The experience of digitized pedagogical documentation in Italy

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Abstract

The pandemic emergency of 2020 meant that the common reflection on issues such as modernization and adequate digital preparedness within the early childhood education and care (ECEC) system underwent a strong acceleration, to allow families, children, teachers and educators to stay in touch

This push has made it possible, subsequently, to continue to reflect on the value and importance of pedagogical documentation and on the usefulness of using digital documentation to communicate more effectively, both within the service (working group) and externally (families, territory, institutions); Finally, the Libertec Project and the proposed methodology have made it possible to test the results of this reflection in the field.

In this context, Cepiss has developed a Web App dedicated to early childhood services under management, identifying a dual function: on the one hand, it is designed as a Digital Library in which documents and work tools useful for the educational team are stored and preserved; on the other hand, it is a space for documentation and communication available to families.

The web app is a digital tool for sharing children's daily lives and journeys, which provides secure access (with login and password): administrator/coordinator, work group, families with different levels of accessibility and display of the information it contains.

The part visible to the working group includes all the documentation relating to the children: personal data, certifications, authorizations, individual observation sheets, individual and/or collective project sheets, minutes of the working group, minutes of individual interviews, video and photographic documentation. This allows constant sharing and information within working groups, even in larger ones, where communication becomes more difficult.

As far as families are concerned, Cepiss believes that the first step to activate a relationship of trust and collaboration is to convey a legible and transparent image of the service, through constant communication and information about everything that happens and within it. The aim is to let the parent know the experience lived by the child at the Nursery or Kindergarten, starting from sharing the educational design of the service and the pedagogical documentation produced.

The introduction of the web app in the Cepiss System was preceded by a training course that involved the staff of the Services and constant support and monitoring by the Pedagogical Coordination to support the introductory phase.

The Libertec Project has made it possible to move on to the experimentation and implementation phase of the web app, through which the coordinator and educators, supported by IT technicians, have been able to identify strengths, areas for improvement and possibilities for development.

Introduction

The LIBERTEC project has given a fundamental boost to the process of digitization of pedagogical documentation in Cepiss Services and has made it possible to implement the Digital Library contained in the web app.

Our intervention aims to illustrate our experience, with particular attention to the experimentation phase that has allowed us to detect the aspects of the web app that still need to be improved and/or developed.

1. The Web App: differentiated access

The Cepiss web app currently provides four levels of differentiated access:

1.   Administrator/coordinator, who has access to the control panel where all the information contained on the web app is stored; it is possible to insert new documentation and delete any documents inserted by mistake; It is the only access that allows you to do this. From the control panel it is possible to create New Accesses, with username and password
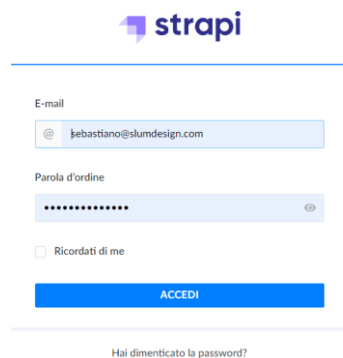

Fig. 1 – Login to access the web app control panel

1.   Coordinator, who has access to the web app and views information and documentation of all educational services
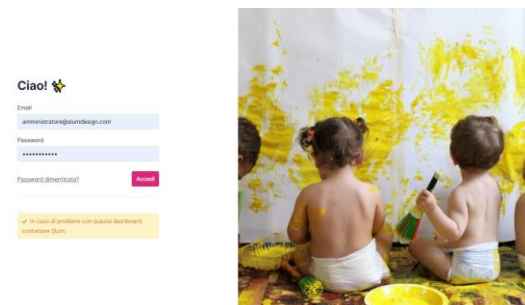

Fig. 2 – Login for the Coordinator's access to the web app

1.   Working group, which displays information and documentation related to its educational service
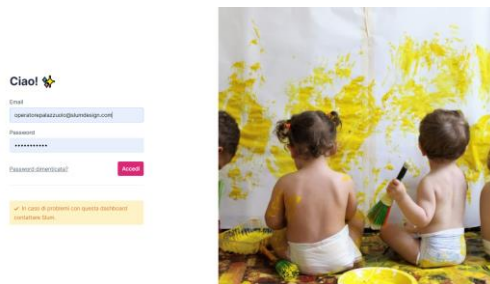

Fig. 3 – Workgroup login

1.   Family, which displays information and documentation relating to their child and any communications addressed to all families in the service to which they belong

