

Experimentation, research and innovative perspectives for a contemporary approach to the well-being and care of 0-6 year olds

Experimentación, investigación y perspectivas innovadoras para un enfoque contemporáneo del bienestar y el cuidado de los niños de 0 a 6 años

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ABSTRACT

Services for children 0-6 years in Italy are receiving many legislative measures aimed at providing unified care and education, for greater accessibility and for the transition in the continuity of the child's growth (Bondioli et al., 2017). In Central Italy, five services with an integrated 0-6 project were identified and monitored in order to assess what the law has led to and the significance of this approach in terms of educational quality. The methodological approach chosen was qualitative, reflective and narrative in order to encourage participation and involvement of all participants.

Ad hoc instruments and focus group meetings were conducted. The results show a strong motivation for the 0-6 "culture," with individual continuous experimentation projects and autonomous sections. These are marked by ongoing work on the quality aspects of planning, family participation, the pedagogical coordinator, and relationships, especially regarding interactions among children. From this point

of view, experimentation can only develop for the future, involving more and more services, especially of the public kindergartens section.

Key words: Poles 0-6, Child Care Services, Early Childhood, Education, Child Care.

RESUMEN

Los servicios para niños de 0 a 6 años, en Italia, están recibiendo muchas medidas legislativas que apuntan a una perspectiva de atención y educación unitarias, para una mayor accesibilidad a los servicios y para hacer una transición continua en el crecimiento del niño (Bondioli et al., 2017). En el centro de Italia, se identificaron cinco servicios con un proyecto integrado de 0 a 6 años y se supervisaron con el fin de evaluar lo que la ley ha provocado y la importancia de este enfoque en términos de calidad educativa. El enfoque metodológico elegido fue cualitativo, reflexivo y narrativo para fomentar la participación y la

implicación de todos los participantes.

Se realizaron instrumentos ad hoc y reuniones de grupos focales. Los resultados muestran una fuerte motivación por la "cultura" 0-6, con proyectos individuales de experimentación continua y secciones autónomas. Éstos se caracterizan por un trabajo continuo sobre los aspectos cualitativos de la planificación, la participación de las familias, el coordinador pedagógico y las relaciones, especialmente en lo que respecta a las interacciones entre los niños. Desde este punto de vista, esta experiencia 0-6 debe continuar desarrollándose en el futuro, implicando cada vez más servicios, especialmente las escuelas infantiles Públicas.

Palabras clave: Red de Servicios 0-6, Servicios de Atención a la Infancia, Primera Infancia, Educación, Cuidado Infantil.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary approach to childhood brings with it greater attention to the well-being of children and their care, which then brings forward issues that also concern parenting and education. Childcare services play a fundamental role in promoting child development, preventing inequalities and supporting the role of parents (Tamburlini, 2014; Thompson & Nelson, 2001).

As for the educational model, in the last decade the issue of quality in early childhood education and care has received increasing attention in research, politics and pedagogical debates at the European and national level.

In terms of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), i.e., services of education and assistance aimed at children in the 0-6 age group, the European Commission proposes a unitary perspective outlined by the guideline document Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which defines services for children as a unique educational system with common pedagogical orientations (Lazzari, 2014; Van Laere & Vandebroek, 2017).

In accordance with this document, in Italy, the founding decree of the "Integrated education and training system from 0 to 6 years" was issued, which assumes the new Italian educational and cultural horizon as a new perspective on childhood and its education; it guarantees all children, from birth to six years, equal opportunities to develop their potential

for relationships, autonomy, creativity and learning to overcome inequalities, territorial, economic, ethnic and cultural barriers (Legislative Decree n.65, 2017).

This decree aims to unite (0-6 years) the management of nursery schools (0-3 years) and kindergartens (3-6 years), until now separate, under public management, guaranteeing the right to education as a fundamental public service, also by strengthening services for the 0-3 age group. Currently, these services are managed by municipal bodies with the contribution of users and are distinct from the public nursery school, differing from it both in terms of governance and in terms of educational identity.

