our work with the children are guided by our interpretations of the processes we observed and documented.

In the experience we just described, the children's understanding of some of the concepts, such as the rotation of the human figure in relation to different points of view, is certainly advanced, but it needs further opportunities in order to become consolidated. By contrast, the problem of representing space still seems to be unresolved, while the representation of movement is interesting, even though it is still embryonic. The continuation of the work thus has to reckon with these aspects.

Teachers need to have the ability to be in touch with the children's strategies and problems and to play that famous "ping-pong match" with them, as described so wonderfully in the metaphor often used by Loris Malaguzzi to explain the teachers' role.

In this case, we suggest a representation of another game: "Red Light, Green Light,"* which, in comparison with Ring-around-the-Rosy, draws attention to an expanded space where the figures are clearly on different planes in relation to the observer.

* The game begins with one child facing the wall with his or her back to the other players. The child says "Green light" and starts to count. The others, all starting from the same place, have to move quickly toward the wall against which the counting child is facing. When the child at the wall decides to turn around, he or she calls out "Red light," and the children who are running have to stop short. If the child at the wall catches a glimpse of anyone moving, that person is sent back to the starting point.

We think that recording the children with a video camera may provide a sort of *moving photograph*, according to the suggestions made by Giovanni and Davide. The teacher takes particular care to record from different points of view, including one from the top of a ladder...to allow the children, in groups, to then discuss their viewings from the various perspectives

The discussions and viewings continue, and the game is simulated with a scale model.
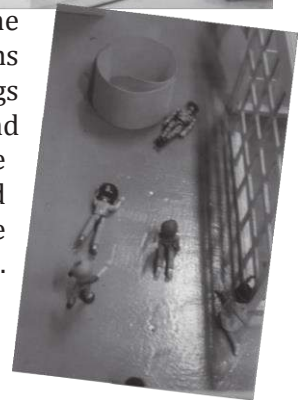
Representations of the "Red Light, Green Light" game

Giovanni's drawing reconfirms his understanding of both the rotation of the figures and the space. Indicating the figure
at the top of the sheet, he comments: *I made it smaller because it's the one farthest away.*
In order to illustrate the whole scene of the game, he uses a representational technique that architects call "axonometric projection," which presents a perspective from above. It is a very advanced point of view, which gives a strong narrative sense of the situation.
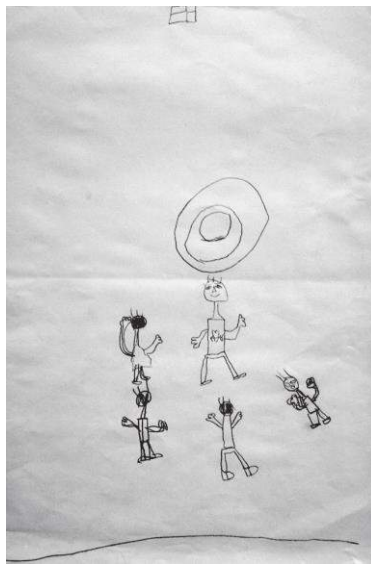
In Leonardo's drawing, space is indicated by three perceptual levels: the closest part of the foreground is the atelier wall, then there is the dress-up
play structure in the middle of the piazza where the child who is counting is standing, then the entrance door in
the background. The game is taking place between the atelier and the dress-up play structure.
Leonardo: *The kid who's counting has just turned around and everyone has to stand absolutely still, otherwise they pay for it.*
Leonardo also seems to have understood the rotation of the figures as well as the representation of the space.
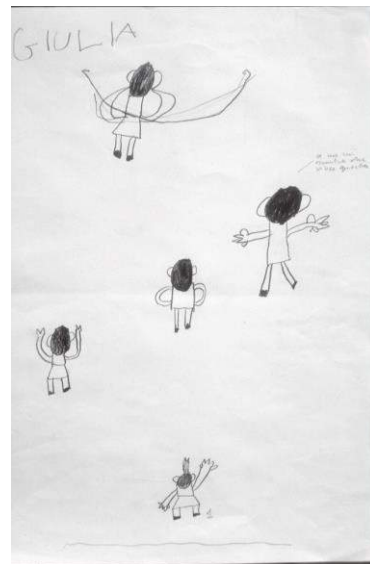
In her drawing, Giulia intelligently places herself at the viewing point that enables her to draw the backs of all the figures, this being a new representational discovery that she uses most successfully.
The way she arranges the figures across the space of the sheet leads us to suppose that she is engaged in spatial research that has gone beyond the stage where all the subjects are drawn on a single baseline (often coinciding with the bottom of the sheet), typical for children of this age.

