

## Chapter #6

### ENLARGING THE VIEW. A MODEL TO PROMOTE QUALITY IN ECEC SERVICES BY INTEGRATING THE INDICATOR FRAMEWORK APPROACH TO THE SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING

**Paolo Sorzio, & Caterina Bembich**

*DiSU, University of Trieste, Italy*

#### ABSTRACT

In this contribution it is proposed a critical framework, based on Basil Bernstein's theory, for two aims: a) criticizing some tendencies in the Indicator Frameworks for the evaluation of the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care services (ECEC), which rely mainly on measures of the structural and processual characteristics of the educational settings. However, the processual dimensions are reduced to their individual components, overlooking the complex and contingent interactions that create opportunities for learning; b) proposing a critical framework, based on Basil Bernstein's theory to analyze the different child-centered approaches to ECEC.

*Keywords:* child-centeredness, quality of services, indicator frameworks, reflective practice.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Chung and Walsh (2000), three major perspectives on child-centered practices have historically evolved: Romantic, Developmentalist and Democratic. Each identifies the child as at the center of the educational practices, characterized by the identification of each child's needs, competencies, interests. However, each perspective proposes its own declination of what the child is at the center of (Romantic: her/his world; developmentalist: the curriculum; democratic: the community).

The "Romantic" conception, elaborates the "naturalistic" idea of childhood as an age of harmony between the Child and Nature; the adult has the task of "fertilizing" the environment, to promote the development of the child's potential, which is expressed through play.

The "Developmental" perspective assumes a universalistic and sequential process of children's growth, characterized by a match between the children's ages and the expected achievements. In this perspective, greater attention is paid to lessons and structured materials, to the learning of counting, to the recognition and reproduction of written letters, numbers and geometric figures. In this conception, more sophisticated competencies such as metacognition and peer collaboration are learned after basic skills (recognition, reproduction and simple problem solving activities).

The "Democratic" perspective is characterized by the idea of the child as rich in expressive competencies, able to construct her/his own knowledge through meaningful experiences in collaboration with others. The socio-constructivist conception emerges from the interpretation of Piaget's and Bruner's theories and in particular of the practical elaboration of the Reggio Emilia approach. The central concept concerns the role of

individual interests and skills in the development of the child, supported by a stimulating environment. In this perspective, development implies greater self-regulation of thought, greater expressive mastery and motivation to explore the environment. The role of the adult consists in the design of stimulating learning settings, supporting children's initiative and thinking through appropriate discursive interventions (Bruner, 1978). In this perspective, the adult assumes new and sophisticated skills in planning, documentation and the organization of educational activities to support children's participation and self-reflection (Hendy & Whitebread, 2000).

## 2. CRITICISING THE QUALITY INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS METHODOLOGY

In developing a Quality Framework, Policy Institutions have usually identified some structural and processual indicators, in order to signal the level of achievement in the relevant dimensions of the educational practices, according to given benchmarks.

The focus of this contribution is to question the validity of measures of the interactional processes, as well as reflecting about the potentiality of the introduction of qualitative evidence to promote quality and child-centeredness in the Early Childhood Education and Care services.

The Quality Indicator Frameworks are supposed to be the “objective” devices to comparatively evaluate the quality of Early Years services as well as to highlight their critical elements. According to this approach, any educational practice is cut up into its constitutive elements: each component is evaluated on the basis of simple measures, typically obtained by using standardized instruments (for example: rating scales, check-lists; standardized observational schemes); then its quality assessed according to given standards.

*Table 1.*  
*Relevant features usually incorporated in the Quality indicator frameworks.*

<i>Structural factors</i>	<i>Organizational factors</i>	<i>Process factors</i>
Finances	Staff qualifications	Staff responsiveness
Indoor/outdoor spaces	Staff/children ratios	Complexity of tasks
Playing materials and furniture	Health/food regulations	Quality of social interactions
Impact over the community	Design/documentation strategies	Children's attendance
	In-service teacher training and action-research	Relationships with families

However, there are methodological limits in the analysis of the educational processes: for example, frameworks such as CLASS (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) and ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2004) are intended to single out and measure isolated dimensions as proxies of complex and dynamic processes, such as respect of children's rights, promotion of good relationships between adults and children, non-invasive care, autonomy, respect for children's interests and emotions, close listening, joint meaning making, prosocial behaviors.

