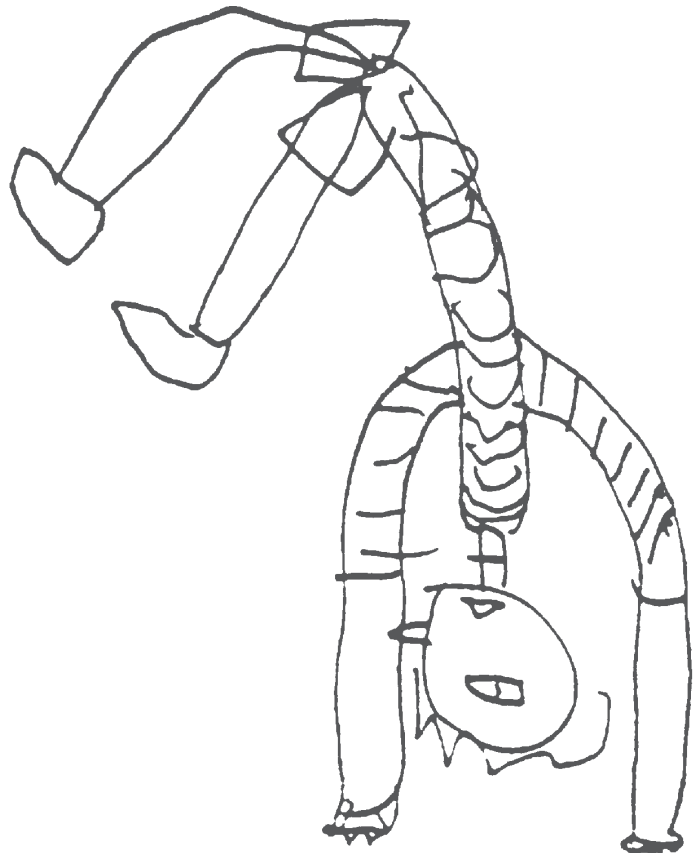


PedaKos

Preschool Education Development Alliance for Kosovo

Scientific monitoring report

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Agjencioni për shërbime social-educative
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INTRODUCTION

PEDAKOS-Preschool Education Development Alliance for Kosovo is a three-year project (2019/2022) funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and implemented in the country by the NGO Volontari nel Mondo – RTM (RTM), with the support of the Italian Embassy in Kosovo.

The project's general objective is to support public institutions and private stakeholders in the implementation of the KESP-Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 with regard to the early childhood (0-5) component, while its specific objective is to improve the quality of educational services (age 3-5) offered by public, private, and community-based kindergartens.

The augmentation of the quality of the preschool education services is based on three pillars:

- a) enhancing the competencies of preschool staff through the provision of professional training;
- b) fostering, through the exchange of good practices, the adoption of an educational approach based on the protection and promotion of children's rights and potentialities, and on the shared responsibility of the sectorial actors;
- c) implementing the public-private partnership through the reform and relaunch of the Collegium of Preschool Institutions.

In doing so, PEDAKOS makes reference to and makes available in Kosovo the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) and the related educational system and experience, an internationally recognized best practice in the field of early-childhood education.

PEDAKOS relies on a partnership that involves on one hand the main actors of the Reggio Emilia experience, that is to say the Municipality of Reggio Emilia-Istituzione Scuole e Nidi d'Infanzia (CRE-ISNI), the E 35 Foundation (E35), and the Reggio Children Foundation-International Centre Loris Malaguzzi (FRCH), and on the other hand the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MASHTI), the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (IPK), the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina (FEDU), and three educational service providers such as the Botanika School, and the NGOs ChildProof and Shpresa e Jetes.

With regard to the first two pillars of the project, the staff of fifteen pilot kindergartens of Kosovo – representing the whole national territory, and all types of pre-school institutions and ethnical and religious minorities – has been provided with training opportunities (remote and in-person) concerning the principles, the values, and the practices of the REA. At the same time, the project has also provided the schools with material support with the aim to enable them to interpret and put into practice the theoretical inputs and insights. Thus, some of their spaces were rehabilitated and they were

equipped with relevant instruments and materials in order to experience activities inspired by the REA.

In this framework, the IPK has been participating in the training program and in the activities of exchange of good practices, and it was tasked with the scientific monitoring of the project. This activity is meant to report on how the changes promoted by the project in terms of pedagogical approach and practices are implemented by the fifteen pilot schools, with the aim to assess the related progress and developments over time.