Degree Course in Primary Education Sciences

Academic year 2015-2016 - II semester (1 March – 17 May 2016)

The Approach of Reggio Emilia's municipal *scuole dell'infanzia*/preschools (42 hours)

Course Professor: Carla Rinaldi

COURSE CONTENTS:
The course of study will provide opportunities for knowing and reflecting on the educational experience of Reggio Emilia's municipal preschools, with particular reference to their history, the organization of times and spaces, the relation between learning and teaching, the meaning of the dimension of play and creativity in children's knowledge processes.
These are some of the questions that have made it possible to construct the competent and attentive exchange of points of view between teachers, pedagogistas, families and administrators who have tried to identify ways, processes and "tools" to make it possible for teachers to reflect not only on children's learning processes but also on those of adults, learning to support their thinking and action in relation to the children's processes and to their dialogue with colleagues.

Modulo 1. The value of school – values in school

- The value of memory
- Historical - cultural roots in relation to local and national contexts

Modulo 2. The value of learning

- The image of the child (and their ways of learning) orienting the experience in the schools of Reggio Emilia.
- Reference theories and research journeys

Module 3. The value of listening

- The pedagogy of listening: meanings and interpretations
- Observation
- "Listening" on the part of the world

Module 4. The value of organisation in a participatory school: the school as system
- The organisation of architectural space as meaning and giving meaning
- The organisation of time as a constructor of relations and qualities (the day in school)
- Professional growth of school educators
- The organisation of parent participation

Module 5. Professional growth of school educators: experiences and international exchanges

- Testimonials from a multiplicity of geographical and socio-cultural contexts

Module 6. Education as research (in a school that designs)

- The concept of progettazione (design)
- The relation between progettazione (design) and documentation
- The relation between education and research

Module 7. The educational experience of Reggio Children with special rights children

- Principles and experiences.

Module 8. The value of school as a place of cultural formulation in a relation with the city and the local territory

- The value of school as a place of cultural formulation in a relation with the city and the local territory
- Giving possibility to the future: the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre
- The experience of the "Planetary Messages"

IDEAS FOR THE NIDO BAMBINI BICOCCA
DECEMBER 2015

(*Edited by: Susanna Mantovani & Piera Braga*
University of Milan-Bicocca. Dep. Human Science for Education "R. Massa")

The **Bambini Bicocca** Infant-Toddler Center is open to children of the University of Milano-Bicocca staff and students, to children whose parents work in the "Bicocca area" in companies which have made the project possible and to neighborhood children. It is run by the *Bambini Bicocca Consortium*. The Pedagogical Project is coordinated by the *Dipartimento di Scienze Umane per la Formazione "Riccardo Massa"* .

The project has five aims:

- to offer a tranquil and rich educational space for children in a service which offers support to parents who work and live in the neighborhood;

- to create an inclusive environment where everybody – adults and children- acknowledge all possible diversities and where each child can feel welcome and encouraged to be active, autonomous and open to the world;

- to create an environment for the experimentation of innovative and sustainable professional development approaches;

- to create a working group of teachers which shares decisions and interprets them according to personal talents and where each member of the group knows the characters, peculiarities, friendships, strengths and weakness of each child, finding a balance between the special bond child- teacher and personalized and significant relations with the other teachers.

