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Digital Handbook

Pedagogical Documentation in Childhood Education
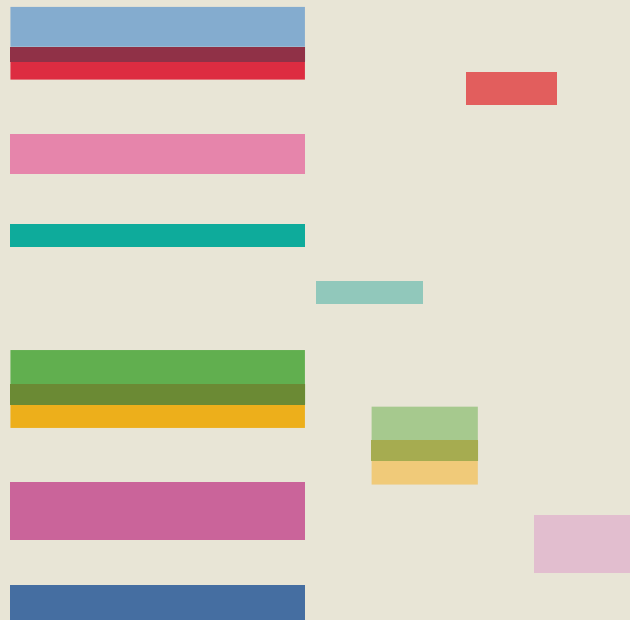
Ireland
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Pedagogical Documentation in Childhood Education

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Digital Handbook

PORTUGAL

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O manual digital visa dotar os educadores de infância com as competências necessárias para:

. Compreender o conceito de documentação pedagógica na educação infantil.
. Compreender como a documentação pedagógica pode apoiar os processos de aprendizagem.
. Refletir sobre as pedagogias participativas que utilizam a documentação pedagógica como forma de tornar visível a aprendizagem das crianças.
. Aprender a usar a documentação pedagógica através da lente da abordagem holística.
. Refletir sobre princípios éticos na documentação pedagógica.

PORTUGUESE HANDBOOK

The digital handbook aims to provide early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers with the competences to:

. Understand the concept of pedagogical documentation in early childhood education.
 Understand how pedagogical documentation can support the learning processes
. Reflect on the Participatory pedagogies that use pedagogical documentation as a way of making visible the children's learning.
. Learn how to use pedagogical documentation through the lens of the holistic approach.
. Reflect on ethical principles in pedagogical documentation.

ENGLISH HANDBOOK

Il manuale digitale ha lo scopo di fornire agli educatori dell'infanzia e agli insegnanti della scuola dell'infanzia le competenze per:

. Comprendere il concetto di documentazione pedagogica nell'educazione della prima infanzia.
. Capire come la documentazione pedagogica possa supportare i processi di apprendimento
. Riflettere sulle pedagogie partecipative che utilizzano la documentazione pedagogica come un modo per rendere visibile l'apprendimento dei bambini
. Imparare ad utilizzare la documentazione pedagogica attraverso un approccio olistico.
. Riflettere sui principi etici nella documentazione pedagogica

ITALIAN HANDBOOK

Manualul digital își propune să ofere cadrelor didactice din învățământul preșcolar competențele necesare privind:

. Înțelegerea conceptului de documentație pedagogică în educația timpurie a copiilor.
. Aprecierea modului în care documentația pedagogică poate sprijini procesele de învățare
. Să reflecteze asupra pedagogiilor participative care utilizează documentația pedagogică ca modalitate de a face vizibilă învățarea copiilor .
. Să învețe cum să recurgă la documentația pedagogică prin prisma abordării holistice.
. Să reflecteze asupra principiilor etice în documentarea pedagogică.

ROMANIAN HANDBOOK

EYdigiFOLIO
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1st edition
e-book

ENGLISH HANDBOOK

EYdigiFOLiO
early years digital portfolio
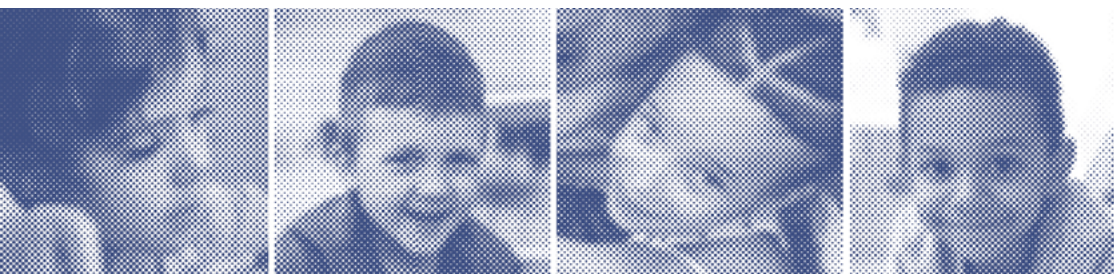
Introduction

Welcome to the Handbook on Pedagogical Documentation in Childhood Education! This comprehensive guide has been created to provide educators, and stakeholders in the field of childhood education with a thorough understanding of pedagogical documentation and its pivotal role in enhancing children's learning experiences.
Pedagogical documentation is an indispensable tool that facilitates the observation, analysis, and interpretation of children's learning and development. This process empowers educators to make informed decisions,design educational strategies, and create enriching environments that nurture the potential of every child.

In this handbook, we delve into the core concepts, characteristics, and methods of pedagogical documentation. Additionally, we explore its intricate relationship with children's learning, emergent curriculum, and various participatory pedagogies. We emphasize a holistic approach to early years education, highlighting the principles of wholeness, interconnectedness, inclusion, and balance. Moreover, ethical considerations and principles governing pedagogical documentation are discussed to ensure that the rights of the children are upheld throughout the process.

Each section of this handbook is designed to offer valuable insights, real-life examples, practical tools, and self-reflection suggestions to aid educators in implementing pedagogical documentation effectively in their teaching practices. By embracing pedagogical documentation, we aim to enhance childhood education quality and contribute to the holistic development and lifelong learning of the children we serve.

Join us on this enlightening journey through the pages of this handbook, as we unravel the intricate tapestry of pedagogical documentation and its transformative potential in childhood education. Let us foster an environment where learning is not only observed but truly understood, celebrated, and nurtured.
Happy reading and may this knowledge empower you in creating a lasting impact in the lives of young learners!

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1. The concept of pedagogical documentation in early childhood education

1. The concept of pedagogical documentation in early childhood education

Alan Bruce, Steve Goode and Imelda Graham,
Universal Learning Systems, Dublin, Ireland

Pedagogical documentation can be described as a process of making processes (such as learning) and practices (such as project work) visible and therefore subject to reflection, dialogue, interpretation, and critique. It involves, therefore, both documentation itself through the production and selection of varied materials, such as photographs, videos, recordings, notes, children's work, and discussion and analysis of this documentation in a rigorous, critical and democratic way – always in relationship with others (Moss, 2019).

"I have spent nearly forty years concerned about and involved in the care and education of young children, as a parent, early years educator, manager, and most recently teacher of future early years educators. I can't imagine having spent so much time with young children if I didn't have a passion for watching them grow, develop, and come to understand the world around them. I have spent many hours in the sand or water areas and there is very little new, for me, to discover about the properties of these materials. What has fuelled this passion for this length of time is the opportunity to think with young children, to engage with them in the discovery of new things, to watch their learning unfold and the delight that they show when they find something new or make a connection that wasn't apparent before"
(Personal prologue, Steve Goode 2023).

In many ways, this personal concept of early childhood education sums up the idea of pedagogical documentation where we:

. Describe what children do;
. Reflect on what it might mean;
. Consider all the ways we can support and extend their learning.
. Start to make that learning visible to the children and the adults in their lives.

This passion is shown by many early years educators, and their commitment to early years education and young children is evident, but, unfortunately, in many countries, this does not lead to the respect and rewards that it deserves. Early years educators are often poorly paid, and the importance of early years education is rarely recognised as the start of education.

This handbook emphasises the importance of how documentation can be used to highlight children's learning in the early years, and how education starts long before children go to school.

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1.1 What is pedagogical documentation?

Pedagogical documentation, as it is used in early childhood education, involves the systematic and intentional collection of evidence about children's learning and development, as well as reflections by teachers and educators. The documentation serves as a tool for understanding and making visible the learning process, and it can inform further teaching and learning strategies. However, it does not take the same form in different countries around the world, and there are many examples of how it can be used in different regions. For example, some descriptions are included in the following references: in the UK (Bath, 2012), Italy (Picchio, Di Giandomenico, & Musatti, 2014), Scandinavia (Kalliala & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014), USA and Canada (Stacey, 2015), Portugal (Mesquita, 2022; Sousa, 2019). Further details of how some European countries (Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Romania) approach the issue of documentation are discussed later in this chapter.

One of the primary purposes of pedagogical documentation is to support and enhance children's learning experiences. It involves observing children in various contexts, such as play, group activities, or individual projects, and documenting their actions, interactions, and expressions. This documentation can take various forms, including written notes, photographs, videos, samples of children's work, and audio recordings, and many of these forms will be covered in later chapters of this handbook.

However, pedagogical documentation goes beyond simply recording what children do: it aims to capture the underlying thinking, theories, and meaning-making processes behind their actions. It requires careful observation and interpretation by teachers or educators who are seeking to understand and make sense of children's learning. It requires an acute awareness of how young children express ideas and question the world around them. Through this process, teachers can identify children's interests, strengths, and challenges, and adapt their teaching practices accordingly. This knowledge needs to pass through a "thinking lens" considering:

. Recent events or experiences in the classroom;
. An understanding of the child's prior knowledge of the topic;
. The child's cultural and family backgrounds.

When doing this, it can be perceived where the child's interest, passion or action comes from. It can help decide what direction to follow in the classroom and it provides the roots of the 'emergent curriculum'. The starting point is to ask yourself 'What do I notice about children's play, what do they do, who do they play with, what materials do they use'?