This exercise was implemented for the first time in the last trimester of 2021, at the end of the II year of project implementation, and it will be replicated during and at the end of the III and final year of the project. The document at stake reports on this first step of the scientific monitoring process of PEDAKOS, and it includes the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy based on the image of a child with strong potentialities for development and a subject with rights, who learns through the hundred languages belonging to all human beings, and it grows in relation with others.

It is based on a series of fundamental pillars:

- Collegial and relations-based work for all workers
- The daily presence of a plurality of educators and teachers with children
- The atelier and the person of the atelierista
- In-school kitchens
- The environment as educator
- Documentation for making creative knowledge processes visible
- The pedagogical and educational practice co-ordinating group
- The participation of families

Children are equipped with extraordinary potentials for learning that are made manifest in an unceasing exchange with the cultural and social context.

Every child is the subject of rights. Every child, individually and in their relations with the group, is a constructor of experiences to which they are capable of attributing sense and meaning.

Children as human beings, possess a hundred languages: a hundred ways of thinking, expressing, understanding, of encountering otherness through a way of thinking that weaves together and does not separate the various dimensions of experience. The hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative

processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed.

It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre and the preschool to valorise all verbal and non-verbal languages with equal dignity.

Every child, like every human being, is the constructor of knowledges, competencies, and autonomies.

The process of learning privileges research strategies, exchange and discussion, and participating with others.

Research is one of the essential dimensions of life for children and adults, the tension towards knowledge to be recognized and valorised. Priority is given to research between adults and children as an everyday praxis, a necessary attitude for interpreting the complexity of the world, and a powerful instrument of renewal in education.

Research, made visible through documentation, constructs learning, reformulates knowledge, is at the foundation of professional quality, and on national and international levels it becomes an element and guarantor of pedagogical innovation.

Documentation is an integral part of the educational theories and practices and gives them structure.

It renders the nature of learning processes visible and evaluable, subjective and in groups, in children and in adults, and turns them into a shared common legacy.

Educational action is shaped through *progettazione*/designing of didactics, of environments, of participation, of the professional growth of personnel, and not by means of applying pre-defined programmes.

Progettazione/design is realized through the close synergy between how work is organised and educational research.

The organisation of work, of spaces, of the times of children and adults, are structurally part of the values and choices of the educational project.

The organising constructs a network of responsibilities that are co-shared at the levels of administration, politics, and pedagogy. Working conditions and forms of contract that are conducive to stability, continuity, and a sense of belonging acquire particular relevance.

The interior and exterior spaces of the infant-toddler centres and preschools are designed and organised in interconnected forms, and are offered to children and adults as places to live together and research. The environment

interacts, modifies, and takes shape in relation to the projects and learning experiences, in a constant dialogue between architecture and pedagogy.

Care of the furniture, the objects, and the activity spaces is an educational act that generates psychological wellbeing, a sense of familiarity and belonging, aesthetic sense, and the pleasure of inhabiting. These are also primary premises and conditions for safety in the environments, a quality generated by dialogue and shared elaboration between the different professional profiles who must concern themselves and take care of this aspect.

Professional growth/formation is the right and duty of single workers and of the group, included and considered as part of the working hours, and collegially organised in content, form, and each single person's ways of participating.

Professional development is developed in the synergy between staff 'update' meetings in single preschools and infant-toddler centres, the planning for formation/professional growth in the city's system of educational services, and educational and cultural opportunities in the city, nationally and internationally.

Participation is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived in encounter and relations day after day. Participation valorises and makes use of the hundred languages of children and human beings, understood as plurality of points of view and of cultures.

Participation generates and informs the feelings and culture of solidarity, responsibility and inclusion, and produces change and new cultures.

Evaluation is a process that structures the experience of education and of running the schools, part of every aspect of school life, and understood as a public act of dialogue and interpretation.

With this objective in mind the infant-toddler centres and preschools are equipped with tools – the Charter of Services, the City Childhood Councils, the pedagogical coordination group, the school collective work group, and the co-presence of co-responsible and co-entitled workers – and with practices, such as documentation, participation by families and the local community, and participation in the city's integrated public system.

Methodology

Being the Reggio Emilia Approach an educational philosophy, a mindset, an attitude towards children, their rights, and their capabilities, it is not possible to reduce it to categories of activities to be performed by educators.