- to experiment with new forms of organization and management witch combine the best experiences of Municipal ECEC services, cooperatives and factories engaged in provisions for children and families.

The Infant-Toddler center complies with all national, regional and European safety regulations in effect and the teacher/child ratio and the pedagogical and organizational coordination requirements are fully met by the Consortium partners.

THE GUIDING IDEAS

The project is participatory and over the years has taken shape through t the dialogue with our partners and the families- because each Infant-Toddler Center is a *community* and a particular and specific *context for development and learning* where the protagonists define the aims and the meaning of the organizational and educational proposals together, based following some fundamental beliefs:

➢ the **boys and girls** who attend the Nido are considered active subjects, interested in relationships with others, eager to communicate and know, "researchers" and "builders" moved by curiosity and the desire to explore. During their first years, children experience intense emotions, a gradual awareness of their identity, a frustrating but thrilling effort towards autonomy, the discovery of both explicit and implicit rhythms and rules of the community they are part of. They gain control of their bodily functions, their movements become independent and intentional, they learn to speak and discover symbolic play and creative expression. To carry out these actions, end express their potential children need a caring community, *stable personalized relationships* and experiences with their *peers* in a carefully constructed environment which stimulates their curiosity, contains and fosters the progressive regulation of their emotions and offers a wide variety of occasions for play and experimentation;

➢ **parents** are essential partners in the educational project. The first years are characterized by the mutual adaptation of the children who are born with well- defined personalities and traits and the family welcomes them; during the first year attachments are formed and parents learn to create a "mental space" for their children, to get to know them and guide them. Sharing the caretaking and the educational responsibility with the school gives value to and supports the relationship between children and their parents, and it also offers the children and their parents new, more open relationship models they can experience and observe to widen their experiences and perspectives as they gain a sense of personal identity, in a secure environment and in autonomy;

➢ the **teachers** have an important, delicate role, welcoming the child and their parents, caring for and offering security to the child observing, creating the environment and spaces for exploration and independent activity, attracting attention and concentration, relaunching from the first months. They mediate the peer group and dialogue with the parents, they are the *reference points* who guarantee the continuity and the individualization of the care offered to the group of children, they support the gradual broadening of relationships with other adults and their progressive ability to explore the environment and make use of it. Their *intervention is generally indirect*: it is expressed through the prepared environment and the activities, the

observations and the support offered in exploring, expanding and offering stimuli to the children. The activities proposed are based on the evaluation of the development and interests of each individual and each group and through documentation;

➢ the **team** is composed of teachers, coordinators, experts and all the staff at the Infant-Toddler Center who guarantee the educational project. It is the reference point for each teacher and for the families: the school is a *community* and an *organization* where the educational responsibilities of the individual are discussed in the group and information, including documentation regarding development and knowledge about the children, is shared; the group of teachers guarantees the continuity of the points of reference and the interventions, they discuss and agree on the organization, the educational proposals, the training and this offers an important model of socialization for the children;

➢ the physical **environment** is an essential aspect and vehicle for the educational project. Through the organization of the various and differentiated, characterized and recognizable spaces, the choice of furniture, colors and materials, important information is transmitted regarding the possible explorations, the different activities and the groups to the children. Also important is the idea that children deserve beauty and beautiful surroundings: a carefully planned sober, safe, personalized environment, where children are free to move around, appointed and enriched by the team;

➢ **outdoor spaces** are necessary for children to have a rich and healthy experience, move freely, observe and explore natural elements and phenomena of great interest to them in a protected environment, to discover the richness and complexity of living beings. Every day experience is important for autonomy, to "let go" of energy and learn to concentrate on the activities and be part of the group both inside and outside the school, where both environments are carefully prepared;