The new legislation, on the other hand, leaves the objective of eliminating territorial disparities and increasing access to early childhood education and education system, which has so far been negative, to a State-Regions agreement. In addition, the legislation addresses the continuity between nursery and kindergarten, defining good practices for treating and making the passage of the child evolve (Bondioli, Savio & Gobetto, 2017). The decree includes Childhood Centers, with the aim of accommodating both 0-3 and 3-6 segment structures in a single building or in neighboring buildings for better use of resources through sharing of services, spaces and human resources. Further, in Italy, the National Commission for the Integrated Education and Training System, established pursuant to Article 10 of Legislative Decree n. 65 (2017), approved the pedagogical guidelines for the integrated "zerosix" system to constitute the pedagogical framework of the experiments and provide the system with the necessary and appropriate cultural, pedagogical and, in part, didactic bases, shared theories on the rights of the child and on "Centrality" in which the 0-6 child is placed, in an ecological key.

In the dimension of the rights and centrality of children in the 0-6 age group, the document appropriately places the references to the quality of the services dedicated to them, understood as an intertwining of education and care and the educational purpose of "well-being", albeit in the perspective of the "child competent", the subject placed within a symbolic-cultural system oriented to learning. The document provides belonging to the pedagogical culture of the 0-6 sector as a system choice, now irreversible, and reaffirms both in the language and in the reference to some concepts, many elements that are now a shared culture in childhood pedagogy. In particular, in the Umbria Region, in recent years and through various methods and subjects, many of the

issues have been the subject of research-training and strategic interventions (research on the quality of childcare services, inter-institutional table on 0-6, research-action on the experimentation of 0-6 poles), which opened to the desire to build 0-6 poles. State infant schools (teachers and school managers) are particularly involved in the aforementioned operation. At the present time, it appears more difficult to implement the integrated 0-6 model, with the aim of creating a participatory process that moves "from below".

The publication and dissemination of the document represents a unique, precious and unrepeatable opportunity to be entrusted to the many components involved, which places our Region and our country in the European dimension of "recognizing the education and care of children in the phase preceding the primary education as essential to provide the basis for lifelong learning and development of children" (Pedagogical guidelines for the integrated system 0-6", 2020, p. 40).

In Italy, public investment in children in the first phase of their life cycle (0-3) is lower in comparison to other European countries. The network of educational services made up of about 13,000 facilities accommodates 24.7% of children, while the target proposed by Europe is 33%. The percentage of attendance is very different from the North, the Center and the South, while the offer of public nurseries is even more critical: only 17% of children under 3 have a guaranteed place versus 35-55% in France and the Nordic countries (Marucci & Rosiello, 2021).

The hypothesis of Childhood Poles arises from the primary need to guarantee, from birth, equal opportunities for education and instruction, care, relationships and play for all girls and boys, helping to eliminate inequalities and territorial, economic, ethnic and cultural barriers, by overcoming the dichotomy between educational services for early childhood and kindergarten; this entails building a unitary educational and training path, while respecting the specificity of each segment and setting the ambitious goal of raising the level of educational services for early childhood, i.e. aimed at children under the age of three up to the threshold of 33 % (Marucci & Rosiello, 2021).

In Italy, the establishment of Childhood Centers is an innovation that provides for: "Permanent laboratories for research, innovation, participation and openness to the territory, also in order to encourage maximum flexibility and diversification for the best

use of resources, sharing general services, collective spaces and professional resources" (art. 3, c. 1, Legislative Decree n. 65, 2017). Furthermore, the legislation appoints the individual municipalities as beneficiaries to take care of the executive planning of the interventions for the modification or creation of the buildings dedicated to 0-6 Poles. In 2020/2021, there were 47 municipalities identified in the various Italian regions (National Institute of Statistics [ISTAT], 2020).

In the Umbria Region in Central Italy three municipalities won the tender for the construction of the Poles, but none of them were completed. In addition to this, some programs of services for children have emerged from the territory, which, in the past, had accepted the proposal to include a 0-6 project in their programming.

Given the presence in the territory of these 0-6 experimental programs, characterized by innovative elements offering services, the need emerged on the part of the Umbria Region, together with the University of Perugia, to start a process of monitoring the experimental 0-6 programs, which can help to frame what the law has actually produced in the Umbria Region to date.

The possibility of joining together two segments of educational agencies is an important test that brings with it many challenges, but which aims to ensure inclusion of all children within quality services. But the two segments were started and grew separately, leading to a split that is difficult to overcome today. In particular, the need to build a pedagogical mentality is emphasized, one that from being separated, becomes unitary and shared and transforms itself into a coherent educational project aimed at a period of infantile life in itself of continuity, in a holistic evolution that embraces the whole course of development (Zaninelli, 2019).

For these reasons the experiment of the 0-6 programs has started in the Umbria Region and is supported by a research-action project in the structures that have proposed the 0-6 experimental projects, with cognitive and exploratory intentions.