Peter Moss and collaborators (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2013; Moss, 2016) introduce some epistemological criticisms toward standardized tools:

- The Quality Indicator Frameworks are based upon a philosophical conception of an absolute rationality, developed by external experts; any educational service should be measured and compared through the same criteria. However, this approach lacks cultural sensitivity: Early Childhood educational services usually act as bridges towards families and communities, in order to integrate different developmental demands and to promote children's participation in culturally meaningful activities. As a consequence, each educational institution is related to its specific community and develops its own characteristic organization (Fuller, 2007); in the Quality Indicator approach, complexity and diversity are overlooked, although these are essential components of the professional work;

- By transforming education into a technical project, the educational means are separated from their aims; the apparently neutral question of "What works?" substitutes the more relevant questions of "Working for whom?", and "Where to?";

- the standardized measures tend to separate professional agencies from the contexts in which they occur: in fact, educators deliberate in the emergent contingencies of their practical conditions, acting what is considered possible, given the contextual constraints, rather than according to an abstract rationality.

Although the systematicity and elegance of many Quality Frameworks are to be appreciated, there are two critical points:

- a) the Frameworks tend to merge the concept of "indicator" and the concept of "measure" (Alexander, 2008). Some measures of quality can be easily assessed (space per child; teacher/children ratios; health quality of food; daily schedules); however, rating scales do not suffice to evaluate the child-centeredness and the opportunities for learning, since they single-out individual dimensions from the complex and dynamic processes of interaction; since educational processes are dynamic and contingent system of interacting conditions, they are not easily captured by static measures of isolated variables. Indicators tend to be easy-to-formulate aspects of complex processes, however they lose sight of the layered nature of the constitutive components of the educational practices; as a consequence, a high degree of inference as well a high level of ambiguity can be found in applying the Quality Frameworks (Alexander, 2008).

- b) Assessment of singled-out dimensions of the educational practices creates a rift from the direct experiences of practitioners, children and families in their everyday practices (Hammersley, 1995). The contingent and variable conditions that act as "gravitational forces" (Erickson, 2006) on the participants in any educational setting are undervalued. In turn, educational deliberations emerge as perceived opportunities in the contextual contingencies. As a consequence, evaluation procedures should not isolate the participants' acts from the complexity of their educational situations.

By confounding measures and indicators, the complexity of the child-centered pedagogy is overlooked. The construct validity of the quality indicators needs to be assessed through educational theories, rather than relying only upon the management approach. Furthermore, practitioners develop their professional activities in a context characterized by specific settings, tools, norms and people that together constitute the situated conditions for

the development of the curricular activities. As a consequence, from the point of view of the practitioners, each setting is a unique context of practice. The ranking of each specific dimension on the standardized measures is only an information that must be interpreted.

### **2.1. Integrating the measurement approach with the insiders' accounts**

The measurement approach can be considered conducted by a detached subject who applies standardized instruments to gather data (which represent the magnitude of specific dimensions in a setting), in order to compare them with given standards. This distant evaluative look can be complemented with in-depth professionals' accounts in narrative terms.

In Pastori and Pagani's research (2017), the introduction of Quality Frameworks tools in a professional practice is an opportunity to offer a pattern of information about the setting that can trigger the educators' reflection, narrative account and innovation. Pastori and Pagani (2020) subsequently conducted a participatory action-research with professionals, by introducing the tool Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS - Pianta et al., 2008), with the aim of engaging the participants in a critical discussion of their practice. Participants reported some positive aspects in the use of the framework, such as the centrality of the educator-child relationship in defining the quality of the service and the focus on the emotional dimension of learning. On the other hand, there are some shortcomings: the framework lacks a deep focus on the interactional competence of children; it emphasizes productivity ("doing something"), rather than the opportunities for learning attributed to the educational activities (which are the "meaningful, rich experiences for children?", "Why do some activities become learning experiences?").

## **3. DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK BASED ON BASIL BERNSTEIN'S WORK**

Since the simple sets of distinctive features that are represented in the Quality Indicator Frameworks cannot define the complexity of historically evolved practices, we propose an alternative framework, based on the concepts introduced by Basil Bernstein (1973; 1999), to understand the practical organization of the child-centered perspective, in terms of the curriculum, the interactional patterns and the levels of cognitive engagement in the Early Years settings. This approach may complement the more established model of standard measures to evaluate the quality of ECEC services.

According to Bernstein, the practices of schooling can be identified by intersecting three dimensions:

a) Classification: the degree of insulation an element has in relation to others, for example: experiences in-school and out-of-school; the degree of separation of activities in the same educational practice. The higher the classification, the stronger is the instructional approach;

b) Framing: the degree of adult's control of the interaction; the higher the control of discourse by the adults is, the stronger is the teacher's voice; the higher the opportunities of children's contribution, the more the children's voices are valued;

c) Vertical and horizontal discourse is a dimension that can highlight some differences within the child-centered approach. The socio-constructivist approach, such as the Reggio Approach promotes a vertical discourse, since it is based not only on child-initiated activities, but also on higher order thinking strategies, such as planning, revision, communication.