➢ the **daily routines**, from meals to nap time, are very important for children: their regularity and the association of each moment with tenderness and sociality allows them to orient themselves in the environment, to recognize the signals of their bodies, moving towards self-control and independence; thus times, spaces, the quality and variety of not only food but also how meals are presented, setting and clearing the table, sleep rituals, the personalization of the furniture and personal belongings are important educational materials as much as the materials and projects;

➢ and last but not least, **time for development**: during the first three years of life, the foundations of social and emotional security are formed, leading to the control of bodily functions, the discovery of rules for community living, the pleasure of exploration, the desire for knowledge. Time is needed to accomplish these things, respecting the rhythms of each child in developing concentration skills. The children learn, develop, discover, and concentrate if they can take their time, if each child can take his/her own time: it is necessary to protect and support the rhythms of each child as they spontaneously appear in a rich environment which is not too

stimulating through carefully chosen activities rather than offering the children a large number of choices which are too fast and superficial. The risk is losing their attention and saturating them to the point that in the future they reject or avidly consume stimuli and knowledge. When well-dosed and offered without hurry at the right time, the children can take their time to observe, try, retry, compare and practice. The occasions created in the environment offered by the adults are in response to the stimuli offered by the children, resulting in them feeling confident and able to nourish their curiosity, exercise their intelligence and maintain their desire for knowledge.

OUR INFANT-TODDLER CENTER

Our infant-toddler center is a place for day-to-day life organized to promote well-being, consolidation of personal identity, affective security and control of the body, calm play, sociality and co-responsibility towards others, things, environment, conviviality, outdoor life, carefully planned to communicate with children through beauty and with their parents through caring for values attributed to childhood.

It aspires to be a learning environment where children can express and regulate themselves, where they are offered rich and varied opportunities aimed at experimenting with scientific rigor which are proposed calmly, systematically and in an ample time period to arouse creativity, concentration, discovery, imagination, comparison, construction using hands, bodies, relationships with others, the many expressive, playful languages.

It is a place for studying and experimenting the most effective ways for exposing this age group to language, music, the observation of natural phenomena, figurative languages. Activities, projects, processes and the children's progress is documented regularly in the Infant-Toddler Center.

We choose our proposals based on our competences and experiences because the children have the right to interact with competent experts. We try to understand the meaning of the proposals and define with them the new projects that spring from the groups of children and their common researches.

We ask that parents actively participate from when they bring their children for the settling-in period. We support them by showing their children that during important moments the parents are there and we offer occasions for meetings and consultancy on themes regarding child-raising, health, culture and education.

ORGANIZATION

The Nido is organized in groups referring to the same teachers' team and is attended by a maximum of 64 children between 3 months and 36/40 months (i.e. when they start attending *Scuola dell' Infanzia* in September after turning three).

The organization of the space and the timetable are defined around the developmental needs of the different groups.

The day is marked by *routines*, free play and organized proposals. The routines revolve around care (mid-morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, changing time, nap time) and they are meaningful experiences for building affection and relationships with adults and the other children, for developing independence, concentration and language skills.

Arriving at the Nido and leaving, the transition and the rituals of leave-taking and greeting of parents are carefully planned.

For the youngest children the relationship with the adult during lunch, changing time or falling asleep is as far as possible carried out by one teacher; as the child grows and acquires greater motor independence, these moments become shared with other adults and the rest of the group.

Outdoor activities are carried out at all times during the day.

During play, the teachers are the directors and mediators between the children and the environment and the other children; they support and stimulate their explorations in the space, with materials, in relationships. Proposed focused activities (atelier, laboratories, focused outdoor activities, etc.) in small groups is held mid-morning, after the snack and in the afternoon, after nap time.

The teachers, selected after a training course organized by the Department in collaboration with our partners, participate in the coordination of the activities and receive continued training.

A pediatrician is occasionally present at the Center as a consultant to teachers and parents (Notice: in Italy each resident child from birth to 14 is followed by a pediatrician chosen by the family within the national Health Service)

The Nido follows the dietary and health regulations issued by the Health authorities of the City of Milano.