In this regard, the development of the data collection tool for the analysis of the changes in terms of educational approach and practices promoted by the project and implemented by the schools focused on the identification of a number of macro-dimensions to be assessed. The tool was developed by the KPI researcher who implemented the whole monitoring activity, with the support of the RTM-PEDAKOS staff, and including the technical assistance of a pedagogist of Reggio Children. The identified macro-dimensions are:

1. Use of internal and external spaces;
2. Use of materials;
3. Planning and organization of educational activities;
4. Collaboration with families and inclusion of the community;
5. Professional development of teachers.

For each of them, some sub-aspects were identified, with the aim to make sure that all features of every macro-dimension were addressed. Such a tool was used to guide the observation and the semi-structured interviews conducted by the KPI in the visits to all fifteen schools.

The visits in every school addressed the whole daily routine, starting with the observation of the following moments/activities: the arrival of children in the morning, the breakfast, the implementation of planned activities in internal and external spaces, the free-time activities, the lunch, and the rest. After this, the director and the educator involved in PEDAKOS were interviewed, based on the identified aspects to be deepened.

Afterwards, the data were elaborated, integrating all the elements collected from every single school, resulting in the findings and conclusions presented in the report at stake, based on which some recommendations are offered as well.

MONITORING FINDINGS

This report collects data for the 15 pilot kindergartens involved in the PEDAPOS project, that have been trained on the principles, the values, and the practices of the Reggio Emilia Approach, and that have been equipped with spaces and materials allowing them to implement activities inspired by such an approach.¹



¹ By the time the visits that informed the report at stake took place, 12 schools had already been equipped with renovated spaces, in 2 schools renovation works were undergoing, while in 1 school the renovation works had not started yet; all 15 schools had received relevant training and instruments and materials to implement activities inspired by the REA.

The 15 targeted schools represent different categories and types of schools' nature and management

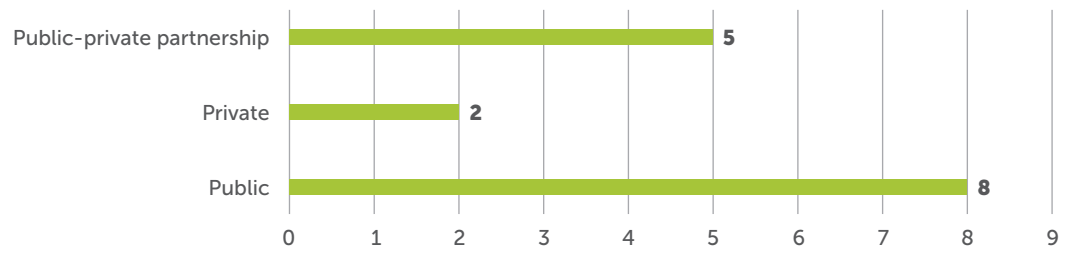


Fig 1. Typology of the kindergartens

1. The use of spaces (internal and external)

Until the moment the visits were conducted, in accordance with which this report has been drafted, 12 kindergartens were equipped with renovated spaces, in two kindergartens renovation works were ongoing, while in one kindergarten the renovation works had to begin.

The environments in 14 kindergartens, where activities with children were held, were illuminated, warm and had at least three corners where children could explore and where materials for the development of children were placed.

In many cases, inside the classroom or the atelier, activities such as drawing, gluing, modelling, working with clay, cutting, painting with different colors, performing dramatic games, movement games, singing etc, are organized. In very few cases shadows, lights, light table, lenses, camera etc are being used. These practices are not well known by the teachers and thus it is necessary for them to gain more experiences in using the same through future trainings.

In most kindergartens the environment is the object of communication between the adults and the children. This is noticed through the engagement of the personnel composed of the director, the psychologist, the supportive teacher, the assistant, the cooks ect in supporting the well going of the work with the children. This is noticed also in the domain of the conversation teacher to child, child to child, in the works prepared by the children that are exposed in different spaces, in the bulletin boards for the parents, during the arrival and leaving of the children, in the free expression of the children during their activities and in the welcoming of the foreign observer into their environments.

In some kindergartens exists a proper environment, but there are no other adults to take care of the groups except for two teachers. There is

communication child to child although there is not much communication child to teacher. During the arrival of the children there is collaboration with teachers and children of different groups, with a tendency of the same collaboration to decrease during the rest of the day.

In most kindergartens the internal and external spaces favor the interaction, the exploration, and the curiosity of the children, since internal and external spaces have been used, together with other different materials, by giving the possibility to the children to discuss over these materials, to touch it, to look it through the lenses and to explore it beyond what has been discussed during the joint meeting.