The next stage is that educators engage in ongoing reflection and analysis of the collected documentation, observations, photos, and other items. This includes sharing and collaborating with colleagues or engaging in professional dialogue to deepen their understanding of children's learning and to identify possible connections to broader educational goals and theories. The documentation helps teachers to identify patterns, emerging concepts, and areas for further exploration or intervention. In addition to analysing and discussing with colleagues, it is important to have a dialogue with children and their parents to make children's activities and learning visible to all.

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1.2 Characteristics of pedagogical documentation

It is important to note that the characteristics of pedagogical documentation may vary based on different educational contexts, approaches, and philosophies. However, the following characteristics provide a general framework for understanding the nature and purpose of pedagogical documentation.

Observational
Pedagogical documentation is based on careful observation of children's actions, interactions, and expressions. It involves keen attention to detail and capturing significant moments of learning and engagement.

Reflective
Pedagogical documentation requires educators to reflect and think critically. It involves interpreting and meaning-making of the documented evidence, exploring children's underlying theories, and thought processes, and reflecting on the implications for teaching and learning.

Systematic and intentional
Pedagogical documentation involves a deliberate and systematic approach to collecting, organizing, and analysing evidence of children's learning and development. It is not haphazard or random but follows a purposeful and structured process.

Collaborative
Pedagogical documentation often involves collaborative processes among teachers, educators, and sometimes parents. It encourages sharing and discussing observations, interpretations, and reflections, allowing for diverse perspectives and insights.

Holistic
Pedagogical documentation seeks to capture the holistic nature of children's learning and development. It is not restricted to isolated skills or outcomes and considers the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical dimensions of children's growth and progress.

Authentic and contextual
Pedagogical documentation aims to capture children's learning in authentic and meaningful contexts. It reflects children's natural and everyday experiences rather than contrived or artificial situations.

Communicative
Pedagogical documentation serves as a means of communication and sharing of information. It involves documenting and presenting evidence in various forms, such as written notes, photographs, videos, samples of children's work, and audio recordings. It enables teachers, educators, parents, and other stakeholders to understand and appreciate children's learning journeys.

Continuous and iterative
Pedagogical documentation is an ongoing and iterative process. It involves repeated cycles of observation, documentation, reflection, and action, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation in teaching and learning practices.

Informative and actionable
Pedagogical documentation provides valuable information for teachers and educators to inform their teaching practices and decision-making. It offers insights into children's interests, strengths, challenges, and learning progress, guiding the planning of future activities, individualised support, and curriculum development, and provides the knowledge to communicate with parents about their children.

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1.3. Examples of National policy requirements

Assessment and documentation play a pivotal role in shaping the educational journey of young learners in early childhood education. A comprehensive understanding of a child's development and learning progress is essential for providing tailored support and fostering their growth. Across different nations, each country's legal frameworks and national requirements shape the assessment practices, emphasising unique approaches to early childhood education.

In this study, we delve into the legal references and guidelines for assessment and documentation in four diverse countries: Portugal, Ireland, Romania, and Italy. These countries, with distinct cultural and educational contexts, offer valuable insights into how they prioritize child-centred approaches, participatory pedagogy, and continuous improvement to enhance the quality of early childhood education. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to highlight the common themes and unique perspectives that contribute to fostering the quality learning and growth of young learners.

In **Portugal**, the assessment and documentation practices of children's progress in early childhood education are anchored in the national regulatory framework.
The Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (OCEPE), mandated by Despacho no. 9180/2016, serve as the primary reference for constructing and managing the curriculum. Decree-Law no. 241/2001 establishes the Specific Professional Performance Profile of the Kindergarten Teacher, complementing the assessment process. Assessment is regarded as a continuous and interconnected cycle that involves observing, recording, documenting, planning, and evaluating children's learning and development. Educators use systematic evaluation to inform their planning and create meaningful educational interventions. Assessment is understood as a fundamental aspect of the educational process, influencing curriculum development, and fostering learning outcomes.

In **Ireland**, assessment and documentation in early childhood education are guided by two essential frameworks: Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and Síolta, the National Quality Framework. Aistear provides comprehensive curricular guidelines for educators to support children's learning and development from birth to six years old. The approach prioritizes play-based learning, recognising each child's unique strengths and interests. Observational assessment is central, with educators documenting children's progress through learning stories and portfolios. Síolta emphasises quality standards across all aspects of services/settings and supports educators in providing high-quality care and education.

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Formative assessment practices are encouraged, promoting continuous improvement in educational approaches. Parental involvement is valued, fostering collaborative partnerships to enhance children's experiences and development.

In **Romania**, the assessment's importance in early childhood education is underscored by the guidelines developed by the National Evaluation and Examination Service (SNEE). Preschool education assessment aims to measure children's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours acquired through the educational process. Participatory pedagogy plays a crucial role in involving children, families, educators, and other stakeholders in the assessment process. The Romanian legal framework, including the National Education Law, supports the implementation of participatory and reflective assessment practices, ensuring individualised educational and developmental paths for each child. Ongoing evaluation enables informed decisions to adjust and improve preschoolers' educational experiences.

In **Italy**, the focus is on competence assessment, extending beyond cognitive acquisitions to encompass attitudes, creative abilities, and psychomotor skills. By competence we mean the set of acquisitions relating to knowledge, know-how, and knowing how to be. In Italy for each field of experience identified in the National Framework, various competence goals are evaluated. The key legal references for assessment and documentation are embedded in the integrated system 0-6 pedagogical lines. The focus is on comprehensive assessment, extending beyond cognitive acquisitions to encompass attitudes, creative abilities, and psychomotor skills. The formative evaluation is narrative and positive, focusing on each child's progress and achievements. Teachers use various assessment methods, such as observations, conversations, and analysis of children's works, to document children's learning journeys. Parental involvement is emphasised, and the documentation is shared with families during meetings to promote collaborative understanding and support for each child's growth and development.

The assessment and documentation in early childhood education in **Portugal**, **Ireland**, **Romania**, and **Italy** are founded on their respective legal frameworks, emphasising continuous, participatory, and formative approaches. These frameworks prioritise child-centred practices, reflective methodologies, and inclusive strategies to ensure optimal learning outcomes and holistic development for young learners.

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1.4 Self-reflection suggestions

What do you notice about the play of children from your setting?

What questions do you think arise about this play?

How could you document the play you observe?

Look at this picture →

What do you see?

How could you talk to the children about the picture?

How could you incorporate it into your documentation?

Figure 1 Children in action

1.5 Practical tools for everyday activities

Further Reading

Stacey, S. (2015). Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood. Red Leaf Press.

Fleet, A., Patterson, C., & Robertson, J. (2017). Pedagogical Documentation in Early Years Practice. Sage.

Videos

Learning Stories: Documentation Project - Pedagogical Narration in Saanich Elementary Schools

The Urgency of Slow - Session 1

Standard II - Webinar: Pedagogical Documentation: Making Learning and Professionalism Visible

Slow pedagogy - making time for children's learning and development

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2. Relationship between pedagogical documentation and children's learning

2. Relationship between pedagogical documentation and children's learning

Alan Bruce, Steve Goode and Imelda Graham
Universal Learning Systems, Dublin, Ireland

This chapter shows how pedagogical documentation can support children's learning by making what and how children learn visible to the teacher. It describes the idea of reflection and its importance in the learning process. The chapter ends by providing a case study that illustrates how documentation is used in an early childhood setting to make children's learning visible to the children, colleagues, and parents.

2.1 The children as learners and the practices of educators

The relationship between pedagogical documentation and children's learning is significant and multifaceted.
Here are some **key aspects**:

Assessment and reflection

Pedagogical documentation allows educators to assess and reflect on children's learning processes, progress, and achievements. By observing and documenting their activities, educators

can gain insights into children's strengths, interests, and areas where further support may be needed. This can lead to the need for further observations, and we can start to see the development of the cyclical nature of observation, reflection, and planning, leading to further action and observation and the cycle starts again. This reflective cycle is key to pedagogical documentation.
Many of our ideas and practices in reflective practice can be traced back to Schön.
He made a distinction between 'reflection on action' and 'reflection in action' (Schön 1987). In a nutshell, the difference between these is as follows:

. *Reflection in action: thinking on your feet.*
. *Reflection on action: retrospective thinking – or thinking 'after the event'.*

Both approaches have a role in pedagogical documentation.
Schön suggested that reflection is used by educators when they encounter unique situations, and when individuals may not be able to apply known theories or techniques previously learnt. His ideas ignited the imaginations of many working with people in public services such as

health, social care, and education, and have influenced practices around the world in seeking to improve these.
(Craft & Paige-Smith, 2013)

Reflection on action involves reflection on one's own, but also with colleagues, the children and parents. When we are open to sharing our observations with others it opens the possibility for change and improvements.

Collaboration and communication

Pedagogical documentation promotes collaboration and communication between children, educators, parents, and other stakeholders involved in a child's education. Documentation provides a tangible record of children's learning, enabling educators to share insights and discuss progress with parents. It fosters a partnership between educators and parents, leading to a more holistic approach to children's learning. Sharing and reflecting with others is key to gaining a full understanding both of our practices and children's learning. The case study described below shows the importance of collaboration, both in planning but also on reflecting on the process.

Individualised learning

Through pedagogical documentation, educators can tailor their teaching strategies to meet the individual needs of children. Individualized learning doesn't necessarily mean entirely individual activities, as it involves a balance between addressing each child's specific needs and providing learning opportunities in a more collaborative and social environment. The fundamental difference between these two concepts is the personalized and adaptive approach that individualized learning adopts to cater to the unique needs of each child, while individual activities can be interpreted as a learning process that occurs in complete isolation, without interactions with other children.