It is open from Monday to Friday, 47 weeks a year.

The standard school day is from 8am to 5pm with the possibility of prolonging to 6:30pm if necessary.

The Nido bambini Bicocca has a Statute, a Parents Association and a Scientific Committee.

ACTIVITIES

We give value to free play and all forms of play, the relationship with the adult and the peer group.

The environment and the day are organized to encourage free *play* for discovery and symbolic play, individually and in small groups. This is the most important activity for children of

this age, who learn and express themselves through play. By playing together, they learn to stay in a group in a different space which is more stimulating and less intimate than the family home, to explore, share objects and engage in activities with other children, to be cared for by adults who are not their exclusive caretakers, who encourage their spontaneous discoveries and their independence.

The pedagogical ideas on which our Infant-Toddler Center is based looks at development in its entirety. Contexts where children can interact with each other and participate in discovery, the creation of activities which become projects, defining their social, emotional, expressive and intellectual worth, are set up.

The activities proposed by the teachers spring from occasions offered by the environment, observations of children at play and in their interactions experiences and talents available. They are fine-tuned thanks to the systematic observation of the children during the day and they are aimed at implementing:

o exploration, reflection on the experiences, a progressive autonomy;

o capacity to interact, face and resolve conflicts in an increasingly constructive way

o the development of verbal language through storytelling and talking about experiences, ideas, dialogue, books;

o the development of creative and symbolic language (figurative, music, theater, etc);

o the development of senses, movement and fine motor skills;

o the development of the ability to observe the surrounding world, others, natural phenomena, living organisms;

o the development of the ability to reason, plan, discuss, compare hypotheses and experiment;

o the development of feelings of empathy, sharing, interest and respect for differences;

o the development of environment awareness as a first step to buid up ethics of sustainability.

The Infant-Toddler Center has 2 atelier/workshops, a space for storytelling, a space for music, corners for dress-up and symbolic play and each classroom is divided into areas for exploration and creative expression which are set-up according to the particular group, their ages, interests and development.

The garden represents the basis of our commitment to environmental education: it was scientifically designed, and is home to a variety of plants, chosen on the basis of specific criteria and sensory experiences, offering children the chance to observe plants as they grow. These activities are connected to investigations undertaken in the scientific atelier. Just outside the Nido there is a vegetable garden and small pond.

TRANSITION

Transition from home to the Nido for the first time, away from parents, staying with other adults who are unfamiliar and gradually become sources of security and tranquility, being able to look around with interest and curiosity, liking staying and playing with others is an important process which is both delicate and tiring for children and parents. For us it is important to take the time to get to know each other and build a relationship of trust with the teachers who become the points of reference.

At different ages, children express this effort and ambivalence at detaching from their parents and settling-in to school. On the one hand, the new environment attracts them because there are other children and lots of things to do, on the other they need to become more independent; sometimes they protest, they sleep badly, they express anger or cry, they show greater attachment to family members or temporary aggressiveness towards other children. These behaviors and feelings reflect the normal ambivalence of parents, especially mothers, when for the first time they share the responsibility of caring and the pleasure of the daily conquests of their children with other adults outside the family.

Teachers working together with parents during this moment is important for the children, it makes them feel supported and it facilitates the settling-in when they perceive that a relationship and communication exists between their parents and the teachers. Many mothers need to see their children in the new environment in order to feel serene and the teachers need to get to know the children and see them interact with their parents.

This is why a settling-in period includes an individual interview with the parents, so that gradual transition can be planned considering the age, habits and personality of the child, as well as the characteristics of the group where the child will be placed. We advise new parents to set aside two-weeks, which can be shortened or lengthened according to the ease or difficulty of the adaptation of the child and the specific family situation.

EVOLVING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The **Nido Bambini Bicocca** opened on 5 September 2005 . We are now over 10 years old.