Fig. 4 - Login for family access
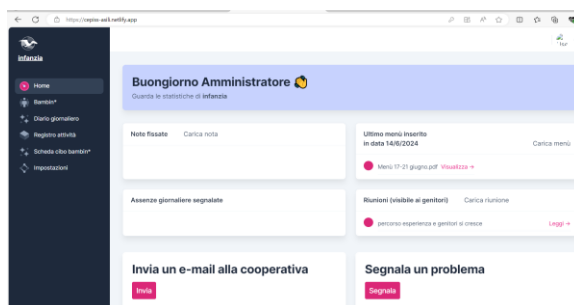
2. The web App: the structure

Fig. 5 -Home Page web app

The web app is organized through several macros - sections:

- Home page: this is visible to the workgroup and families and can be entered:
  - the menu and its changes, the special dish of the week; This section is updated weekly.
  - meetings and meetings aimed at parents (initiatives in the area and continuity meetings with the Kindergarten can also be included) to help and support the participation of families, thanks to organizational reminders.
  - In the notes, the working group can enter any requests to the family (missing material and/or clothing, for example).
  - Daily absences: the family can notify the service of any absence of the child for that day.
  - On the part of the family, there is the possibility to send an email to the cooperative which will be taken care of directly by the Service Coordinator and report a problem
- Children: here the working group can enter all the children's data (personal data, residence, delegated persons, various certificates, special diets), the data relating to the individual sections (reference educators, etc.). It is also possible to include all the work tools useful for keeping track of the child's journey at the nursery (acclimatization diary, individual and/or collective observation sheets, cards relating to interviews with the family, etc.). The child's card is created at the beginning of the year and constantly updated by the working group.
- Daily diary: this section is updated daily by the educational team and includes the activities carried out within the Nursery, the participants and the photographic and/or video documentation.
- Activity Log: allows you to create a sheet for each proposed activity, which contains the name of the activity, the name of the participants and any comments from the working group. This section can also be used by educators for the planning phase of structured activities. It is closely linked to the Daily Diary.
- Children's food card: this part is updated daily by educators and what and how much the child ate for breakfast, lunch and snack is recorded. For each family, news related only to their child will be visible.

3. The Web App: experimentation and implementation

The Libertec Project made it possible to test the strengths and areas for improvement of the web app.

The testing phase, which lasted about 5 months, allowed educators to understand how the web app works; In the first phase, we worked on the involvement of the working group and on understanding the advantage of using such an organized digital documentation.

The subjects involved in the child's growth path (parents, team, pedagogical coordinator) share the same information and content in order to be able to confront each other; Cepiss believes that this system of sharing, linked to relationships and daily and constant communications, develops an educational model that nurtures the participation of families, as they are an active, participatory and informed part of it.

The digitization and standardized organization of pedagogical documentation has allowed easier and faster access to the working groups, which have thus been able to share work tools and information related to children and families more effectively and quickly.

This has improved communication within the working group, the sharing of strategies and methods (without eliminating the daily relationship between educators), decreased the time spent archiving documentation and optimized the resources available, as well as reducing the use of paper.

Cepiss has supported this process through the initial training of educators, the constant support of the Pedagogical Coordinator and the IT team, and the enhancement of the digital tools available.

Finally, the use of the web app was integrated with the experimentation of other programs and/or apps proposed by the Libertec Project Guidelines, used to create invitations to events for families (e.g. Canva), videos (e.g. Videoshows), books and digital stories (e.g. Book Creator and Storyjumper).

The experimentation has also made it possible to identify the limits of the web app, mainly related to technical elements that we are trying to solve with the IT team; We have found that sometimes the loading of documentation is slow and does not always go well, and this slows down the work of educators. For this reason, it has not yet been made visible and usable by families, despite the fact that the accounts have already been created.

Finally, we have identified some elements that could lead to an implementation of the web app:

1. Possibility to insert videos of workshops and activities that can also be done at home
2. Possibility to insert audio readings, music and nursery rhymes
3. Possibility of creating a section for families: in moments of collective participation (meetings, workshops, parties), parents could be involved in the production of materials in favor of the identified educational projects: creation of recipe books, storybooks, lullabies, tutorials and anecdotes from home, readings in the language.
4. Possibility to create a section for the insertion of articles, bibliographic suggestions, educational reflection and support points for families (e.g. The diaper, the detachment, the rules, the autonomies, etc)

4. Conclusion

The experimentation and adoption of the LIBERTEC guidelines allowed Cepiss to support the process of digitization and organization of pedagogical documentation that was already underway, but which needed additional support; the adoption of the LIBERTEC Guidelines has made it possible to deepen some aspects of the pedagogical documentation and has validated the importance of the Digital Library as an effective and efficient model for the entire educational service.

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