Meaningful learning experiences

Documentation helps educators identify meaningful learning experiences for children. By observing and documenting children's interests, educators can create environments and activities that build upon those interests. This enhances engagement and motivation, leading to deeper and more meaningful learning. In the same way as we observe individual children

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2 Relationship between pedagogical documentation and children's learning ---------->
3 Participatory pedagogies in early childhood education
4 Holistic approach in early years
5 Ethical principles in pedagogical documentation
References

2.1 The children as learners and the practices of educators
2.2 Pedagogical documentation and emergent curriculum
2.3 Methods for collecting and presenting learning evidence
2.4 Methods of storing and using documentation in early years
2.5 Displays of documentation
2.6 Self-reflection suggestions
2.7 Practical Tools for everyday activities

and respond appropriately, we can use this approach with the whole group.

Reflection and continuous improvement

Pedagogical documentation encourages educators to reflect on their teaching practices and make adjustments based on their observations. It promotes a cycle of continuous improvement, allowing educators to refine their strategies, and creating more meaningful and complex learning experiences for children.

Children's agency

Agency means giving children the ability to make decisions, express their opinions, and influence educational practices. Pedagogical documentation can empower children by involving them in the process. It fosters self-reflection, critical thinking, and metacognition, enabling children to become active participants in their learning journey.

Pedagogical documentation is based on the ideas of participatory pedagogies which focuses on the adults and children and how they co-construct knowledge by participating in the learning

process (Oliveira-Formosinho & Sousa, 2019). It contracts sharply with the ideas of transmissive pedagogy where the teacher controls both the content and the process of learning. In that case, documentation serves the teacher and institution with the focus on how well they are doing. Children take little part.

Pedagogical documentation perceives children as active participants in their learning process. They construct knowledge and understanding through their interactions with the environment, social interactions with peers and adults, and their exploration and inquiry. As learners, children have unique interests, abilities, and learning styles that need to be acknowledged and supported by educators. Here are some practices that educators can employ to facilitate children's learning which complements participatory pedagogy:

Child-centred approaches

Recognise and respond to the individual needs, interests, and strengths of children, allowing children to have a voice and a choice in their learning experiences.

Play-based learning

Play is a vital component of children's learning. Educators can incorporate play-based learning into their practices by providing open-ended materials and play spaces that afford opportunities for freely chosen and self-directed activities, and stimulate imagination, problem-solving, and social interaction.

Inquiry-based learning

Encouraging inquiry-based learning involves promoting curiosity, questioning, and investigation. Inquiry-based learning fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and a deeper understanding of concepts.

Scaffolding and support

Educators can provide scaffolding and support through modelling, guided practice, breaking down tasks into manageable steps, and offering feedback and encouragement. Scaffolding enables children to take on new challenges and develop higher-order thinking skills.

Collaboration and social learning

Promoting collaboration and social learning allows children to learn from and with their peers. Collaborative learning enhances social skills, empathy, and perspective-taking.

Reflection and metacognition

Educators can facilitate reflection and metacognition by encouraging children to think about their own thinking and learning processes. Reflective practices help children develop a deeper understanding of themselves as learners and become more actively engaged in their learning (Whitebread & O'Sullivan, 2012).
By incorporating these practices, educators can create an inclusive and engaging learning environment that supports children's holistic development and maximizes their learning potential.

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2.2 Pedagogical documentation and emergent curriculum

Pedagogical documentation and emergent curriculum are closely interconnected in early childhood education. The emergent curriculum is an approach to teaching and learning that emphasises children's interests, experiences, and inquiries as the basis for curriculum development. It acknowledges that children are active participants in their learning and that their interests and ideas can shape the direction of the curriculum. At times, topics emerge from children's interests. At other times, educators introduce specific topics to support children's development and learning (AistearSíolta, 2019). This can take the form of responding to children's interest in the moment, "I want to paint" and bringing out paint and paper, it can arise from the items and materials (loose parts) in the environment, or planned activities initiated by the educators following the curriculum.

Careful observation and reflection both in action and on action can support the educator in planning the emergent curriculum. Having noticed a child's interest, you plan an activity or a way to extend the child's interest, then the next step is to reflect on the activity. There are many approaches to reflection, the most useful for early years is based on the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988).
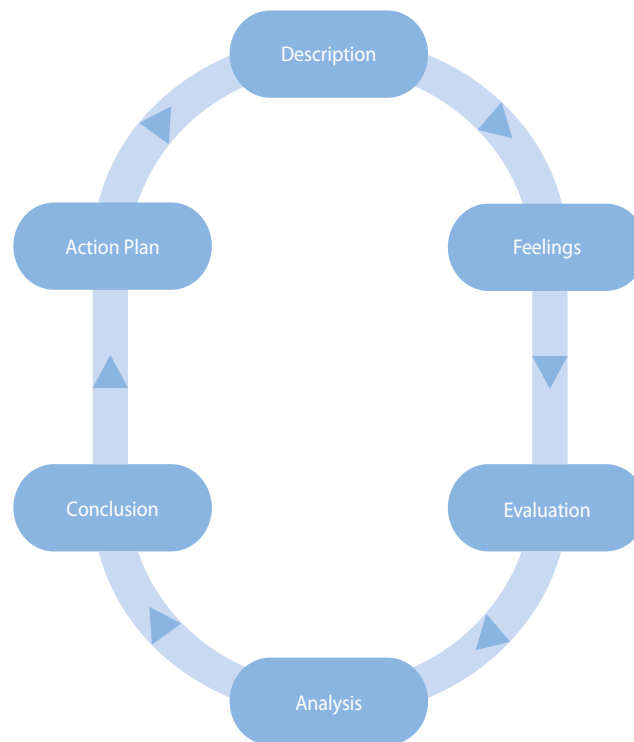

Figure 2 Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Description: these are the observations you have made of the activity.

Feelings: what you were thinking and feeling during the situation.

Evaluation: what was good or bad about the experience, did everyone joined in.

Analysis: this is the main part of the reflection where you describe what sense you make of the situation.

Conclusion: where you bring all your thoughts together including what the children did and what was the learning impact.

Action plan: Take each section of the cycle into account and what is different in a similar situation.

While this approach is focused on the role of the adult, pedagogical documentation can also involve reflection with children. A similar approach can be used by asking children to describe what was happening (description), what they were thinking and feeling (feelings), and what they would like to do next.

The **case study** provided below illustrates many of the ideas that have been introduced in this section of the handbook.

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Case Study
A Pedagogical documentation and children's learning strategy

Introduction

The pedagogical planning and documentation took place in a Swedish early-year setting and was reported in Pedagogical Documentation in Early Years (Bjervas & Rosendahl, 2017). It illustrates some key thinking between planning for and documenting children's learning.

The developed project wanted to introduce a group of toddlers to the environment surrounding the preschool. The decision as to where to go and what to experience was made jointly following consultation by the staff in the service. Everyone was conscious that the project had to be well-planned and organised. It needed to be something that stimulated curiosity in the adults and the children, something that extended children's learning and was transformative.

Staff needed to be committed as the centre would have to be organised in two groups, one staying in the centre and the other accompanying children on the visit. The teachers' willingness to cooperate was supported by the shared reflective culture, where all teachers were involved in reflections about the ongoing project works for different groups of children.

The staff decided to base the project on the previous year's documentation to introduce this year's activity.

The project consisted of visiting a landmark near the early years centre Some children had been involved in the previous year's activity and the photos were used to promote discussion about the visit.

What was documented?

The documentation started as soon as the children got ready to leave the centre. The children held hands and walked to the site. The adults followed and supported communication among children. As the children were holding each other's hands, the adults were free to be able to document.

The staff documented the trip, they were guided by place attractions and the children's wonders. They recorded:

. children's physical movements and verbal and non-verbal expressions among the toddlers
. the children's explorations, trying to be attentive to what connected the group to the place
. children's body language, their gestures, pointing fingers and what they gazed at, as the children have very limited verbal language.

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Selection and sharing of documentation

Great thought was given to choosing what photos to use when they were shared with the children. Photos were printed and placed on a circular table where children could explore them. In this circle time, the children explored and commented on the photos. The adults took some photos from the children's hands so that they could focus on the activity and on what they were doing and not on the object itself. Similarly, some photos were printed in black and white, so the focus was on the object and activity and not on the bright colours of the children's clothes. Children's comments would also be included.

The adults also created a 'reflection wall' with photos from the walks. Children were involved in choosing and placing the pictures. Children could return to the wall when the adults were not with them, and it could also be shared with parents when they came to take their children. Sometimes the pictures could be projected onto the walls and the children could 'play in the pictures.'

Sharing with parents

In early years much of the regular discussion with parents is around how the children have eaten or slept. This strategy of pedagogical documentation can support parents to be more interested in the pedagogical processes and it is an important tool to involve them in their children's learning.

So, in preparing the documentation the teachers ask themselves.
'What needs to be documented to give parents insight into and understand what their children experience and learn in preschool?'

The teachers in this setting decided to document the start of the visit to show parents how they trusted the children to hold hands and walk together to the site without using pushchairs.
In this case study we can see links among pedagogical processes, documentation, and children's learning.

We notice:

. The importance of planning and working collaboratively
. The use of previous documentation as a stimulus and introduction to a new project.
. The involvement of children in the process before, during and after the development of the project
. Recording the project and sharing with the children, colleagues, and parents.

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2.3 Methods for collecting and presenting learning evidence

Many educators will have learnt about documentation methods in their professional training and in ongoing continuous professional development (CPD). In addition, there are numerous texts covering this topic (Clark & Moss, 2005; Fawcett & Watson, 2016; Jackie Harding & Liz Meldon-Smith, 2000; PACEY, 2016)
Here are some commonly used observation methods in early childhood education:

Anecdotal records
Anecdotal records involve written descriptions of specific incidents or behaviours observed in the classroom. Educators record details such as the context, actions, language, and emotions exhibited by the child. These records capture significant or incidental moments and provide a snapshot of a child's development and interactions.