Our ideas and the educational project evolve and change with the growth and evolution of the children, the talents of the new teachers, the inputs of students the experience and research that we are conducting together, the changing needs of the parents. We are now experimenting in "science" with a focus on the environment and the living things, on music, on language and conversation with children.

TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pre-service

The Nido hosts every year a number of students who are enrolled in the courses of Educational Sciences to become ECEC and Community Educators.

Students are involved in observation, documentation, participate to activities and are supervised by the *pedagogista* and by experienced teachers of the Nido.

In service

Teachers working in the Nido, selected through a course organized by the Consortium have 150 of paid yearly hours for professional development, group work and meetings with parents.

We work in a reflective perspective, combining observation, intersubjective observation analysis, documentation and a video-research approach.

THE CONSORTIUM BAMBINI BICOCCA

The Nido is run by the Consortium Bambini Bicocca, a partnership between the university of Milano Bicocca and two Social Cooperatives Genera and Or.S.A. who have a long-lasting experience in running ECEC services and a tradition of strong involvement of parents.

The *Dipartimento di Scienze Umane per la formazione "Riccardo Massa"* is a well known research center in ECEC in Italy.

The Consortium acts in strict partnership with the Municipality of Milano, which ceded the premises for the Nido and the whole building which today mainly hosts courses for the pre service training of ECEC and primary school teachers .The agreement commits the University to reserve 1/3 of the available places at children of the neighborhood. Fees for families are the same as for other Municipal ECEC services, i.e. on a sliding base according to income. The neighborhood is mixed and includes a highly socially disadvantaged area.

PEDAGOGISTA (SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR)

PIERA BRAGA (DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SCIENCE FOR EDUCATION "RICCARDO MASSA")

ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATOR

Indicated by one of the partners (at present Giusy Labanca/Cooperative Genera)

SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISION

SUSANNA MANTOVANI (DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SCIENCE FOR EDUCATION "RICCARDO MASSA")

ONGOING AND PAST RESEARCH PROJECTS, AMONG THE OTHERS

Bambini Bicocca has promoted and monitors the Italian Network of University Infant-Toddler Center.

We participate as a Case of good practices for curriculum and professional development to the CARE project- Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (http://ecec-care.org/).(Italian team: Susanna Mantovani, Giulia Pastori, Chiara Bove, Piera Braga, Francesca Zaninelli, Gaia Banzi, Silvia Cescato, Valentina Pagani)

The Nido is involved in the Research Project (IT-USA), titled "Teachers' Behavior Analysis in Infant-Toddler Centers: Instruments and Methods for Training" (Mary Jane Moran, Piera Braga & Chiara Bove). The project, started in 2008 and carried out in collaboration with the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, aimed at the identification of new instruments and methods for the early childhood educators' professional development.

Experimentation/trial of the Scientific Atelier (in collaboration with a Biology University professor: Annastella Gambini). This project aims to encourage and support a virtuous relationship between children and natural world/nature (animals and plants) through experiences in the garden of the Infant Toddler Center.

REGGIO CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (Collaboration between University of Milan-Bicocca/Department of Human Science for Education and Reggio Children s.r.l.).

Pedagogical-Managerial-architectural Project of ENI ECEC (in partnership with Reggio Children, University of Milan-Bicocca, Tullio Zini Architect, ZPZ Partners, Lapis Architetture; December 2008).

DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

Banzi G. (2015) *Autonomy and rules. Practices, Meanings, and Professional Development in Infant Toddler Centers.* PhD Dissertation in Science of Communication and Education. University of Milano-Bicocca, Department of Human Science for Education "R. Massa".