The PEDAKOS project, until the end of the year 2021, has provided 12 ateliers with inventory. All inventory has been adapted to the spaces within the kindergartens. Some bigger spaces, and some small ones, have been provided with the necessary and qualitative inventory, materials, and didactical tools. In some kindergartens investments have occurred in external environment, in some other in the dining halls, and yet in some other kindergartens such investments will occur after the total renovation of the same.

Ateliers are well equipped with materials and the necessary tools to work with the children, although the same are used in different ways. In two kindergartens, due to the narrow space, the ateliers are used by half of the group of the children and one teacher, while the other half remains inside the classroom with the other teacher, and the same spaces are used via rotation. In some other cases the atelier is used by many groups and for that a timetable needs to be prepared.

Teachers of 15 kindergartens, at the beginning of the activity, hold joint meetings with the children, where they talk over the topic set for the day. This is an opportunity for the children to express themselves on things they already know and to give different ideas on determined topics. This is applied in all kindergartens, although if in some cases with more professional competencies by the side of the teacher and in some cases with less competencies. Nevertheless, this situation underlines the fact that in practice teachers have started to implement the philosophy of placing the child at the center of the attention.

When it comes to the development of the children through 100 languages, spaces in the kindergartens are properly organized, with materials to be used by the children and where to the same is given the possibility to express in different ways such as: through drawings, modelling, working with clay, playing different roles, verbal and nonverbal communication etc. The documentation of the work, of the expressiveness of the child and of their

presentation to others, represents the use of these languages, something that has started to be practiced in some cases.

Teachers of 13 kindergartens conduct activities with the children in small groups, in spaces within classrooms. Children in these groups communicate, interact, construct and develop individual and collective skills, since, depending on the use of the materials and on the realization of the activity, they engage in a working group, with the possibility of changing the group after some time. In rare cases, although in small groups, children are instructed by the teacher to perform the same work. For the work in small groups outside the classrooms (in squares, corridors etc), or in external environments, teachers still need to benefit from the Reggio Emilia Approach, since this kind of work has been conducted only in few cases.

Teachers have created spaces for children in order to give them the possibility to take care of themselves when arriving at the kindergarten, to take the necessary materials for the implementation of an activity, to be able to pass alone from one activity to the another, to present ideas, to tell stories from the daily life, to clean the tables after the work, to put things back in their place, to be vigilant in the kitchen and in other spaces of the kindergarten.

In some cases, teachers provide children, until a certain point, with the possibility of expressing themselves, even if the children have to take the materials themselves, although they still remain in attendance to receive instructions from the teacher on what to do. At the same time, they wait to be taken care from the parents once they come to take them home, expect to be fed by the cooks, do not remove plates etc. They appear well self organized in the yard during free activities, without receiving instructions from the teacher. Yet, there are still cases when the communication between the children is limited in YES or NO when it comes to questions and answers, and questions from the teacher lead to answer (suggestive) with no possibility of exploration and without stimulating their curiosity.

In all kindergartens the works of the children are exposed in visible places for other children and parents, while some other works are inserted in children's files. In one kindergarten children take back home their works in order to raise the awareness, within the community they live, regarding the importance of preschool education.

During the observations some of the kindergartens used their external environment to implement activities with children, while in most cases kindergartens' internal environments were used even if external spaces happen to be in better conditions. The PEDAKOS project invested in some external environments, although the same are not being used by the

kindergartens. During the interviews teachers declared that (external) spaces are used by the children, nevertheless during the observation the plan was to conduct activities in internal environments.

In most of the kindergartens (12 kindergartens) the kitchen is used to feed the children and as an educational and interaction space between the teachers and the children, in which case the kitchen is used to prepare biscuits, different salads in accordance to the seasons, fruit juices etc, in relation to different topics they had to implement.

In three (kindergartens) kitchens are used by the children to be fed, to take and to put back plates from the trolley, and in other cases kitchens are used by the children only to take the food for themselves.

2. The use of materials

In some kindergartens materials are well exposed in order to give children the possibility to touch them, to observe, to talk over and finally to use the same.

In other kindergartens materials were first distributed in order to begin immediately with the implementation of the activity and to end the activity by discussing on what material is it, why do we need it, and in cases when the material is composed of fruits or vegetables first the children would draw them and only afterwards would taste the same.

Fifteen kindergartens, together with the materials, have received proper trainings, in order to implement activities inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach.