Running records
Running records involve detailed, real-time observations of a child's behaviour over a continuous period. Educators document what the child says, and does, and the context of the observation. Running records capture a comprehensive picture of a child's actions, allowing for analysis and interpretation of their behaviours and progress.

Checklists
Checklists are tools that list specific behaviours or skills, and educators check off the items observed or not observed. There is very little emphasis given to checklists in pedagogical documentation.

Event sampling
Event sampling involves observing and recording specific behaviours or events that occur within a set timeframe. Educators choose particular behaviours or events of interest and document each time they occur. Event sampling helps identify patterns, frequency, and duration of specific behaviours or interactions.

Time sampling
Time sampling involves dividing observation periods into specific intervals of time, and educators record the presence or absence of a particular behaviour within each interval. Time sampling provides insights into the frequency and duration of behaviours over time and helps identify patterns and trends.

Video or audio recording
Video or audio recording involves capturing children's interactions, conversations, and activities in the classroom. Recordings allow educators to review and analyse the footage, observing and reflecting on the dynamics, language use, social interactions, and learning experiences. This method provides rich and authentic documentation for further analysis and reflection.

Documenting children's free play can be difficult and some approaches are useful. If we understand that play is something that can arise spontaneously, is part of ordinary life and can take place anywhere, then such play does not necessarily take place in the areas designed for playing or those areas designated for a certain type of play (Lester, 2018). For example, water play in an outdoor area doesn't only take place when water is provided by the adults in special containers, but it takes place when it rains, in a naturally occurring puddle or as it drips from a leaky rain pipe

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The environment is important in children's play, how the children use the space is useful in planning what to include and how to arrange the space. For example, **Mapping** can be a useful technique in understanding how children use the space (Figure 3).

This strategy involves in the first stage drawing a rough map of their playing areas inside or outside. After the educator can choose three play places that are special/important for them and take photographs. It is important to involve children in the reflection about the photos and engage them. Stage two is to discuss the maps with colleagues and the children to develop a combined map of the area.

Figure 3 Map of the room

The child found a snail on the outside of the fence and called out to everyone to come and look.

"There is a periwinkle, can I take it home, my mum eats them".

I tried to explain it was a snail and we eat them like periwinkles

Making use of the map, we can start to document what children do and where they do it. If we start to think of children's play as 'ordinary magic and everyday' (Russell & Lester, 2017) we can be interested in the small everyday moments and record them. Using, for example, small sticky notes many everyday events can be simply recorded. They can be placed on the map where they took place and shared for reflection with colleagues, children, and parents (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Documentation of small events

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We are also interested in how children move around the space. We can create maps of the area and map how children do this. On a rough map of the area, follow a child for about 15-20 minutes and mark where they go and their encounters with things, objects, and people. On reflection we can visualise how children use the space; it can tell us a lot about their interests and their communication with others.

Some examples of individual maps (Fig. 5).

It is important to note that when conducting observations, ethical considerations and confidentiality of information should be maintained.

Additionally, a combination of observation methods can be used to gather a comprehensive understanding of a child's development and learning experiences.

Figure 5 Individual maps

A comment from an early years educator

I followed the child around as she stopped and engaged with everyone in the group.

At each encounter she stopped, asked what they were doing or just watched and then moved on to the next person or group of children.

She spent 25 minutes doing this never stopping to join in. She was always on the go.

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2.4 Methods of storing and using documentation in early years

Portfolios

Portfolios allow educators and parents to track a child's growth and development over time, providing a tangible record of their accomplishments and milestones. Portfolios are collections of samples of a child's work, including artwork, photographs, writing samples, and other documentation and learning records. They showcase the child's accomplishments, interests, and growth across various areas of learning.
Individual portfolios can serve as a means of communication and collaboration between educators and parents. They provide a window into a child's daily experiences and learning. Portfolios facilitate meaningful conversations and shared understanding between educators and parents, as they review and discuss the child's work, achievements, and areas for further support or extension.

Individual portfolios can be particularly useful during transitions, such as when a child moves to a new grade or to school. Portfolios serve as a comprehensive record of the child's previous experiences, strengths, and interests, helping educators in the new setting to gain insights into the child's learning history and support a smooth transition.

There are many ways in which the portfolios can be shared with children and parents, such as:

. Having the portfolios on display so the children can view them at any time and be part of the process of choosing what to include.

. Using scrap books and share with family at the end of the year.

. Collecting photos into books at the end of the year, sample page shown in figure 6.

. Photo books can also be used as a record of the group during the year.

. With the increase in the availability of digital devices, this opens the possibility of multimodal documentation, photos, and video. It is effective when children are engaged in play which is difficult to record using writing or photos (Cowan, 2014; Walters, 2006).

Although there are many digital methods of storing and sharing documentation available, these are usually used for marketing methods and not documentation.

Figure 6 Example of a photo album

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2.5 Displays of documentation

The majority of early years services have displays of children's work in their settings. These displays are often homogenous groupings of children's art and craft work on classrooms or corridor walls. Children have had little or no involvement in choosing what is displayed. The display is far removed from children's artistic creativity. They may be primarily based on holidays, such as Christmas or Eid[1] , or seasons (Eckhoff, 2019). This approach to displaying children's work and the activity of the preschool has little to do with pedagogical documentation.

In the case study from Swedish preschools, we can see an example of how documentation can be used to support children's learning. When pedagogical documentation of children's free play is displayed regularly on wall panels or wall newspaper, children engage with it supporting them to continue in the play activities for several days and to import new ideas into their play. It has the added benefit of encouraging communication about the play among the children and between children and their parents (Matsumoto, Nishiu, Taniguchi, Kataoka, & Matsui, 2021).

2.6 Self-reflection suggestions

· What pedagogical approach do you use in your setting?

. What documentation do you use?

. Are they compatible?

. How do you change your practice to meet the needs of individual children?

. How do you or can you involve children in pedagogical documentation?

. Draw a map of your setting. What places are the most important to you and why?

[1] *Eid It is an Islamic religious festival that takes place at the end of Ramadan*

2.7 Practical tools for everyday activities

Practical tools for everyday activities

Learning records examples below
AistearSíolta Practice Guide
(Resources for Sharing - Aistear Siolta)

Further reading

Lester, S. (2019). Everyday playfulness: A new approach to children's play and adult responses to it. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2005). Spaces to play: More listening to young children using the Mosaic approach. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Websites

Reggio Emilia Long-Term Project Documentation Video

Documentation: A Central Aspect of the Reggio Emilia Philosophy

Provocations: A Central Aspect of the Reggio Emilia Philosophy

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3. Participatory pedagogies in early childhood education

3. Participatory pedagogies in childhood education

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Several pedagogical approaches in early childhood embrace a participatory approach. These typically engage the child, together with the adult, in developing the curriculum, establishing the environment, and adopting a child-centred philosophy. These approaches, outlined in the following sections, enable the construction of a child-friendly school, promoting communication and dialogue with families and the community and respecting the rights of children to become active agents in their learning process.

These are Evidence-Based practices.

. Equity for all children
. High-quality education
. Teachers as leaders
. Strength in community

3.1 HighScope Approach

The HighScope approach emerged from a planned intervention in the USA in 1962, the Perry Preschool Project in Michigan, to analyse how best to support children in disadvantaged communities who had a history of failing school. HighScope (the name comes from the original project aims of 'High Aspirations/Broad Scope) has held consistent values since its inception.

The effectiveness of the HighScope approach has been validated through much research since its beginnings in Michigan. Initially, the children's attainments seemed to level out around the age of eight. However, as children grew to adulthood and later years, the evidence consistently showed that their life outcomes on various criteria were markedly better than their peers who had not experienced HighScope. The conducted longitudinal studies assessed the children at different ages up to 40 years old and found that the participants who experienced the preschool programme:

. Had fewer teenage pregnancies;
. Were more likely to have graduated from high school;
. Were more likely to hold a job and have higher earnings;

. Committed fewer crimes;
. Owned their own home and car.
(Manning and Patterson 2006)

Further external studies confirmed these findings and showed the cost-effectiveness of investment in quality early years education such as HighScope. For example, the Heckman Equation (Heckman, 2012) states that "the analysis of the Perry Preschool programme shows a 7% to 10% return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and criminal justice expenditures" (p.1).

A key element of the HighScope approach is its participatory nature, both with children and their parents and families. Pedagogical documentation is supported through the Child Observation Record, most recently updated in 2015. In addition, quality is continually monitored through the Preschool Program Quality Assessment tool (the PQA-R), this is an evaluation tool that assesses the basic quality of any preschool program and is 'compatible with most curricula'.

HighScope in practice utilises the '*Plan-Do-Review*' process with the children. This is an important sequence consisting of three steps which children engage with as they begin each day.

Plan
During the planning session, children and teachers come together to discuss and make plans for the children's choice of activities. They may decide to work in something initiated formerly or opt to play and work in a particular area or activity. This can be done from a very early age utilizing creative strategies developed by the educators. The children learn to develop their thinking, to recognise that their choice may not be immediately possible and to consider alternatives. They may set goals for themselves and develop strategies to accomplish their choices.

Do
During the 'Do' phase, children conduct their planned activities. They can explore, interact with others, and may be supported by the teacher. In some cases, children may change their minds or decide to move to another activity where available.

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3.2 Reggio Emilia Approach

Review
During the Review session, children come together with the teacher to reflect on what they experienced, their choices, and what they learned. This helps them to develop critical thinking, self-reflection, and problem-solving skills.

HighScope focuses on children's key developmental experiences, such as social-emotional, cognitive, physical and language development. For example, social-emotional development is fostered by supporting the children to engage in conflict resolution through a typical mediation method. All of these are integrated into the daily routine by well-trained and supported teachers and afford a holistic approach to children's learning.

HighScope is also shaped by the premise that children learn best by real experiences, such as natural materials, and real-life tools and equipment.

Through its participatory and child-centred approach, HighScope empowers children to take an active role in their decision-making and learning, recognising their unique abilities, interests, and developmental needs. Teachers act as facilitators, they create a stimulating and supportive environment which facilitates children's curiosity, problem-solving, and creativity abilities.