The research-action work has developed through the intertwining of actions of detection, analysis, exploration and reflection on the practices implemented. The research - action activities were carried out with observations, communications, online meetings, and compilation of questionnaires by all the actors involved in the educational and didactic process. The action research has concentrated its efforts on the possibility of detecting data that emerged from

the union of the two segments of childcare services, creating the conditions for giving children a new and innovative, quality educational experience (Zaninelli, 2018).

The perspective chosen was that of the continuity of the investigation that leads to continual investigation and deepening (Dewey, 2014). The project envisaged the total participation of all the actors involved who actively took part in the shared research-action path (Nigris, 1998). In this process, the actors have held together cognitive, detection and systematization purposes from within their own context. This has produced inevitable situations of reflection on ideas, practices and perspectives that have also been formative.

This work will try to summarize what, to date, the situation of decree n.65 (2017) has produced in terms of feasibility and prospects. In particular, attention is focused on the aspect that most relates to the experiment in question: the 0-6 programs in the Umbria Region in Central Italy.

The intent of the research-action is of a cognitive and exploratory nature of the structures being tested. The aim was to monitor the significance of the 0-6 experiences, in terms of educational quality, observing the implementation of the experiment. Furthermore, the organizational, pedagogical and didactic aspects were evaluated to determine if they are in line with the national reference legislation and with the guidelines approved by the Umbria Region and to give visibility to the services created in the project.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach chosen is qualitative and reflective in order to promote the involvement of all those involved in the field (educators, teachers, parents and pedagogical coordinators).

The research work developed through the interweaving of analysis, exploration and reflection on, and starting from, the practices already in place, creating the conditions for children to encounter a different and innovative educational experience, quality.

The research involved the following phases; in the first phase, mapping the analyzes of the regional programs recorded as 0-6 experiments were carried out, both through interviews with the network pedagogical coordinators, and through the computer systems of the Region. Subsequently, the contact persons for each experimental program were identified and project sharing meetings began.

With the programs that decided to join the research-action, tools were administered in digital format from October 2020 to May 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the participation of all those involved. The administration was reformulated according to national regulations for health emergencies.

Participants

The participants in the research-action were five experimental childcare services for 0-6-year-olds in the Umbria Region, of which three were with public governance and two private. The mapping made it possible to identify the programs that respected the guidelines of Poles 0-6 and therefore could be monitored by action research.

Of these programs, three had a unitary experimentation project, with an autonomous section; the other two had projects in continuity. The survey of the programs was carried out on those that had activated 0-6 experiments in Umbria, intended as joining children aged 0-3 and 3-6, with unitary spaces and common activities, or unique experimental sections.

No experimental realities were observed with few occasional experiences of educational continuity and carried out in buildings (0-3) and (3-6) very distant from each other.

Tools

1. The mapping card, built ad hoc, consisted of 15 open questions to identify the descriptive aspects of the 0-6 experimental programs. The form included the request for data referring to: structural and functional conditions (type of service and Social Zone); administrative and management aspects (contact person of the entity that manages the service, administrative manager, service coordinator and staff); composition of groups of children (number of children); distribution of educators and teachers; organization and management of spaces (inside and outside); organization of professional times; type of 0-6 experimental project (whether with joint sections or only projects in continuity between the nursery and kindergarten).

2. Collection of the documentation produced by the service, either on paper, photocopied or digital, of all the materials produced exclusively for the 0-6 experimental project. This collection made it possible to trace the project and map the essential pedagogical tools present in the project.

3. The documentation sheet, built ad hoc, consisted

of 28 open questions on the basis of the "Guidelines for the construction of an experimentation project of an integrated education and training system for girls and boys aged 0-6 - Childcare Center" (Umbria Region, 2016). This sheet highlights some elements concerning the structural and functional conditions of the buildings, the administrative and managerial aspects, the composition of the group of children and of the educational group; the organization of spaces, professional times, the description of the experimental project, the pedagogical project, the educational program, the participation of families and the relationship with the coordinator.