MASTER DISSERTATION

Zeni E. (2014) *The teachers' emotions within the educational relationship with children in the Infant Toddler Center. An exploratory survey through the T.R.I interview by R.C. Pianta.* Master's Degreee Thesis in Developmental and Educational Psychology. University of Milano-Bicocca, Department of Psychology.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

- Gambini A., Braga P., Mantovani S. "Learning about living things and sustainability: a scientific atelier in an infant-toddler center", presented at the EARLI Conference 2014 (European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction)/ SIG 5 Learning and Development in Early Childhood (Jyväskylä, Finlandia, 25-27 Agosto 2014)

- Gambini A., Braga P., Mantovani S. "Feeling good in places and with people: in the garden and in the atelier", presented at the 24th EECERA Conference (Creta, 7-10 Settembre 2014).

- Mantovani S., Braga P., Bove C.,"Teachers' behavior analysis in infant toddler center. Instruments and methods for training within a cross-national research project", *Seminario di Studio del Gruppo di lavoro Siped "Pedagogia dell'infanzia tra presente e passato"* (Università di Milano-Bicocca, 10 Marzo 2015);

- Bove C., "Osservare il comportamento educativo al Nido. Una ricerca in prospettiva cross-culturale", Seminario Gruppo di ricerca Siped *Teorie e Metodi della Ricerca Educativa* (Rimini, 3 ottobre 2014);

- Bove C., Moran M.J., Cescato S., Braga P., Brookshire R., "Re-Conceptualizing Parents' participation during the transition from Home to Infant-Toddler Centers: insights and examples from a Cross Cultural Research in Two University Lab- Centres (Italy, Usa)" , *17 th INET Conference "International Roundtable on school, Family, and Community Partnership"* (Philadelphia, 3 Aprile 2014);

- Brookshire R., Moran M.J., Braga P., Cescato S., Bove C. "The Power and Potential of Cultural Critique on Teacher Reflectivity and Practice: Early Childhood Teachers as Critical Viewers of Self through Cycles of Micro analyses of Practice". Paper presented at the *Fourth-Bi-Annual Italian-US Symposium: The Driving force of context in the Refinement of Self* (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 25 March 2014);

- Braga P., Bove C. "Analisi del comportamento educativo nel nido: strumenti e metodi per la formazione. Una ricerca tra Italia e Tennessee". Presentazione al *III seminario Rete Nidi Universitari, I nidi universitari: esperienze, ricerche e prospettive* (Università Milano-Bicocca, 15 novembre 2013);

- Brookshire R., Bove C., Moran M.J., Braga P. "The Power and Potential of Cultural Critique on Teacher Reflectivity and Practice: Early Childhood Teachers as Critical Viewers of Self through Cycles of Micro-analyses of Practice", *23rd EECERA Conference: Value, Culture and Contexts* (Tallinn, Estonia, 28-31 Agosto 2013);

- Bove C., Braga S., Mantovani S., Moran M.J. "Fostering meta-cognition and reflectivity in early childhood professional caregivers through video and text cues". Presented at the *5th Biennial Meeting of the EARLI special interest group 16 "Metacognition",* (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 5-8 Settembre 2012)

- Moran M. J., Bove C., Braga P. "Learning from Each Other: Cross-Cultural Research on Italian and U.S. Early Childhood Professional Development". Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of AERA-American Educational Research Association. Vancouver,* (Aprile 2012)

- Braga P. Bove C., Mantovani S., Moran M.J. "Learning from each other. Cross cultural research on Italian and US early Childhood professional development. Paper presented at the *International Symposium (workshop).* (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 28 Ottobre 2011);

- Mantovani S., Bove C., Braga P. "Videoricerche e formazione in contesti educativi: esempi da tre progetti", Presentazione al *Seminario Videoricerca in contesti educativi. Contributi interdisciplinari* (Università Milano-Bicocca, 8 giugno 2011)

- Mantovani S., Braga P., Hallam R., Moran M.J. "Lessons Learned from an On-going Cross-National Research Project: ECE Teacher Practice in Two University Lab Schools". Presentazione all'*International Symposium "Contexts of Child and Adolescent Development: Family Relations, Risk and Early Childhood Education* (Knoxville-Tennessee, 5 febbraio 2010).

CONTACTS

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