Reggio Emilia is an area in the Bologna region of Italy, where, after the Second World War, Loris Malaguzzi and several parents in the community came up with a vision for a new child-centred approach to early childhood education.
What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing, as a consequence of their activities and resources. (Malaguzzi, 1987).
They developed their approach based on several principles:

a) Image of the child
The approach sees children as competent learners who are active participants in their education. They are viewed as having rights, ideas, and opinions that should be respected and valued.

b) Emergent curriculum
The curriculum in the Reggio Emilia Approach emerges from the interests, questions, and experiences of the children. Teachers observe and document children's activities, interactions, and thoughts to plan and guide the learning process. The curriculum is flexible and responsive to the children's needs and interests.

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c) The role of the environment

The physical environment is considered the "third teacher" in the Reggio Emilia Approach. Classrooms are carefully designed to be inviting, engaging, and filled with natural light and materials. They are organised into different learning areas that encourage exploration, creativity, and collaboration.

d) Collaborative learning

Collaboration and social interaction are emphasised in the Reggio Emilia Approach. Children are encouraged to work together on projects, solve problems collectively, and learn from one another. Teachers also collaborate with children, parents, and the community to create a supportive learning environment.

e) Documentation

Documentation plays a crucial role in the Reggio Emilia Approach. Teachers carefully observe and document children's learning processes, capturing their thoughts, ideas, and progress through photographs, videos, recordings, and written notes. This documentation is used for reflection, as-sessment, and to communicate with parents about their child's learning process.

f) Teacher's role

In the Reggio Emilia Approach, teachers are seen as co-learners and facilitators of children's learning. They observe and listen to children, ask open-ended questions, and provide materials and provocations that stimulate exploration and problem-solving. Teachers support children's interests, encourage critical thinking, and guide them in their inquiries.

Throughout the Reggio Emilia approach, children are listened to, heard, consulted, and involved in their learning. The 'Atelier', and the classroom, reflect the children's interests and needs, and the approach of the teachers in their role as facilitators, co-learners, and co-constructors. This is crucial to this participatory approach. Children are seen as competent.
Malaguzzi believed that 'social learning preceded cognitive development', and that the environment played a crucial role in making experiences meaningful. The classroom environment can help shape a child's identity as a powerful player in his or her own life and the lives of others.

To foster such an environment, teachers must go deeper than what is merely seen at eye level and develop a deep understanding of the underlying principles and children's thinking, questions, and curiosities (Biermeier, 2015).
The children's rights, the respect for their capabilities and the power of the learning environment encourage children to be active participants in their learning, support the meaningful experiences on offer and promote holistic development stemming from active participation.

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3.3 Montessori approach

Dr Maria Montessori developed her teaching methods in Italy in the early 1900s whilst working with cognitively impaired children, noting that their learning improved when they were able to work in the right environment, right practice and with the right materials. She honed her methodology, developed specially designed materials, and established her first Casa dei Bambini in Rome in 1907, which was open to all children.

The Montessori approach emphasises the development of the whole child in different dimensions — physical, social, emotional, and cognitive — through a prepared environment and specially designed materials, many of which are self-limiting and have only one correct way to operate. There is an emphasis on children's independence and the development of real-world skills, for example, opportunities are provided for children to use real cleaning materials in activities such as polishing a mirror or washing up.

The key principles of the Montessori approach are:

a) Prepared environment
The classroom is carefully designed and organised to facilitate independent learning. It includes child-sized furniture, materials displayed on low shelves, and clearly defined areas for different activities.

b) Mixed age groups
Montessori classrooms typically have mixed-age groups spanning three years. This setup allows younger children to learn from older ones and older children to reinforce their knowledge by supporting younger peers.

c) Self-directed activity
Children are encouraged to choose their activities from a range of options, allowing them to follow their interests and work at their own pace. Teachers act as guides, providing individualised support when needed.

d) Hands-on learning
Montessori materials are designed to be manipulative and sensorial, allowing children to learn through direct experience. These materials are self-correcting, providing immediate feedback and encouraging independent problem-solving.

e) Respect for individual development
The Montessori approach recognises that children have different learning styles and abilities. It values individual progress over standardised comparisons and promotes respect for each child's unique development.

f) Focus on independence and life skills
Montessori education fosters independence, self-discipline, and practical life skills. Children learn to care for themselves and their environment, develop fine motor skills, and engage in activities like cooking and cleaning.

g) Freedom with limits
While children have the freedom to choose their activities, some clear limits and boundaries promote respect, responsibility, and consideration for others. These boundaries help children develop self-control and a sense of community.

h) Emphasis on natural learning
Montessori education recognises that children have a natural inclination to learn and explore their innate curiosity. It encourages exploration, discovery, and creativity in a supportive and nurturing environment.

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In the Montessori approach, teachers can observe and see when a child is at a sensitive period in their learning when they are open to focusing deeply on a particular skill or activity, which the teacher can support, extending the opportunities for the child to engage in their interest for as long as they need.

The special equipment in the Montessori space is designed to encourage children to learn initially by engaging various opportunities to explore, including tactile and sensory, for example, sandpaper numbers allow the child to explore the shape of the number through touch. Mathematical theories can be explored through special wooden blocks such as the binominal theorem, where the blocks are designed to fit into a special box in one correct way only.

Observation and documentation are crucial for the teacher in supporting the child. By observing the children, we can provide appropriate activities and create an environment that will support the development of the skill on which they are currently focused. Educating children in the Montessori philosophy means observing them and noticing what they are interested in so that suitable scaffolding and preparation of the environment will support the child's needs.

In particular, the Montessori approach suggests there are certain periods – called sensitive periods – when the child is very interested in one kind of activity. It can be climbing, transporting things, or focusing on small details or language and teachers are trained to respond appropriately. Teachers are trained to understand the different stages of children's learning. This supports their responses to the children and the organisation of the environment.

Central to Montessori's method of education is the dynamic triad: children, teacher, and environment. One of the teacher's roles is to guide the child through what Montessori termed the 'prepared environment, i.e., a classroom and a way of learning that is designed to support the child's intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development through active exploration, choice, and independent learning (Marshall, 2017).

Montessori education responds to the needs and developmental stages of children, it respects their role as independent active learners.

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Introduction
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3.2 Reggio Emilia Approach
3.3 Montessori Approach
3.4 Escola Moderna Portuguesa Movement Approach (MEM)
3.5 Self-reflection suggestions
3.6 Practical tools for everyday activities

3.4 Escola Moderna Portuguesa Movement Approach (MEM)

The Escola Moderna Portuguesa Movement emerged in Portugal due to teachers' research activity and practice led by Professor Sérgio Niza and Professor Rosalina Gomes de Almeida who, in 1965, formed a working group for pedagogical promotion that encouraged educational practices. This group was led by Professor Rui Grácio, in a dictatorship sociocultural and political context. This pedagogical model was firstly based on Freinet's (1975) and Dewey's (2002) theories. After the Portuguese democracy was implemented, other pedagogical perspectives inspired the MEM approach namely Vygotsky's (1991) and Bruner's (2000) social constructivism. One of the most important aspects of this approach is to base the learning development on a social-centred interaction, rooted in the sociocultural heritage, and supported by peers and adults (Niza, 2007).

It defends the importance of placing the children at the centre of the learning process, as stated by Folque and Bettencourt (2018) "the management of learning processes is done in cooperation between participants and not, as traditionally done in school, commanded by educators or teachers" (p.114). This is an active and differentiated methodology, which fosters children's democratic participation in coopera-

tive living in the classroom, as well as in the various contexts in which they are placed starting from the needs and interests of the child in a dialogical and negotiated process.

MEM is also characterised by using pedagogical means as a vehicle; school activity as a social and educational contract; work processes as social processes of culture construction sharing of information; school practices with social meaning, and students as actors in the social environment. It is an approach based on democratic principles, which considers the child as a responsible being and builder of her thinking and in which, according to Folque (2012)

"learning is considered an emancipation process that provides the tools for autonomous and responsible citizens to become actively involved and act in solidarity in the world, as well as to fulfil themselves personally and socially" (p.52).

Folque (2014) mentions that in MEM the classroom is organised into fixed working areas and the daily routine is organised in a council (welcome and planning, project time and communications, curricular group work, animation, and evaluation in the council).

As the council is the main element of MEM, it takes place everyday morning, at the welcome moment, to plan the day and every Friday afternoon to reflect on the work developed during the week, consisting of an evaluation of the events and possible improvements. The work with the children is done through projects in which the whole group participates in their organisation, planning, development, conclusion, dissemination, and evaluation. It is here that we find democracy in the group experience when children are motivated to discuss and share

their doubts and fears to the group, live their achievements and share what they have learnt. This educational approach advocates that children as well as professionals should create material, affective, and social situations and establish an environment that allows them to share knowledge, processes, and moral and aesthetic values of the historical and cultural evolution of humanity. In this curricular approach, the space in the activity rooms is divided into six basic areas, also called workshops or ateliers, and a central area that allows collective work.
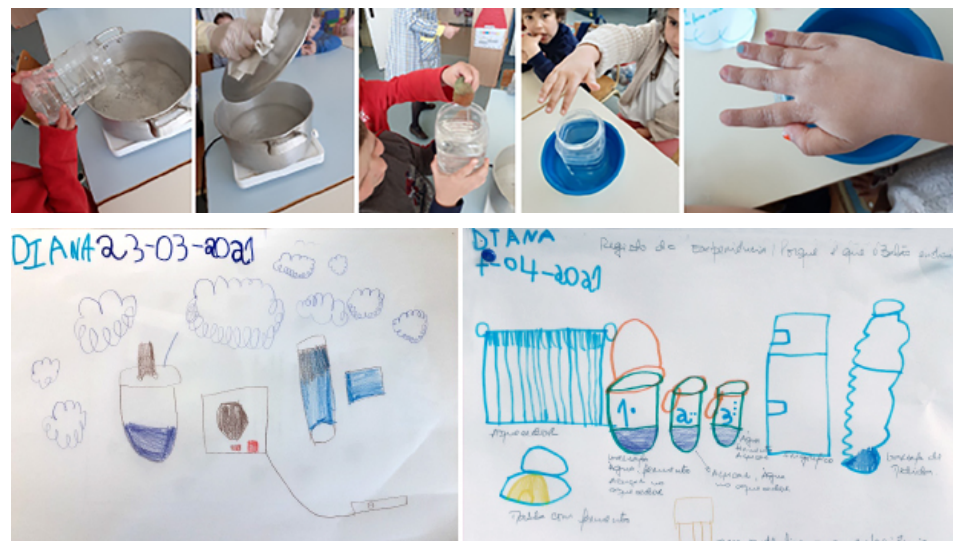
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The basic areas are the library, the writing, plastics and carpentry workshops, the science laboratory, the toy area, which includes make-believe and traditional games, the kitchen, which emphasises cultural activities and food education, and finally, the multipurpose area to promote work or meetings in large groups.