4. The observation sheet, built ad hoc, was based on the "Evaluation of the quality of services" project (Sannipoli, 2020) and the "European Framework for the quality of services for children" (Lazzari, 2016). This instrument is made up of 108 closed questions, with the possibility of answering in the present/absent mode to collect data in the areas of educational planning (organization of activities), times, spaces and materials (institutional time and child's time, organization of inside and outside spaces, furnishings and materials), accessibility (recognizing diversity), educator-child relationship (stability of the reference figures, relational modalities in the actions of care and education, personalized attention and active listening, management of socio-relational and socio-emotional aspects and observation as an instrument of knowledge), the child-child relationship (construction of the group of children, interaction among children and respect for rules and emotional skills), the educator-educator relationship (planning and visibility in management, coexistence and collaboration in activities).

5. Video recording was done in order to obtain a greater collection of data from experiences regarding the 0-6 experimentation project. The video recording of a moment of the educational day, chosen by the educational group, of a maximum of 15 minutes was requested. The video recording was done after obtaining the authorization signed by both parents who hold parental responsibility for the minor and produced with obscuring the children's faces. In addition, the video recording was followed by a card in which the reasons that led to the recording of certain moments of the educational day were transcribed as well as the salient aspects of the recording by the educational group.

6. The questionnaire for the coordinator, built ad

hoc, consisted of 19 items with a 5-point Likert scale (0 = absolutely disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = indifferent, 3 = agree and 4 = absolutely agree). The tool was used to observe the relationship between the educational group and the parents during the Covid-19 health emergency; the dimensions investigated concerned the role played by parents in teaching and in educational links at a distance for 0-6, the work style of the educational team, the pedagogical project, technologies, the specific needs of children identified by the parents, the developmental goals, the documentation of the experimentation, the evaluation of the experimentation, the organization of professional times, the problems and strengths encountered with the parents.

7. The semi-structured interview, built on the dimensions found in the observation sheet previously mentioned, aimed to deepen and clarify some elements of knowledge present in the documentation sheet and in the observation sheet. It was also designed to be able to explain the process, the procedural logic, the state of the art and the future prospects of the project. The interview, consisting of eight open questions, was administered online, with video meetings on Zoom with audio recording. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed verbatim to allow for the qualitative analysis of the data.

8. The focus group, with the entire educational team and the parents of the children participating in the 0-6 trial, was conducted by a research representative. The tool allowed empirical detection of the intersubjective descriptions of the different programs and increase in the validity of the results obtained by the previous tools. Subsequently, data coding was done through the content analysis carried out by identifying categories and indicators. The meetings were held online, with video meetings on Zoom.

Data analysis

Analysis of the data from the questionnaires was qualitative and had an exploratory purpose. It was carried out through the "taxonomic evaluation" approach, which consists in breaking down the documents into thematic nuclei and then reassembling the various elements within a matrix that represents the characteristics of each indicator of the project considered (Hill, 2012). The qualitative investigation allowed the information base to extrapolate the meanings and interpretative elements in an explanatory way. Finally, written profiles were drawn up on each individual 0-6 experimental program and shared together

with the participating subjects. For the analysis of the data of the video recordings, microscopic analyzes of the interactive behaviors and the dimension of the meanings attributed to them were carried out; the videos and transcripts were analyzed, identifying, in the filmed micro-sequences, the relationship processes that outlined the interactive movements of the participants. This made it possible to recognize, on the basis of precise observational criteria and behavioral indicators for the systemic study of interactions, some constants and variables within the situations filmed (Cescato, 2016).

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

The first results show that the motivations of the 0-6 experimental projects of the realities participating in the action research are to experiment a project that could have a social impact; provide services at low cost, higher quality services, in the area, for the sustainability of families; respond to the needs of the child in the first 0-6 development plan; give continuity in the growth path of children, according to the 0-6 pole methodology; offer structure and culture of service for a qualitative change in online services and rationalize the opportunity for quality for the needs of small territories.

Regarding the number of children participating in the experimental projects, it is in line with the regional regulations governing the capacity of the classes and the combined number of the educational group, made up of educators and teachers.

In particular, the experimental autonomous sections have a number of children from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 19, with a good distribution in the different ages (minimum 16 months, maximum 6 years); while the continuity project presents a number of 19 children with an age distribution from 7 months to 6 years.

As regards the didactic-educational group, both the autonomous experimental sections and the ongoing projects guarantee the presence of at least one educator and one teacher, with support staff.

Further descriptive results of the programs show that regarding the organizational times of the activities four of them have the complete timetable of the day, from morning to afternoon; one of them ends the activities for children aged 0 to 3 years after lunch, and for the children aged 3 to 6 offers other activities in combination with other sections of the scho-

ol's kindergarten. Only one of them ends its activity for all children 0-6 after lunch. As for the space, there are inside areas organized with an autonomous room for three services; while two of them have multifunctional rooms managed in common with the other programs of the school. As for outdoor space, all five programs have an outdoor garden in which the pedagogical planning can be organized. Compared to the latter, there is a project built collegially (among educator and teacher) for four programs, while one program has a separate educational project for 0-3 year-olds and 3-6 year-olds.