In those kindergartens (11 kindergartens), where the materials were well exposed, children started to talk over, to take other tools to observe the materials, for example lenses or the light table etc, to discuss over these materials, of the way it changes, to taste the fruits, to talk of the tastes etc and then to continue with drawing, modelling, preparing juices, always in accordance with the planned activities.

In other kindergartens, where the materials were not well exposed, drawing and modelling activities were implemented, with the role of the teacher as an observer and by strictly instructing the children where to put the materials, how to work with it, in order to have children's works that would look beautiful.

Books are used in four kindergartens (with children of age 5-6 years old), and all of them do the same thing such as writing, painting, in accordance with the models presented in the books. This puts limits on the children in using other materials and their works look almost all the same.

The children show competencies depending on the space given to them by the adults (teachers, parents, community and other adults). Thus, in order to create an image of the child as today's citizen and not tomorrow's citizen, our kindergartens would still need further improvement.

In all kindergartens (15 kindergartens) there was sufficient didactical materials (paper, colors, markers, brushes, clay, glue, scissors etc) and less didactical tools (lenses, camera, microscope, computer etc). In most of the 15 kindergartens there was nature materials (leaves, wood, grass, chestnuts, walnuts etc), while few kindergartens possessed recyclable materials. Recyclable materials are used to work only with children of the age 3-5 years old. Overall, in the 15 beneficiary kindergartens, 1420 children have access to and use recycled materials.

In all kindergartens materials are in conformity with the activity, and in some other kindergartens materials were used, enriched, supplemented, and combined with other materials taken in nature. In other cases, the materials are in accordance with the activity but limited in use such as copied paper on which the children must work within the proposed spaces and not on spaces created by the children.

3. Planning and organizing educational activities

The kids that participated in activities inspired by the REA observed in the filed visits of this report range from 3 to 6 years of age and they amounted to 257

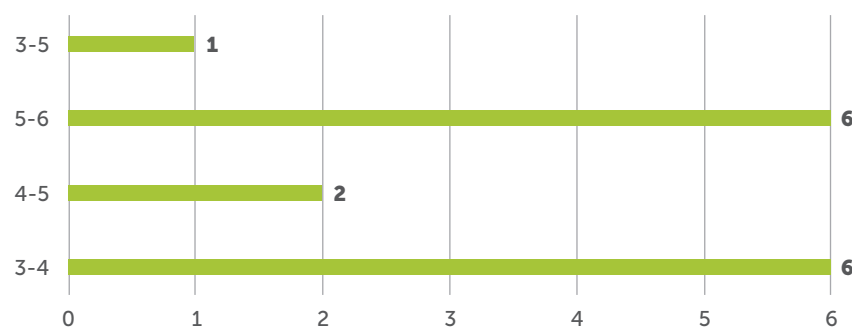


Fig 2. Groups of children per age

The meetings for the preparation of educational planning, when it comes to the teachers that work with the children of ages 3-4 and 4-5 years old, differs from one kindergarten to the other. Only the annual planning is drafted at the same time from all the teachers, meaning that at the end of each educational

year the planning for the coming year is drafted. Teachers gather and decide on the monthly or bimonthly topics. Then, for each group two teachers of the group (in three cases there is only one teacher for the group) draft the planning in accordance with the indicators of the Early Learning Development Standards for Children of age 0-6 years old.

In kindergartens, where teachers work with children of the age 5-6 years old, the planning is a derivative of the subject planning and the core curriculum for preschool class, which are formal documents of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. The bimonthly planning is drafted by the personnel of the Municipal teachers for all the preschool teachers (in kindergartens, schools, community-based centers etc) and the same planning can be adapted to groups of children for their daily activities.

For the children of the age 3-4 years old the annual planning is prepared and adapted with other teachers of the kindergarten, while the weekly and daily plans are adapted to the age and the learning of the children of the group.

In one kindergarten a total of five mandatory meetings have been held with all the teachers, in order to assess the realization of the planning and to make necessary changes. In another kindergarten only three mandatory meetings have been held.

Daily meetings, between the teachers, are held only in few kindergartens (at the end of the working hours) and in many cases with the presence of the directors, in order to discuss for the coming day and on what to change in the planning, what materials are needed, if there is any need, in accordance with the children's interest, to change the planning or to add other materials etc.

Teachers and the directors presented their experiences of collaboration with families in the period before the pandemics, while during the pandemics no activities involving parents were foreseen to be implemented, due to the fact that the restrictions imposed by the Kosovo Government do not allow the parent, and other adults, to have access to internal spaces of the kindergarten, except for the children and the kindergarten's personnel.