The in-depth theoretical and practical study of children's education and the school through reading, debates and education has generated the auxiliary tools production for the pedagogical work developed for and one of the references for that was the work of Célestin Freinet (Folque, 2008). Today, MEM continues its journey with a centrality in the cooperative self-development of teachers and educators who work in the different levels of education from pre-school to higher education.

The curriculum is an ideal representation of the theoretical, administrative, political principles, and pedagogical components of a project aimed at achieving a particular educational outcome.

Any pedagogical approach should reflect on 'good practice'; in this sense, it is important to reaffirm that educators should give visibility to their pedagogical practice by adopting a pedagogical perspective which includes three main levels:
the theoretical, the context and the action in the context.
The MEM's perspective on evaluation and assessment integrates the following elements:

a) Holistic assessment
MEM emphasises a more holistic approach to assessment, which means evaluating children based on a wide range of skills and abilities rather than merely focusing on academic achievement or test scores. This approach aims to recognise and value individual talents, creativity, and personal development.

b) Project-based learning
The movement promotes project-based learning, in which children engage in real situations that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Assessment in such a context is often centred around the quality of children's projects, their ability to apply knowledge, and the depth of their understanding.

c) Formative assessment
MEM advocates for formative assessment practices, where continuous feedback and ongoing assessments are used to monitor children and group actions. The emphasis is on using assessment as a tool for learning and growth, rather than solely for grading and judgment.

d) Children-centred approach
The movement prioritises the needs and interests of children, focusing on their learning processes and encouraging active participation in the learning experience. Assessments were designed to align with students' learning goals and promote intrinsic motivation.

e) Educator as facilitator
In the MEM approach, educators play the role of facilitators rather than traditional lecturers. They guide students through their learning journey, provide support, and encourage critical thinking and creativity.

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3.5 Self-reflection suggestions

These are some questions for you to reflect:

a) While the HighScope approach has shown positive long-term outcomes, how can we ensure that its benefits are applicable and effective in different cultural and socio-economic contexts?

b) In the Reggio Emilia approach, where the curriculum emerges from children's interests and experiences, how do we strike a balance between child-led learning and ensuring coverage of essential knowledge and skills?

c) The Montessori approach emphasises independence and real-world skills, but how can we ensure that children also develop a broader understanding of global issues and the interconnectedness of the world?

d) Participatory approaches like MEM and Reggio Emilia require significant teacher education and ongoing support. How can we ensure that educators are well-equipped to implement these approaches effectively?

e) The HighScope approach emphasises evidence-based practice and positive outcomes, but are there any potential downsides or limitations to this model that should be considered?

f) In participatory approaches like MEM, how do we address potential challenges related to classroom management and the maintenance of order while still promoting children's autonomy and decision-making?

g) The Reggio Emilia Approach places a strong emphasis on the environment as the "third teacher." How do we ensure that the physical space and materials are inclusive and reflect the diversity of children's backgrounds and cultures?

h) While the HighScope approach has demonstrated cost-effectiveness through research, how can we ensure that sufficient funding and resources are available to implement this model on a larger scale without compromising its quality and effectiveness?

3.6 Practical tools for everyday activities

Extend your knowledge

Mesquita, C. (2022). O impacto da Educação de Infância no desenvolvimento e aprendizagem das crianças: revisão da literatura. RELAdEI-Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Infantil, 11(1), 65-81. Disponivel em http://www.reladei.net.

Videos

What Is the Reggio Emilia Approach to Education?

Introduction to Large-Group Time

Work Time

Getting to Know HighScope's Infant-Toddler Curriculum

Links

https://highscope.org

https://www.early-years.org/highscope

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4. Holistic approach in early years

4. Holistic approach in early years

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The holistic approach movement emerges as a response to one-sided, mechanistic, and fragmented pedagogies that prioritise the cognitive and rational dimension, adopting a worldview that aims to transform the foundations of education. In this sense, a holistic perspective on education cannot be defined as a specific method or technique. Instead, it should be understood as a paradigm, a set of principles and assumptions that can be utilised in various ways (Miller, 1992).
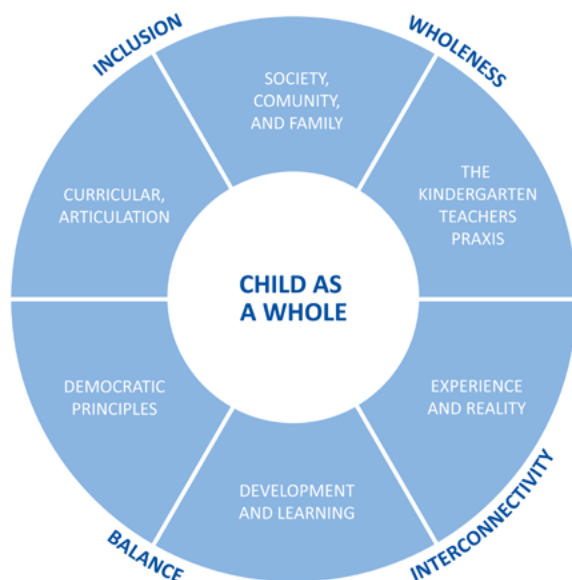Figure7 summarizes the concept of holistic pedagogy.

Figure 7 Summary of the holistic approach

4.1 Principles of holistic pedagogy: wholeness, interconnectedness, inclusion, and balance

Holistic approach has its roots in humanistic and progressive education. It focuses on wholeness and avoids excluding any significant aspect of human experience. The focus of this approach is the interconnectedness between experience and reality. It is claimed that all realities in the universe are interconnected. Everything that exists is articulated within a context of interconnection and meaning, and a change or event will affect each of the related elements. This means that the whole is composed of relational patterns that are not contained within the parts, and therefore, a phenomenon cannot be understood in isolation (Miller, 2000, 2007). Thus, we can emphasize that this perspective contradicts fragmented views that marginalise various forms of children's expression and reductionist views of knowledge and learning, instead of affirming a concept of praxis as practical intentionality for change and an ethical commitment to action (Elliott, 2010).

From this perspective, it is also characterised by being inclusive in two dimensions. In the first dimension, holistic education respects cultural diversity, celebrating the differences among children and accepting them as starting points for action that values everyone. In the second dimension, it is inclusive because it considers strategies that respond to diversity and support all children in differentiated ways in their efforts to being and becoming (Miller, 2000).

It also includes the idea of balance among the distinct aspects that characterise individuals: intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and aesthetic, as well as the relationships between people, the individual, the social, and the environmental context.

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4.2. The child as a whole and the professionals' actions

Holistic approaches focus on the child, encompassing their body, mind, emotions, creativity, history, and social identity, acknowledging their overall development (Silva, Marque, Mata, & Rosa, 2016). It is emphasised that a child's learning process takes place across interconnected cognitive, social, cultural, physical, and emotional dimensions, highlighting the need to value all forms of expression.

The holistic view also emphasises that the child should be understood as one of the actors within society who actively participates in it.

From this understanding, the nature of professional practices (particularly aspects related to building positive interactions and care), curriculum decisions, and matters concerning children's learning are also holistic. This pedagogical line emphasises what is common to all children as human beings, establishing general principles for their education and based on these principles, determines procedures and practices that enable understanding and acting upon their individual needs (Ponte & Ax, 2010). In this approach pedagogy goes beyond methodological concerns and asserts itself as a body of theoretical, practical, and ethical knowledge that enables professionals to make informed decisions promptly, balancing individual well-being and the demands of contemporary society (Oslon, 2003). It considers children's rights and their participatory competence (Mason, 2005), using listening, observation, and negotiation as processes to ensure participation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Oliveira-Formosinho, 2007a; Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008). It is a pedagogy that responds to the complexity of society and communities, knowledge, children, and their families, through an interactive process of dialogue and confrontation between beliefs and knowledge, between knowledge and practices, between practices and beliefs, and between these interacting poles and the surrounding contexts (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2007b, p.15).

4.3 The interconnectivity between development, learning, and the curriculum

It is understood that in early childhood education the curriculum interconnects the child's development and learning, considering their individuality, interests, needs, agency, and desire to explore the world. Early childhood education (ECE) is a critical period of learning and development for young children typically ranging from birth to around eight years old. The curriculum in early childhood education is often viewed as more than just a program; it is a comprehensive framework that encompasses a broad spectrum of experiences, strategies, and methodologies designed to promote holistic development in young learners.

Therefore, the contexts must create environments that stimulate children to invest in constructing knowledge and allow them to explore reality through all their senses, representing it through multiple forms of expression. The child's engagement facilitated by an enabling environment, ensures the intentionality and substance of their learning (Bruner, 2000). Regarding this, the curriculum should recognise the importance of play-based learning and hands-on exploration, allowing children to learn through activities and experiences. It values spontaneous learning, imaginative play, and social interactions, elements of the culture.