Further descriptive results made it possible to see that all the participating programs had efforts to encourage the participation of families, understood as an educational alliance combined through bonds of trust and constant authentic communication. The results are shown in table n.1.

Furthermore, other descriptive results show that in the 0-6 experimental project, four programs include the figure of a pedagogical service coordinator, an important figure for promoting the quality of the educational and training offer (Lazzari, 2016; Savio, 2017). In the Italian context, this figure was established by Law n.1618, of 16 November 2009 (Umbria Region, 2009), which defines the role of the Social and Educational Service Coordinator within the organization of the service, with the function of supporting the educational professionalism of the working group, to ensure proper functioning and to encourage the participation of families. This professional figure represents an important quality parameter in the functioning of childcare services, as they can contribute to the change and innovation of the dynamics of collaboration and professional development of teachers and educators in an educational community. In particular, during the health emergency (Covid-19), the role of the pedagogical coordinator acquired an even greater value in the construction of the educational project, in the organization of spaces, in the drafting of documentation, in managing contacts with the Municipality, the Headmaster and network coordination, in comparing with the educational group on educational moments during the day, in providing support and allowing continuous reflection. In addition, this figure was an integral part of the educational group, but from an external point of view, he/she was present in the construction of the design, in the observation, in the training, in the involvement with families and in the connection with the territory and the network.

Only one program turned out to be devoid of this

	Times	Space		Planning
		Inside	Outside	
Municipal nursery school - State kindergarten	8:00 am - 4:00 pm	Autonomous room	Garden	Collegial (observation, documentation, evaluation).
Private nursery and kindergarten sections	Nursery 8:30 am - 2:30 pm Kindergarten 7:30 am - 5:30 pm	Autonomous room	Garden	Collegial (there are moments of continuity: observation, documentation and evaluation).
Private 0-6 educational center	7:45 am - 4:00 pm	Separate multifunctional room	Separate garden	Collegial (0-6 Pole with a unique educational aspect: observation and documentation).
Municipal nursery-preschool	8:00 am - 2:00 pm	Autonomous room	Separate garden	Collegial (observation and documentation).
Private nursery - state kindergarten	Nursery 8.00 am - 3.00 pm Kindergarten 8.00 am - 4:00 pm	Separate room	Separate garden	Separate (in the individual paths, informal and formal meetings: observation, documentation and evaluation).

Table n.1 Descriptive results of the participants (times, spaces, planning and participation of families)

	Pedagogical coordinator	
	Presence / absence	Functions in health emergencies
Municipal nursery school - State kindergarten	n.1	Construction of the educational project, organization of spaces, drafting of documentation, contacts with the Municipality, the Headmaster and network coordination. Comparison on educational moments during the day, support.
Private nursery and kindergarten sections	n.2	Continuous reflection.
Private 0-6 educational center	n.1	An integral part of the educational group but from an external view. Present in the construction of the design, in the observation, in the training, in the planning, in the involvement with families and in the connection with the territory and the network.
Private 0-6 educational center	-----	-----
Private nursery - state kindergarten	n.1	There is no shared coordinator. The micro-nursery has its own pedagogical service coordinator with whom supervision is provided on a monthly basis and with daily discussion.

Table n.2 Descriptive results of the participants (presence and functions of a pedagogical coordinator)

figure, recognizes the value of this role, but is hampered by bureaucratic and administrative impediments of the public body to which it belongs. The results are shown in table n.2.

Integrated dimensional qualitative analysis

From the integrated qualitative analyzes of the data that emerged from the various tools used, the marked presence of some large macro areas relating to relationships, the pandemic situation, the type of experimentation and future prospects frequently emerged for all programs. For each macro area, categories have been constructed and are divided by strengths and weaknesses.