They (teachers) presented experiences on how they planned to include the families and the community, nevertheless with the pandemics no activities involving parents were foreseen to be implemented, due to the fact that the restrictions imposed by the Kosovo Government do not allow the parent and other adults to have access to internal spaces of the kindergarten, except for the children and the kindergarten's personnel.

Directors of 15 kindergartens have declared that annual plans are presented to the parents at the beginning of each school year, and that until

the end of the year three mandatory meetings have been held with parents. During this year, by abiding to the pandemic restrictions, annual plannings have been sent online to parents and online meetings have been held with the parents in order to ask from them for any suggestions, additions to make or to present any idea, even if, usually, parents will agree with the planning and will show their readiness to assist in its implementation. In one of the meetings parents have asked from the kindergarten not to use text packages with the children of age 5-6 years old. This request has been honored and such texts are not being use anymore. In some cases, the weekly and monthly plannings are exposed in the bulletin table for parents in order to inform them and to ask for support for the activities that will be implemented with their children.

In 15 kindergartens the directors have started the process of observing teachers in the way in which they implement activities. Supportive teachers and assistants (where they occur to be) support the children with special needs and include them in the activities, and the planning of the work, together with the approach of the teacher and the entire personnel, is improving.

In eight groups, where the monitoring was conducted, there are no children with special needs, while in groups (seven groups) composed of children with special needs there is a support from the psychologists, the supportive teachers and from the assistants. In three, out of 15 kindergartens, the directors are psychologists themselves.

Two kindergartens, out of 15, have a collaboration with associations for children with special rights, where consultations with professionals take place and the parents are supported. In other cases, the parents send their children to different professionals and transmit their recommendations to the kindergarten on how to work with their children. Other kindergartens declared that the Municipal team is at work for the assessment of the children with special needs and assist the teachers in drafting the individual planning.

In relation to the observation, 15 kindergartens have realized one part of the basic observation that used to be practiced in the same kindergartens, where through a checking list, based on learning indicators for the children and divided in different developing fields for the children (Early Learning Development Standards for Children of age 0-6 years old, or the Core Curriculum for the preparatory class), teachers have conducted the observation.

Only two kindergartens have adopted practices from the experiences they benefited from the Reggio Emilia Approach. During the interviews teachers

declared not to have understood very well the observation process, thus are not capable of performing it properly.

Teachers of 15 kindergartens conduct the documentation in various forms, through taking pictures from activities with children, through recording videos, by exposing the works of the children in visible places, and by creating files with the works of the children in which case, from time to time, children take home their works.

As per the documentation, in accordance with what has been taught in the Reggio Emilia Approach trainings, only two kindergartens have conducted the documentation phase by taking notes during the implementation of the activity and stated that teachers meet and decide on planning the activities for the coming days based on the documentation they conduct.

During the interviews, teachers from 13 kindergartens declared to be flexible in changing the topic in cases they noticed a lack of interest from the side of the children. Thus, the activity is changed from the improvisational point of view and not as something based on a beforehand observation.

Proper projects, as we have seen in the trainings organized by PEDAPOS, have been developed by all 15 kindergartens only during the trainings, such as: educational projects (bicycles, paper, traditional food, tea etc). No other projects are being realized. Only one kindergarten has planned to implement a project entitled "The Book", during the month of April. During the interviews it was declared that kindergartens will attempt to conduct their monthly topics in accordance with what they have learned during the trainings. Thus, to develop projects that deal with the research, exploration, visits, works and to follow everything through the observation and documentation.

4. Collaboration with the family and the inclusion of the community

In community-based kindergartens (2 kindergartens) the council of parents and the director manage the kindergarten. The council of parents holds meetings with parents of each class, with or without the presence of the teacher, but always with the presence of the director (nowadays online meetings).

Other 13 kindergartens have declared that pandemic measures allow meetings with up to 30 people and that they started to hold meetings in person with the parents and to conduct visits with the children as well. Nevertheless, there are still some kindergartens not to have held any meeting with the parents due to the situation with the pandemics.

In one kindergarten activities involving the parents and their children have

been conducted. This activity has been conducted to raise the awareness of the community to send their children to the kindergarten (multiethnic center).

Four other kindergartens, after the lifting of some pandemic restrictions, started to conduct activities with the children, and one kindergarten, with the support of the parents, has conducted a visit at the airport.