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The management of the curriculum in early childhood education emphasises the multidimensionality of educators' actions. They should be based on conceptual principles to outline the content to be learned, the processes through which children learn, the practices they engage in to achieve such purposes, as well as the intentional organization of the learning environment.

Several approaches that embrace a holistic vision (Hohman & Weikart, 2011; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2008; Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008; Folque, 2008; Niza, 2007) emphasize that learning should take place through an integrative perspective that values play and highlights the development of knowledge on life and for life, described as follows:

I. Physical and motor development
through progressive awareness and mastery of their body, the pleasure of own movement, space, others, and objects, as well as an understanding of healthy eating and the importance of physical activity.

II. Language development
encompassing listening and comprehension, the development of oral language and communication, vocabulary expansion, and the emergence of written language through real and functional situations associated with the child's everyday life, such as reading and writing.

III. Cognitive development
fostering various concepts including numbers and operations related to comparison, classification, spatial and quantitative conservation, one-to-one correspondence, oral and object counting, progressive construction of spatial sense, data organization, sequential organization, critical thinking, observation and verification, reasoning and problem-solving, as well as knowledge about the physical, social, and natural world.

IV. Personal, social, and emotional development
focusing on the construction of self-awareness, self-control, initiative, curiosity, engagement, persistence, cooperation, sensitivity, social relationships, positive interactions with peers, prosocial behaviour, expression and acceptance of feelings, and respect for the feelings of others.

V. Sensory development
through visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic experiences that contribute to the development of the five senses.

VI. Creativity and aesthetic sense development
exploring different forms of art, fostering dispositions, expressions, and appreciations in the domains of dance, theatre, music, and visual arts.

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Inspired by the aforementioned approaches, we consider that these areas of development are based on a set of principles that educators in early childhood education should take into account in their practice:

(i) understanding play as the foundation of learning;

(ii) valuing experience as the process through which learning occurs;

(iii) including different forms of expression (visual arts, dance, movement, drama, music);

(iv) considering the rhythms, interests, and needs of children;

(v) integrating formal and informal interactions and learning;

(vi) recognizing the characteristics of children's thinking;

(vii) valuing their competence in ways of thinking and acting;

(viii) using different cultural tools as means of learning;

(ix) associating education with care;

(x) integrating knowledge (literacy, numeracy, and understanding of the world) into everyday experiences;

(xi) considering children's participation by negotiating, dialoguing, reflecting, and decolonizing; (xii) connecting knowledge;

(xiii) starting from observation and active listening for planning; and (xiv) implementing continuous, formative, and authentic assessment that integrates processes and achievements.

From this conceptual perspective, the child learns through their experiences with objects, other people, and reality, where they can make mistakes and try again, recreate, imitate, and identify themselves. Therefore, the educator should promote an environment where the child feels encouraged and challenged to choose, explore, and experiment, feels happy, and safe, and is provided with diverse opportunities to learn; an environment where their voice is heard, their ideas are considered and valued, and they feel a sense of belonging to a group that supports one another and collectively constructs knowledge. As emphasized by Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2011), such environments promote the construction of interactive and continuous learning, providing children with both the right to participate and the right to be sensitively, supported, stimulated and empowered by the educator.

In this sense, a holistic approach considers everyone's participation as a right, calling for the internationalization of a pedagogical praxis that values the child's agency as well as the adults who interact with them. Competent educators are those who understand children's competence because they see children as individuals, who have rights that should be respected, and as someone who creates experiential, interactive, and collaborative learning environments, involving parents, families, and the community in the development of a democratic, inclusive, and respecting diversity (Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008).

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4.4. The articulation of knowledge and integrative action

Another reflection on the holistic perspective focuses on the integration of knowledge. As an example of an integrated approach to content, we mention project-based learning, present in the Escola Moderna Movement or the Reggio Emilia approach. In both approaches, the idea of the project involves the integration of various content areas in an experiential experience situated in the deep exploration of an idea, interest, or subject. This perspective helps children relate academic learning to ideas about the real world.

This kind of project helps children establish connections between different concepts and develop a global understanding of the phenomena under study. Therefore, the curriculum is flexible and responsive to the children's needs, considering each one in their individuality.

The way projects are developed values everyone's integration and recognizes social and cultural diversity. It constitutes a strategy that encourages and supports all forms of development mentioned earlier, stimulating the child's expression through different languages. It is also important to note that the project as a pedagogical methodology helps children to organise their ideas, and functions as an aggregator of knowledge, experiences, and competencies, as well as a privileged means of investigating the natural and social reality.

Finally, we emphasize that this methodology allows the child to establish connections with previous learning, by motivating them to seek more information about the topics under study.

4.5. The role of the educator in promoting holistic development

The role of the educator in promoting holistic development in early childhood education is crucial and multifaceted. Educators play a significant role in creating an environment that supports children's overall growth and well-being, considering their physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and creative aspects. By adopting a holistic approach, educators can effectively nurture and support children's development in every domain. Here are some key ways in which educators contribute to promoting holistic development:

Creating a nurturing environment
Educators establish a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where children feel valued, respected, and encouraged to explore, learn, and express themselves. They promote positive relationships, provide emotional support, and foster a sense of belonging, enabling children to develop socially and emotionally.

Individualised and responsive Approach
Educators recognize that each child is unique and has their own strengths, interests, and learning styles. They observe and assess children's development and tailor their teaching strategies to meet individual needs. By recognizing and responding to each child's abilities and preferences, educators ensure that children receive personalized and meaningful learning experiences.

Facilitating play and exploration
Play is an essential component of the holistic development. Educators create opportunities for children to engage in open-ended play, allowing them to explore, experiment, and make sense of the world around them. Through play, children develop physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills while fostering their creativity and imagination.

Integrated curriculum
Educators design and implement a curriculum that integrates various development domains. They plan activities and experiences that incorporate language and literacy, mathematics, science, arts, and the physical development. By offering a balanced and comprehensive curriculum, educators support children in acquiring a wide range of skills and knowledge.

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Promoting social and emotional Development

Educators help children develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. They teach empathy, conflict resolution, and cooperation, fostering positive relationships and a sense of community. Through modelling and guidance, educators support children in managing their emotions, expressing themselves effectively, and developing positive self-esteem.

Encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving

Educators stimulate children's cognitive development by encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry. They provide opportunities for children to explore, investigate, and question, promoting curiosity, logical reasoning, and creativity. By engaging in open-ended discussions and challenging activities, educators stimulate children's cognitive growth and intellectual development.

Collaboration with families and communities

Educators recognise the importance of involving families and communities in promoting holistic development. They establish partnerships with parents and caregivers, seeking their insights and involvement in children's learning experiences. By collaborating with families and drawing on community resources, educators enhance the richness and diversity of the children's educational journey.

Continuous professional development

Educators engage in ongoing professional development to stay updated with the latest research, theories, and practices related to the holistic development. They participate in workshops, conferences, and training sessions to enhance their knowledge and skills. By continuously improving their practices, educators can better support children's holistic development.

Pedagogical documentation is a powerful tool that supports the implementation of a holistic approach in the early childhood education. It involves the systematic and intentional collection, analysis, and interpretation of evidence of children's learning and development.

By documenting children's experiences, educators gain insights into their strengths, interests, and needs.

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4.6 Self-reflection suggestions

Implementing the holistic approach

How can educators practically implement the holistic pedagogy in their daily teaching practices? What strategies can be employed to ensure that all aspects of a child's development (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, etc.) are effectively addressed in the learning environment?

Balancing individualised and inclusive approaches

How can educators strike a balance between providing individualized support to each child's unique needs and fostering an inclusive environment that celebrates cultural diversity and values everyone's contributions? How can holistic pedagogy be adapted to suit different cultural contexts and traditions, ensuring that it respects and celebrates the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the children and families involved?

Integrating play and learning

How can educators effectively integrate play-based learning approaches to promote holistic development? What challenges might educators face when attempting to integrate various aspects of development into a cohesive curriculum? How can they overcome potential obstacles to ensure a well-rounded educational experience for each child?

Collaborating with families and communities

How can educators actively involve families and communities in supporting holistic development, and how can they effectively communicate and collaborate with parents and caregivers to create a quality learning environment for the child?

4.7 Practical tools for everyday activities

Extend your knowledge

Further Reading

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Keung, C.P.C., Cheung, A.C.K. Towards Holistic Supporting of Play-Based Learning Implementation in Kindergartens: A Mixed Method Study. Early Childhood Educ J 47, 627–640 (2019) https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00956-2

Links

Early Years Education: Holistic Development

Waldorf Education: What is holistic learning?

O Começo da Vida Filosofia de Reggio Emilia

Movimento da Escola Moderna

Movimento da Escola Moderna 2

Movimento da Escola Moderna 3

Websites

https://www.foundationeducation.edu.au/articles/supporting-the-holistic-development-of-children

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5. Ethical principles in pedagogical documentation

5. Ethical principles in pedagogical documentation

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This section delves into essential aspects of ethical considerations in pedagogical documentation and the learning process, focusing on the guarantee of children's rights, their agency, and active participation. It also highlights the significance of respecting children during data collection activities. By exploring these interconnected themes, we aim to underscore the importance of upholding ethical standards and ensuring a child-centric approach in educational practices.

5.1. The guarantee of children's rights during the learning process

The rights of the child, expressed in different legal instruments, reflect the special nature of children, considering their unique condition, and aim to promote their well-being and healthy development. In recent years, growing reflection on the principles and research processes involving children, accompanied by a shift in the perception of children as social actors has taken place (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2005; Christensen & James, 2005; Bell, 2008a; Morrow, 2012).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets forth a set of obligations for States (and their actors) and has proven to be a useful and important framework for guiding ethical research with children (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). It is commonly referenced in studies that adopt a child-rights-based approach to research methods (Beazley et al., 2009; Bessell, 2015; Graham et al., 2013). Acknowledging this approach implies a constant reflection on ethical issues, ensuring coherent responses to emerging challenges. It becomes a moral imperative to guide pedagogical and investigative practices according to ethical principles while ensuring the fulfilment of all their rights.