Regarding relationships, the first category identified is the relationship between the educational group and the child, who as strengths, presents the sub-category that emphasizes that relational modalities are favored for the development of autonomy in play and routines; as a point of weakness, referring to the role of the educational group, it is distinct, but complementary. For the category of the relationship among children, among the strengths is highlighted that peer tutoring, the closeness of older children with younger children is a stimulating element of growth, that older children do not experience younger children as a disturbance, but as an enrichment; they are responsible, welcoming and involve the little ones with care, curiosity, respect for times and desires, help them with their needs and requests; younger children show confidence, calmness, imitation and curiosity in letting themselves be guided by older children, especially when the proposals of adults seem difficult for them and children with developmental delays improve with the proximity of children of various ages. Regarding weaknesses, there are no selection criteria for creating groups of children, which favor methods of interaction among children.

There was difficulty in building authentic relationships among children for building closed groups because of the Covid-19 legislation. For the relationship between the educator's category, collegial participation in the planning and documentation of the activities is highlighted among the strengths. The lack of fostering exchange between small groups of educators and teachers is highlighted as a weak point. The results are presented in table n.3.

For the macro area of the pandemic situation, sub-categories are divided between strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths it was found that

the health emergency created the need to rethink the experiment. There was significant collaboration and a strengthened bond with parents in teaching (DAD) and in educational links (LEAD) at a distance for 0-6, which was decisive for the success of the experience. In addition, the work of the educational group was effective in planning and organizing the DAD and LEAD for 0-6, in building the pedagogical project and the organization of professional times in a participatory manner. During the lockdown technologies were very important for a communicative exchange with the children and parents of the 0-6 project. As for weaknesses, inadequate responses to the specific needs of children as identified by parents emerged. There was failure to achieve the same development goals of work as in presence; there was lack of continuity in the documentation of the 0-6 experiment, and parents had problems with DAD and LEAD. With the health emergency the times of socialization with families have been reshaped. The results are presented in table n.4.

As regards the macro area of the experimental typology, the strengths of the management category indicate a unity of management (bonds of territorial proximity and intentions), an organizational quality in the logic of community educational pacts, a will and belief in the project, a continuity of experimentation and a quality of shared decision-making. The weaknesses are identified as bureaucratic impediments (structural difficulties and difficulties in implementing legislation), pedagogical awareness relating to the 0-6 "culture", exceptional experimentation and different economic structures and organizations. The strengths of the category of the educational group are common formation and objectives, an educating community, a collegial and shared construction of the common creative project: common tools for the field of childhood experience and the development objectives of kindergarten, an experimental perspective (optics of the unfinished and questioning), integrated care and education and a recursive confrontation of the educational group. Weaknesses are the need to strengthen the insecurity of any new project and the fear of not meeting the pre-requisites of children. The children's category has their total participation as a strong point and a disproportionate number for age groups as a weak point (there are not as many children aged 3-6.). The results are presented in table n.5.

The strengths of the management category of the macro area of the future perspective are the support of the institutions and individual autonomous schools

Relations	0-6 Experimental programs	
	Strengths	Weaknesses
EDUCATIONAL GROUP-CHILD INTERACTION		
Facilitate relational modalities for the development of autonomy in games and routines	Role of the educational group distinct, but complementary	
Stable reference figure for the children's group		
Awareness of verbal/non-verbal behavior		
Care of the educational environment to foster relationships		
INTERACTION AMONG CHILDREN		
Peer tutoring, the closeness of older children to younger children is a stimulating element of growth	There are no selection criteria for the creation of groups of children, which favor methods of interaction among children	
Older children do not experience the little ones as a nuisance, but as an enrichment; they are responsible, welcoming and involve the little ones with care, curiosity, respect for times and wishes, help them with their needs and requests.	Difficulty in realizing authentic relationships among children for the constitution of closed groups as required by Covid-19 legislation.	
Younger children show confidence, serenity, imitation and curiosity in letting themselves be guided by older children especially when the proposals of adults seem difficult for them.		
Children with developmental delays improve with the proximity of children of various ages.		
Interactions are created among children of all ages.		
All children show the ability to recognize, express and regulate emotions in interactions during activities and routines.		
EDUCATIONAL GROUP INTERACTION		
They participate collectively in the planning and documentation of the activities.	The exchange small groups of educators and teachers is not promoted.	