There are kindergartens not to have conducted activities with the parents due to the pandemics, nevertheless all 15 kindergartens possess pictures that show their collaboration with the parents in the period before the pandemics.

In some kindergartens the parents have expressed their readiness to support with necessary materials. In one kindergarten the parents have created the corner of books by bringing books for the children, while in two other kindergartens they have created the autumn corner with autumn fruits and vegetables, brought by the parents. In certain cases, a fund has been created and managed by the parents, through which materials are bought and visits for the children are realized. Nevertheless, there are cases when parents only pay the fee for their children, without further being interested.

The informing of the parents regarding their children is conducted during the arrival-departure time of the children from the kindergarten, and through closed online groups (Facebook, Viber), emails etc.

Some kindergartens have managed to organize meetings with the community in external spaces, despite the situation with the pandemics. In one kindergarten a chief of a village coordinated the work with the inhabitants of the village to bring fruits and vegetables, picked up in their gardens, to the kindergarten to prepare food for the children. While, in another kindergarten, an exposition has been prepared with the works prepared by the children and their parents for the community. The rest of the kindergartens, due to the pandemics, did not include the community in their activities.

Some kindergartens have organized activities in the city. In one kindergarten the children prepared an exposition in the center of the city, while in another kindergarten the children conducted a visit at a flower garden. Other kindergartens did not conduct any external activity due to the pandemics.

Only some kindergartens have conducted activities with the inclusion of the community, the city or other institutions and organizations. One kindergarten celebrated a festivity, in its yard, with the children of the village who are not part of the kindergarten. One kindergarten conducted a program for the children, in their native language, in the RTK2 national television. Two kindergartens planted plants around the fences of the kindergarten, where children gave their names to each plant they planted. This activity was organized together with the organization Save the Children.

The directors have declared to collaborate with other directors of other kindergartens included in the PEDAKOS project and with some directors of other kindergartens that are not part of the project. Nevertheless, there does not exist any exchange of experiences with teachers from other kindergartens. In three kindergartens the directors declared not to have any collaboration with other directors or teachers.

5. Professional development of the teachers

Directors and teachers of all 15 kindergartens have declared that the PEDAKOS project and the Reggio Emilia Approach offer a good opportunity and that they were lucky to be pilot kindergartens and to have benefited from the project.

The strengths of the project are divided in two parts: in the supply with materials, tools and appropriate inventory for the work with the children and in the trainings over the new approach and the good practices in particular in:

Materials: presentation of the materials, exploration, variety, selection of the materials from the children, use of the paper, benefiting from REMIDA trainings etc;

Teacher's approach: free children and possibility to freely express, all begins with the child, no imposing, self organization of the child, research, observation, documentation, collaboration with the parents and the rest of the personnel of the kindergarten, etc;

Spaces: the use of the atelier, the kitchen and the tastes as part of the educational work, the use of external spaces, etc;

Challenges and weaknesses during the trainings according to the teachers and the directors:

Following online trainings: network disconnections, unprofessional interpreting, occurrence of trainings during the work time, impossibility to live experiences from the vicinity, videos have been provided although it would be good to receive them in order to watch the same from time to time, etc;

Interpreting the information to others: teachers are not sure to have been able to interpret the information to other teachers, in particular in using the atelier and in the domain of changing the approach in the work of other teachers;

Other: no feedback has been sent for the assigned homework during the trainings in order to understand the level of accomplishment and the gaps. This would help us to improve and better understand the Reggio Emilia Approach. The observation and documentation phases have not been well understood, thus further training is needed.

Trainings implemented in the last two years, and included in the monitoring, are listed below. Some of the kindergartens have followed one, two, three up to four trainings. Only one kindergarten did not follow any training except for the trainings provided by the PEDAKOS project and considers that the professional development is indispensable to be reached through trainings.