Thus, the need arises to create environments of interaction and communication among different social actors that interact with children, to foster critical thinking, reflective dialogues, and decision-making guided by ethical principles. These actions aim to promote reflections on the theoretical and methodological foundations underlying pedagogical documentation. Emphasizing the need for a reflective approach to ethics promotes the development of dynamic and respectful relationships among all involved parties (Mesquita, 2020).

Early childhood educators, when documenting, become educators-researchers of and with children. This implies that research with children should be grounded in a reflective dimension. Particular attention should be given to the multiple relationships that occur throughout the process, raising ethical questions, especially regarding protection and participation. By involving the child in the practical research process and considering them as co-producers of knowledge, respect is shown not only to them as subjects of practice but also for their ideas and capabilities. One piece of evidence that demonstrates and guarantees children's rights is the alignment between the quality of practices (that need to be researched) interests and the daily lives of children throughout the entire process. By acting this way, not only do the educators include the children as participants but they also acknowledge them as individuals affected by the research. This empowers children to initiate and continue the research process understanding their rights. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that children have worldviews, which may differ from that of adults, and to allow them to decide, express their availability, or share their perspectives on the reality they observe (Mesquita, 2020).

Ethical principles in pedagogical documentation should be understood by all stakeholders and approached from a holistic evaluation perspective. An overview of these principles is based on the adaptation of ethical principles presented by Oliveira-Formosinho et al. (2019).

Ethical principles to consider in pedagogical documentation and holistic assessment by educators:

a) Follow the principle of greater good with all the stakeholders.
b) Actively and democratically involve children and families in the processes.
c) Respect and consider the child's holistic learning while acknowledging their interaction with the professionals' learning.

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d) Consider the contexts, processes, and outcomes.
e) Support the individual developmental process of each child while considering the group.

The educators must consider and carefully think out all the procedures inherent to research (evidence production, data analysis, discussion, and dissemination). Ethical care and reflection are not determined by the nature of the knowledge produced, but, primarily, by the educator's sensitivity during data collection procedures and their subsequent implications (Berman et al., 2016). Children can speak with authority about their experiences and emotions. However, when the subject is beyond their experiences, their contribution to the research may be more superficial. Therefore, it is essential that, even while acknowledging the immaturity of children, researchers avoid infantilising their discourse and refrain from constantly using simplistic language that only elicits shallow responses (Alderson, 2005).

When educators take on the role of researchers, they should initially engage in reflection with different stakeholders to gather useful information about the best ways to ensure that children's rights are observed in all stages of the investigation. Another important point is establishing a negotiation process with the children, clearly defining what they are and aren't willing to do (Mesquita, 2020).

Among its many objectives, research with children has the potential to inform policies and practices, contributing to the safeguarding of their rights. However, despite the existence of ethical guidelines for education research, there are cases in which these references lack definition, and ethical considerations, specifically the ones related to research with children are rare (Bell, 2008b; Mishna et al., 2004). To address this need, recent projects have been developed to create ethical references for researchers and educator-researchers studying practices involving children. One such project is International Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), which was created to support various social actors (education professionals or families) who interact with children. ERIC serves as a valuable resource for understanding what it means to plan and conduct ethical research involving children and young people in various geographical, social, cultural, and methodological contexts. By following ERIC guidelines, educators can ensure that their documentation practices are ethical and respect the rights and privacy of children.

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5.2. Children's participation and agency

The CRC has made the right to children's agency and participation visible and legitimate (Articles 12 and 13). This brings implications for those who work and research with children. , They have to ensure that children can freely express their opinions, particularly in the research process. Table 1 examines and interprets four articles enshrined in the CRC, which emphasize points related to the agency and participation of children:

ARTICLE	Highlighted points
Article 3 (Point 3)	States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.
Article 12 (Point 1)	- the child who can form his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting him/her. - the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
Article 13 (Point 1)	The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
Article 36	States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Table 1 - Agency and Child Participation in CRC

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When recognizing the agency and involvement of children in matters of their interest, it is also essential to ensure the right to protection and provision, guaranteeing that, in their role as active participants, the children are safeguarded. In this sense, when commencing an investigation, it is necessary to consider its impact on the participants, whether children or adults and their specific contribution. When combining the rights, several factors should be considered (Figure 8):

Children, when participating in the documenting process, must also be protected from potential harm that may arise from it

(Beazley et al., 2009).

Educators bear the responsibility of using methods that facilitate the expression of children's opinions, experiences, and viewpoints

(Beazley et al., 2009).

Children's competence, dependence, and/or vulnerability should not be the sole determining factors for their participation in the documentation but should instead inform how that participation takes place

(Graham et al., 2013).

Figure 8 - Factors to consider ensuring ethical principles

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Early childhood educators must balance the need to document children's learning with the necessity to protect their privacy and dignity while upholding their right to participation. To ensure this right in matters that affect them, children need to be involved in research, as recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Moreover, having internationally agreed ethical guidelines is crucial, that can be applied in different contexts, considering the potential impact that research outcomes may have on children's lives and the significance of safeguarding their rights. When we talk about children's participation in research, it means they:

• Can speak about their rights, ensuring that their experiences and perspectives closely inform the investigations, leading to precise and culturally specific knowledge, thereby increasing the value and validity of the results;

• Contribute to the strengthening of laws, policies, and practices, thus promoting their dignity;

• Have the opportunity to be directly involved in the research, not being side-lined or represented as passive objects;

• Have their informed consent respected, protecting them from invasive and abusive research practices (Alderson, 2005).

When using pedagogical documentation as a strategy, early childhood educators should communicate with both the children and their families about the learning processes and ensure that all parties can be engaged. To achieve this, for the use of pedagogical documentation to be followed by early childhood educators, thereby ensuring that children's rights are respected, it is necessary to establish clear guidelines:

a) Obtain informed consent from parents or legal guardians before using images or texts of children in documentation. Explain the purpose of the documentation and how it will be used.

b) Use images and/or texts that respect the privacy and dignity of the children.

c) Ensure the documentation is confidential, stored securely, and not shared with unauthorized individuals.

d) Use the documentation solely for educational purposes and ensure that it is only accessible to authorized stakeholders.

e) Avoid biases and stereotypes in the documentation. Ensure that the documentation is culturally sensitive and respects diversity.
f) Adhere to ethical and scientific principles when conducting pedagogical documentation.

g) Use the documentation to support children's learning and development and to inform educators and other stakeholders about practices (Heiskanen, 2019; Sousa, 2022; Tarr, 2011).

Pedagogical documentation has the power to promote pedagogical transformation, potentially leading to a praxis based on the rights of early childhood education (Sousa, 2022). Building on this assumption, when we speak of pedagogical documentation as a strategy to record and document the learning processes, play, and ideas of children, to stimulate reflection among early childhood educators and foster dialogue with families (Oliveira-Formosinho & Pascal, 2019), it is also understood that the documentation process must fully respect the rights of children. It is necessary to Establish guidelines to safeguard children's privacy and ensure respect for their agency throughout all the processes.

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5.3. The respect for children during the data collection

Recognising the correlation between children's rights and respect during the information-gathering processes is essential in a rights-based pedagogy. By articulating these two points, respect and research methods, it is presumed that they should be adequate to the child as a whole, their socio-cultural context their culture, their experiences, abilities, and perspectives (Graham et al., 2013). Berman et al. (2016) reflect on the key points to consider when discussing respect, highlighted in Figure 9.

The various methods and techniques used by early childhood educators to capture children's perspectives align with ethical principles, as it allows all children to document and express their ideas and feelings. Respecting children and their interests it is possible to create an environment in which they feel more comfortable. However, in vulnerable situations, it is essential to consider whether some questions or inquiries are genuinely necessary or whether they might cause discomfort for the children. It is recognised that children should not feel obligated to answer adults' questions.

Respect for all individuals	Foundations of respect in documenting	Respect for children as participants
Considering the values, preferences, and beliefs of participants;	Understanding participants as interactive subjects;	Situating children's actions in their experience;
Understanding that people are capable of deliberating and acting according to their decisions;	Recognising complex relationships of interdependence between adults and children;	Recognising unequal power relationships;
Recognising the ability to make judgments, express opinions, and make choices.	Understanding that decision-making occurs based on social contexts;	Acknowledging the developing capabilities of children.
	Acknowledging limitations of personal agency due to age, circumstances, or personal abilities.	

Figure 9 - Points to consider with respect to Data Collection

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5.4 Self-reflection suggestions

One crucial aspect concerns consent. It must be understood that consent involves much more than agreeing to participate; it requires time to decide, to have the opportunity, and to be capable of asking questions, ensuring the right to say yes or no. The process of giving consent should be seen as continuous and not as a single moment (Morrow, 2008). It is equally important to determine the forms of consent and the actors to whom it is necessary to request consent. Assuming that parental or educator consent is sufficient implies considering that children do not need to express their will or refuse to participate (Alderson, 2005).

How can educators strike a balance between documenting children's learning experiences and ensuring their privacy and dignity are respected during the process?

In what ways can the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child inform and shape ethical research practices involving children in educational settings?

How can educators ensure that children's opinions are given due importance according to age and maturity, as Article 12 of the CRC stipulates?

How can educators involve children in decision-making processes that affect their lives, as stated in Article 12 of the CRC?

What steps can be taken to foster an ethical and respectful environment for interactions and communication between educators, children, and families during the data collection process?

5.5 Practical tools for everyday activities

Extend your knowledge.

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Videos

Ethical Research Involving Children

The Early Years Podcast Episode 2 Pedagogical Documentation

Documenting Children's Learning

Participatory Research with Children: Different Degrees of Participation

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