LIBERTEC GUIDELINES:
A Methodological Proposal for Digitized Pedagogical Documentation

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Extract

The Guidelines are the result of the collaboration and sharing of content and good practices by the partner organizations of the European Project Libertec.

The organizations involved, leaders in the management of educational services for Early Childhood, contributed by bringing their specific technical, methodological, scientific and pedagogical skills. The experts and professionals of each organization have taken care of all aspects of the conception and implementation of the Guidelines: from the preliminary research activities for the identification of good practices for early childhood education in their respective countries, necessary for the methodological framework of the Guidelines, to the creation and development of the contents; from the research and definition of useful tools to support the organizational and documentary work of coordinators and teachers, to the experimentation of specific programs and sharing in individual working groups.

And this was precisely the added value in the process of creating the Guidelines; Each partner has been able to make available to the others its own experience, its own expertise, its own specificity, with the aim of not homologating experiences, but of creating enriching contexts and useful tools for each organization.

The structure of the Guidelines consists of two main parts: the first, which describes good pedagogical and management practices for early childhood education and care, with specific attention to the organization of routines and the typical day and the definition of educational and play spaces; the second, where the value of pedagogical documentation and the necessary skills is analyzed.

The creation of a Digital Library is the proposal of digital documentation proper to the Guidelines: the aim is to provide a standardized methodology that can serve as a reference for the digitization of the documentation of an Early Childhood Educational Service, in compliance with the type of service and the organizational structure of the manager.

The goal is to create a space for archiving, organizing and sharing for educational and management purposes, through the definition of a proposal that can be adapted to the different organizational realities, legislation and needs of each individual local context.

The construction of a Digital Library includes the definition of the knowledge necessary to define, implement and adapt it to different realities and for this reason we believe it is essential to train the work team, both through dedicated training courses and through specific moments of self-training to develop digital skills.

In this context, the Guidelines offer references and tools that can be studied and used: for the sharing of content, for the support of service management activities, for the support of educational and didactic activities aimed at children, for the evaluation and verification process, necessary in every educational path.

The fundamental aspects of the configuration of the Digital Library were also presented, such as the choice of the digital support that can be used, the possibility of offline access, the definition of different levels of access and privacy and the minimum necessary contents, organized according to 6 predefined Macro-Areas.

Introduction

The Guidelines of the Libertec Project are the final result of two years of work, in which all the organizations participating in the Project, each leader in the design and management of Early Childhood Services, have made available their professionalism, their skills, their specificities for the definition of a methodological proposal for digitized pedagogical documentation.

Once the good educational practices related to the organization of routines and the definition of the typical day were shared, an important reflection was launched on the value of the educational context and on the criteria that each organization uses within its services.

The most substantial part of the work then concerned a comparison on the ways in which pedagogical documentation is organized, on the necessary skills, on the recipients and on the effectiveness of the digitization of processes and contents.

1. The structure of the Libertec Project Guidelines

The Libertec Project Guidelines are structured in two main parts:

- PART I, which collects the mapping and good practices used in the pilot organizations, on two fundamental aspects: the organization of the daily routine and the definition and management of the educational space
- PART II, which analyses the importance of pedagogical documentation and, specifically, the effectiveness of the digitisation of documentation.
  In this part, the methodological proposal of the Libertec Project is defined, i.e. the creation of a Digital Library, through the objectives it sets itself, the criteria to be taken into account and the proposal of an internal organization. An important part is dedicated to the collection of programs and/or sites that can support the educational and organizational work characteristic of an early childhood service
- Infographic appendix on different aspects of work in ECEC
- Annotated Transnational Pedagogical Bibliography

2. Digitized documentation

Within the mapping, some key aspects emerged on the topic of pedagogical documentation, which can be defined as one of the good practices adopted in Early Childhood Services.