Table n.3 Results of the integrated dimensional analysis macro area relationships

Pandemic situation	0-6 Experimental programs	
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Health emergency as an opportunity for rethinking the experiment.	Inadequate responses to the specific needs of children identified by their parents.	
Significant collaboration and strengthened bond with parents in teaching (DAD) and in educational links (LEAD) at a distance, for the 0-6, crucial for the success of the experience.	Failure to achieve the same development goals as with face-to-face.	
	Lack of continuity in the documentation of the 0-6 trial.	
Effective work of the educational group in planning and organizing the DAD and LEAD for 0-6, in building the pedagogical project and the organization of professional times in a participatory manner.	In DAD and LEAD the problems encountered with the parents were greater than the strengths.	
	The activities proposed to children and their families in the DAD and LEAD will not be repeated in the next educational year.	
During the lockdown technologies were very important to allow a communicative exchange with the children and parents of the 0-6 project.	With the health emergency, the times of socialization with families have been reshaped.	

Table n.4 Results of the integrated dimensional analyzes, macro area Pandemic situation

0-6 Experimental programs	
Experimental Experience	Strengths
	MANAGEMENT
	Unity of management (bonds of territorial proximity and intentions)
	Organizational quality in the logic of community educational pacts
	Will and believe in the project
	Continuity of experimentation
	Shared decision-making quality
	Personnel motivation and qualification process
	EDUCATIONAL GROUP
	Common training and goals.
	Educating community.
	Collegial and shared construction of the common creative project: common tools for the field of childhood experience and the development objectives of the nursery.
	Experimental perspective (optics of the unfinished and questioning).
	Integrated care and education.
	Recursive comparison of the educational group.
	Wide-ranging projects that are best suited to the development of children's potential in a global sense (progressive formalization of learning starting from a playful and experiential approach that enhances and relaunches children's initiatives).
	Integrated observation on children.
	Qualification of the educational system (high attention to growth processes).
	Educational quality.
	Professional and quality development of the educational team.
Professional development processes with widespread decision-making (involvement of people, sense of belonging, involvement and sense of social role).	
Support and collaboration with families.	
Self-esteem, contamination and fatigue; qualification from comparison processes.	

CHILDREN	
	Total participation.
	Unperceived difference of work tools.
	Outside environment.
	Achievement of autonomy and goals.

Table n.5 Results of the integrated dimensional analyzes, macro-area type of experimentation

0-6 Experimental programs	
Future perspective	Strengths
	MANAGEMENT
	Support from institutions and individual autonomous schools to increase the presence of 3-6 year-old children.
	Willingness to have continuity.
	Inclusion of the entire educational group in the process and planning of the school (teaching staff).
	EDUCATIONAL GROUP
	Continuity of the educational group.
	Community educational dimension.
	Positive feedback in the alliance and in the satisfaction of parents.
	CHILDREN
	Continuity in the experimentation (5-year-old children will be the new 6-year-olds).
	Promotion of development in terms of autonomy.
	Recognition of the right to exploration.
	Heterogeneity of skills and temperament.

Table n.6 Results of the integrated dimensional analyzes, macro area for the future

to increase the presence of 3-6 year-old children, the authorization of the institutions to recognize the Pole, the will to have continuity and the inclusion of the entire educational group in the process and planning of the school (teaching staff). The weaknesses are the criteria for participation in the experiment, political clarity about the experiment, economic sustainability and the limited number of experimental situations. The strengths of the category of the educational group are the continuity of the educational group, the work in the fields of experience with goals of competence in the processes, the educational dimension of the community and the positive feedback in the alliance and in the satisfaction of parents. The weak points, on the other hand, are too demanding working times, excessively forced participation, poor explanation of the experiment to families and the need to improve inside spaces. The strengths of the category of children are continuity in experimentation (children of 5 will be the new 6-year-olds), fostering development in terms of autonomy, the recognition of the right to exploration and the heterogeneity of skills and temperament. The weaknesses are the need to cover the entire age group 0-6 (imbalance 3-4 and shortage of 6-year-olds), the number of children in relation to the staff of teachers and greater accessibility for the disabled. The results are presented in table n.6.

CONCLUSIONS

From these results, the monitored 0-6 experiment is a reality to be developed and strengthened, starting from an already solid base, albeit conditioned by the pandemic period that is being experienced by the entire world school system.

In particular, the motivations of the programs that led to the project are underlined, and are presented in two matrices: one linked to the social impact that this experiment could bring about, providing the possibility of guaranteeing services for children at low costs, i.e. greater quality in the territory for the sustainability of families; secondly, it could be an adequate response to meeting the needs of the child in the development plan for 0-6 year-olds, giving continuity to the children's growth processes.