Trainings that were conducted in the kindergartens:

- Montessori Methodology;
- Positive Discipline (Save the Children);
- Curriculum for the preparatory class (MESTI);
- The platform "Education in distance – Care, Development and Education in the Early Childcare for the age 0-6 years old (MESTI);
- Healthy nurturing – AMC;
- SHPRESE – Preparing Preschool Teachers for the Support and Development of Children's Potential through Games and Creativity (KPI – CARITAS);
- Stress impact after the Covid-19 pandemics;
- Providing first aid;
- Inclusion;
- Individual Educational Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

- Directors and the teachers declared, during the interviews, to have benefited from the good experiences and that they have worked in the direction of adapting their spaces, the inventory and the materials with the gained experiences, for a better development of the children;
- The planning of the work is done in accordance with current topics such as seasons, festivities, family, professions, by focusing in reaching results in the domain of the Curriculum and the Early Learning Development Standards for Children. In some kindergartens the working program of the teacher has started to change and to be adapted to the planning based on the interest of the children, while in other kindergartens, even though trainings have been followed, teachers are still focused on preplanned programs. There are cases in which the teacher cannot attract the interest of the child in a particular topic. In order to do this further support is needed;
- Spaces, used during the permanence of the children in the kindergarten and in the classrooms where the preschool education takes place, are set properly, with corners provided with materials and with plenty of space. Spaces external to the classrooms (corridors, squares etc), including the external environment, are not being properly used;
- In most kindergartens the ateliers are functional and are being used in various manners, in accordance with the space, the number of the children etc. Various materials are being used as well. Teachers are not sure if they are using the atelier in a proper way, thus they need further trainings to do so. Teachers have received experiences on how to present the materials to the children and have given the possibility to the same (the children) to research, to touch and to understand the details of such materials. In most kindergartens there is enough didactical materials (paper, colors, glue, pencils, clay etc), but less didactical tools (in general they possess only what has been provided by the PEDAPOS project). They possess nature and recyclable materials;
- There are changes undergoing when it comes to the cooperation between teachers of different kindergartens. Directors observe from the vicinity the work of teachers and support them. In some of the kindergartens, although not in all of them, there is collaboration with the personnel of the kitchen, in order to transform the kitchen in an educational space. At the same time, and in certain cases, there is collaboration with other professionals, pedagogists, psychologists and supportive teachers;
- The collaboration with families and the community has been challenging for all the kindergartens due to the pandemics. The information is passed

to the parents during brief encounters when children come and depart from the kindergarten and in closed groups such as Facebook and Viber. With the lifting of pandemic restrictions activities with the parents, the community and visits have started to be implemented, in cases in which meetings with up to 30 people are allowed. The collaboration with the community during the pandemic was challenging as well, especially in some cases when activities were to be conducted in nature. Now, with lifting of the restrictions such activities have started to be implemented;

- The observation form that has been conducted until now by the teachers changes from the observation form of the Reggio Emilia Approach;
- There are some basic elements underlining the documentation phase such as photos, insertion of children's works in their files, videos and the exposition of children's works in walls and at the entrance of the kindergartens where the parents can watch them. Teachers have presented good practices in implementing the documentation in accordance with the Reggio Emilia Approach, although further practicing is needed in order to implement the documentation strictly in accordance with this approach;
- According to this observation there is proof that all 15 kindergartens, part of the project, have embraced the documentation phase, the meetings between the children and the work in small groups. Thus, we can conclude that all of them use the approach in which the children are placed at the center of the attention;
- From time-to-time daily topics, that fall in the interest of the children inside the classroom, are implemented. There is need for support from the side of professionals for groups with children with special needs;
- Teachers, according to the results of the interviews, have demonstrated the strengths and the possibilities provided by the PEDAKOS project, starting from the inventory that has been provided to continue with the materials and necessary trainings, in order to undertake the first steps in implementing the Reggio Emilia Approach. Some of the underlined characteristics, that happen to be a novelty for them, are: the use of the materials, the approach of the teachers and the use of spaces;
- Difficulties were encountered during the workshops and the practical work, such as: online trainings, difficulties in interpreting information to other teachers and the need for further training for the work in ateliers and in the observation and documentation phases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further underline, in the educational process, the concept of 100 languages;
- To improve the documentation phase in the aspect of receiving and conserving the data, meaning the use the same data for further planning and in the aspect of presenting the same to others in a proper way;
- Teachers have expressed perplexities in their abilities to well understand the use of spaces and materials of the ateliers, and that they need to be provided with further experiences when it comes to the implementation of activities in using the ateliers in a proper way;
- To organize further trainings on the Reggio Emilia Approach (to be provided more information, videos, materials, presentations and concrete experiences for the implementation of this approach);
- To create resources for the support of teachers during the implementation (of the approach) through mentoring and supervision of the process;
- To provide with possibilities in supporting the integration of the children with special needs in the domain of the implementation of the approach;
- To consider the possibility of providing support, wherever necessary, in the domain of the weaknesses and threats, in accordance with the findings underlined in this report, for the progress of this approach in pilot kindergartens and to replicate the same in other kindergartens.