With regard to the main purposes of the pedagogical documentation and the added value brought by the adoption of digital media, we refer to the intervention following this (Routines, space management and digital documentation – Dolores Madrid)

But it is important to underline that the core of the Libertec project lies in applying IT and technological skills in the educational process, in particular to carry out the documentary practice and pedagogical coordination activities necessary for the proper functioning of the Children's Services.

In this regard, teachers, educators and pedagogical coordinators are required to have specific digital skills related to the 6 points reported in the European Framework of Reference on Digital Competences for Teachers and Trainers (EU-DigCompEdu).

3. The Digital Library

Within the Guidelines, the elements necessary for the creation of a Digital Library have been identified:

- The choice of the digital media that can be used must ensure the safety and security of the data stored, creating a secure business system.
- Low price or free of charge of the chosen technological asset, or adapt existing digital archiving systems, taking care of the sharing function (according to the user's needs) and the aspects of security and data protection in compliance with privacy regulations.

- Pedagogical documentation as a balanced mix of paper and digital documentation, through a mirroring function can allow educators to easily switch from digital to paper archives and vice versa, ensuring immediate access, recognition, application and harmonious use of documents, work instructions and templates for teaching activities. For example, even if the archive of manual activities or traces of children's experiences remains predominantly on paper, the addition of digital photographic documentation can be a good practice, to better manage communication and sharing with families.
- Identify the most suitable digital languages and tools to pursue a real documentation oriented to the different interlocutors, considering the level of digitization of each type

The aim of the Digital Library is to create a space in which different elements can be saved and preserved such as the documentation of educational experiences, thematic projects, repertoires of educational resources and activities, multimedia galleries as well as laws, regulations, work instructions, official communications, evaluations, observations, etc., everything that is relevant to the educational work as a whole.

The Library, therefore, must not only collect administrative documents, but the set of pedagogical documentation activities carried out in the Service and saved in an agile and shareable way, based on the recipients of the same (work group, families, territory, commissioning body)

In addition to building a system that provides for a mix of digital and paper documentation, the characteristics of the Digital Library must include:

- Offline access capability: Most cloud services require internet access to function properly; If the internet goes down or you are in an area with poor reception, you may not be able to access the digital system, so you should always consider a non-digital variant. For example, to work on a file in OneDrive, OneDrive Business, SharePoint, DropBox, or Google Drive, it must have been opened in online mode at least once; The file can be used offline after opening it and then saved to disk in offline mode.
- Identification of security and data retrieval requirements: different levels of access are required in the Library: in addition to those who administer the digital system, accessibility to operators, institutions, colleagues and families must be provided.
- Identify the physical location of the school/service and the device that can be used. The device must be used by teachers/educators to access pedagogical documentation and use must become daily, to get used to digital work; It must therefore be placed in an accessible place.
- Identify the most functional criteria for the organization of materials (e.g. by themes, months, age group, class, teacher, training objectives by teaching phase - if referred to digital teaching resources - etc.).
- Provide the possibility of remote access for different types of use.

3.1 The organization of the Digital Library

Finally, the contents considered necessary for the organization of the ideal Digital Library were identified: a set of digital folders divided into 6 thematic Macro-Areas, corresponding to the main constitutive aspects of the educational work and considering both strictly pedagogical and administrative aspects.

Each "shelf" area should have subfolders with the relevant minimum contents, for which we have made an exemplary proposal that could be customized, enriched and/or modified within each individual Service, according to one's operational needs, one's educational style and one's internal working methods.