The number of children participating in the experimental project is in line with the regional regulations governing the capacity of the classes and the combined number of the educational groups, made up of educators and teachers. In addition, the timing of the organization of the activities that are proposed,

in most cases, are in combination with other sections of the kindergarten of the school; compliance with the working hours of the educational group is ensured. Also regarding the space, both the inside ones, in particular those that guarantee an autonomous room for experimentation, and the outside ones are considered as an important element for conducting the experiment. A further element of the quality of the experiments is indicated by the presence of pedagogical planning, built collectively (between educator and teacher), which also includes efforts for the participation of families, a central element for the success of the experiment. In addition, the presence of the program's pedagogical coordinator is emphasized as an important figure for experimentation, so that the quality of the educational and training offer can be promoted (Lazzari, 2016; Savio, 2017).

The area of relationships has highlighted the importance of the work carried out between the educator and the child, in particular for the development of autonomy in play and routines; for the category of the relationship between children, peer tutoring, the closeness of older children to younger children is an element for promoting growth, even if, to date, there are no selection criteria for the creation of groups of children, which favor ways of interaction among children. Inevitably, due to the pandemic period, difficulties have been encountered in realizing authentic relationships between children due to the constitution of closed groups, as required by the Covid-19 legislation. The relationship among educators also had a marked collegial participation in the planning and documentation of the activities, but an insufficient exchange among small groups of educators and teachers.

Even the health emergency, compared to the trials, was seen as a chance to rethink a meaningful collaboration with parents in teaching (DAD) and in educational links (LEAD) at a distance.

As regards the experimental typology, it emerged that the unity of 0-6 management is connected to an organizational quality in the logic of community educational pacts, to training and common objectives, to a collegial and shared construction of the common creative project. With regard to open questions on the analysis of the experiences of the experimental sections, the goals achieved in terms of satisfaction with the outcomes of development and adaptation of children and families, qualification of comparison and link of care were outlined and education, expressed by the educational group on children and among

children themselves. As regards the open questions on the analysis of the experiences of the experimental sections, the goals achieved in terms of satisfaction with the outcomes of development and adaptation of children and families. These experiences have an embryonic idea of the 0-6-year-old child, together with a vision of combining care, education and training, renouncing an oppositional logic.

On the other hand, the experiences presented only of 0-6 continuity, lead us to indicate that the combined activities have proven useful for initiating processes of encounter and transformation of the 0-6 "culture" and are very productive in the use of aspects related to the tools of observation and documentation; in particular with regard to the joint design and implementation of these tools as a basis from which to start a true integration of perspectives. Furthermore, in this type of continuous experience, it emerges that the initiatives are carried out separately from the activities of the sections and those focused on educational activities structured by adults are frequent, rather than on the sharing of playful moments among children, which is significant on a relational level. Some points on which to continue working are to increase the presence of families in the planning phase of these initiatives and to overcome the management aspects (diversity of contracts, times, training), for the evaluation process, for the frequency of the proposed activities, the collegial construction and sharing of the project and for greater promotion of the relationship among educational groups.

The integrated approach gives a meaningful voice to the central role of children and favors the participation of all families. It is sustainable if supported at the system level (management and pedagogical coordination), confirming the innovative contemporary approach to childhood, aimed at supporting the child's development, facilitated entry to childcare services and his or her well-being (Tamburlini, 2014; Thompson & Nelson, 2001).

These results appear to be in line with the latest research in pedagogy, legislative proposals and pedagogical debates at the European and national levels, which aim to define children's services as a single educational system with common pedagogical guidelines (Lazzari, 2014; Van Laere & Vandembroeck, 2017; Legislative Decree No. 65, 2017).

With respect to the provisions of the Decree aimed at uniting the management of preschools (0-6 years) with that of nursery schools (0-3 years), separated until now, it was found that, for the participants in this

research, public preschools found it difficult to participate in this new innovative organization, due to the different governance and educational identity with kindergartens. However, in the cases presented, there is a shared cultural, pedagogical and, in part, didactic and theoretical basis for the rights of the child and his or her "centrality", understood in ecological terms. It is hoped that in the future 0-6 poles will be implemented, for recognizing equal educational dignity and a common dialogical educational perspective. The findings from the research describe dimensions of educational quality that mesh education and care in order to increasingly promote child-centeredness and well-being as essential for providing the foundation for lifelong learning and child development (Pedagogical Guidelines for the Integrated System 0-6, 2020).

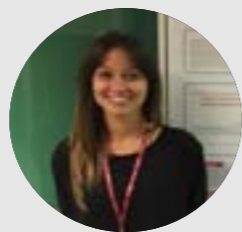
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