1 MEETINGS OF THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM
- Annual Meeting Calendar
- Scheduling Meetings
- Follow-up meetings
- Meeting Minutes

2 GDPR 2019/679 - PRIVACY & SECURITY POLICIES

- Permissions (for children and adults)
- Other documents

3 WORKING PAPERS
- Internal communication (for the educational team)
- Timetables-calendars-timetables
- Educational programs (annual, monthly, quarterly, weekly, etc.)
- Work Instructions & Procedures
- Children's Registry
- Didactic activities (e.g. models and/or supports for activities, digital teaching resources; photo-video gallery and other evidence of the educational activities carried out by the children)
- Evaluation (progress in children's learning; children's activities; effectiveness of internal procedures)
- Family Relationship (Family Relationship Projects for the Team)

4 SCHOOL-FAMILY RELATIONS
- Institutional communications from the kindergarten/service (e.g. official opening and closing communication; strikes; school requests; meetings, family activities, school parties, etc.)
- Report of Family Meetings
- Individual communication (e.g. individual specific requests from the school, one-on-one appointments, etc.)
- Instant communication (e.g. whatsapp channel, webapp, other social media used by the educational service to communicate, etc., to send information of interest, invitations to events &)
- Educational proposals for the family (educational suggestions and advice on possible educational activities to do at home with parents)
- Menu
- Daily activities (typical day and routine: description, photos, videos, etc.)

5 COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD
- Community and territory
- Local activities aimed at families
- Third parties (municipality, public bodies, etc.)

6 LEGISLATION
- National Laws
- Regional Laws
- Municipal Laws
- Privacy
- Guidelines and possible other institutional framework documents

3.2 Sharing content

Among the key competencies of early childhood education professionals is the peculiar characteristic of being able to collectively reflect on pedagogical practice. Starting from its observation and documentation, the practice is in fact evaluated and constantly improved, through the co-construction of pedagogical knowledge shared among colleagues. Thanks to a series of participatory and reflective actions based on professional interactions between the members of the educational team, the educators-teachers try to better manage the class group and the related needs for development and in-depth study.

Effective teamwork makes it possible to analyze and discuss together the characteristics of the class group and those of the individual children, paying attention to the conditions of the context, discussing how to achieve curricular objectives and how to face daily challenges.

Notwithstanding the fact that face-to-face interaction and human relationships between colleagues form the basis for planning, coordinating and carrying out educational work, the use of digital tools and IT skills for organizational aspects can be a valid support.

The Guidelines contain a list and the specific characteristics of platforms and/or programs that facilitate remote use.

3.3 Management and implementation of digital assets

The wide variety of digital resources easily accessible to children, young people and their families becomes a determining factor for the updating of learning strategies implemented in all educational processes.

Children acquire their very first computer skills at an increasingly early age, some even earlier than their parents or educators.

While digital resources for children retain a highly playful component, if they are also introduced in non-formal learning contexts, they promote greater motivation in carrying out activities, contributing to the strengthening of children's skills.

Despite the fact that the current generation of educators already largely belongs to the era of digital natives (those born after the 80s), they are not always able to select the appropriate digital tools to manage and design a good pedagogical action.

Based on previous studies on educators' competences and children's learning process, the operational proposals of the Guidelines are divided into:

1.   List of tools/programs for managing the activities of an early childhood education and care center
2.   List of tools/programs to support the educational activities of a center for early childhood education and care

3.4 Assessment

The experiential, educational, didactic and learning paths that are generated in the Educational Services cannot be separated from evaluation, understood as a process of elaboration aimed at improving the projects and paths identified, in order to achieve consistency with the needs and requirements expressed by individual children or by the group of peers.

The evaluation cannot therefore deviate from a preliminary observation of the specific conditions and circumstances in which the work is carried out and above all from the characteristics of the children, in order to promote the participation of all the actors of the educational community directly involved, especially families.

4. Infographic Appendix

The Appendix presents some of the essential skills that a teacher, educator or pedagogical coordinator should possess in order to better manage digital technologies and resources in their daily work, with a focus on document practice.

The skills identified are also useful for identifying, selecting and using those resources for educational purposes and building activities for children.

Some possible thematic areas for the development and updating of one's digital skills are also indicated and for their application in the educational field.

5. Bibliography

Finally, the Guidelines propose a rich pedagogical bibliography to guide the educational action proposed by each pilot organization participating in the project for a complete and concrete exchange and sharing of knowledge and skills among European ECEC professionals.