Democratic and constructivist approaches in early childhood education are characterized by children's interests and inquiries, exploratory talk, in which the adults accept and extend the children's thoughts and contributions. Democratic approaches to child centered education give value to a variety of children's contributions through different sign systems (should they be verbal language, visual, dance, musical, etc) to make children become the authors of their own individual contribution to the conversation. In these contexts, the professionals adopt practices based on the principles of "children as active constructors of knowledge. In classrooms consistent with this theory, teachers provide direction and guidance as they assist children in developing their knowledge, but they also provide opportunities for children to direct their own explorations of objects and academic topics" (Stipek, 2004, p. 550). Characteristically, settings are integrated and children can move freely, in order to overcome differences in gender, abilities, ethnicity and to some extent in age. Each organized space can create the opportunity for children's initiative, rather than fragmenting the curriculum in simple and repetitive exercises (Low classification). Interactions tend to promote children's genuine contributions to joint activities, to emphasize democratic dialogue, reflection and metacognition, rather than imposing an instructional script (Low framing). Romantic and constructivist Child-centeredness tend to diverge in the role of adults: in the constructivist approach, such as in the Reggio Emilia experience, the teachers' questions are oriented to extend the children's thinking processes, in order to achieve more clarity and systematicity during the joint curricular activities (Vertical discourse). In the Romantic perspective, adults let the children play according to their personal feelings and interests. As a consequence, the documentation tends to be a static representation of memorable events and situations, rather than an opportunity to highlight some crucial elements of the children's participation and learning; practices tend to be fragmented into different centers of interest.

Table 2.  
Different educational approaches according to Bernstein's theory.

<b>Educational approach:</b>	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Romantic Child-centeredness</b>	<b>Constructivist</b>
<i>Classification</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Weak</i>
Principles	Focus on the acquisition of behavior. Children are not considered competent in setting up their own objectives and strategies	Variety of children's behavior is the object of development. Not a prescriptive scheme of behavior	Focus on promoting personal growth rather than on instructing children. Children are considered accountable for selecting their own projects and for self-regulation
Metaphor of learning	Learning as acquisition	Learning as exploration	Learning as construction and transformation

Goals of education	Children master procedures for external tasks. Focus on correctness	Well-being and self-regulation	Metacognitive dispositions; higher order thinking and understanding
Teaching/education	A piecemeal approach to learning. The activities relate to isolated elements of learning. repetition; memorization.	Children’s conducted global activities: they set goals; select tools and strategies	Project-based learning; children set up their own goals and collaborate; teachers promote
<i>Framing</i>	<i>Strong/visible</i>	<i>Weak/invisible</i>	<i>Weak/visible</i>
	Instructional script; children’s contributions should be filled in a prescriptive scheme; they are predictable; the expected answer	less directive approach; children are expected to regulate peer group relationships and individual behavior	High variety of scaffolding strategies, since the children’s thinking processes are at the center of the educational practice
	The teacher models the activity and has an expected behavior in mind	The teacher supports the child-initiated activities; gives freedom and monitors behavior	The teacher: expands children’s activities; promotes dialogue; privileges goal-based activities, in which some relevant aspects are highlighted in order to promote learning

By analyzing the educational settings in relation to the three critical dimensions of classification, framing and discourse, practitioners and researchers can map the position of their specific educational activities in the continuum of the three approaches of Child-centered practices, with opportunities to plot the route of their subsequent projects.

#### 4. EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION OF THE OBSERVATIONAL SCHEME IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

In order to understand the educational activities in relation to the Child-centered approach, an open observation scheme has been worked out, to situate the child in the complex system of practice, constituted by people, tools, norms of interaction, educational objectives (Adams et al., 2017)<sup>1</sup>.

The observational device does not isolate the child from the context of her/his environment, but it offers the opportunity to analytically reconstruct the organization of the educational activity (according to Strong/weak classification), the interactional texture that emerges within specific educational events (Strong/weak framing), and the level of cognitive

<sup>1</sup> In the “Erasmus+ 2019-1-UK01-KA203-061665 “Child-Centred Competences for early Childhood Education and Care”, the observational device was applied to identify different child-centered practices, as evidentiary basis to support an online course (Child-centred Competences for early Childhood Education and Care, 2021).

engagement, as well as the teachers' scaffolding strategies to promote children's learning (Vertical/Horizontal discourse). The goal is the recognition of the environmental conditions that affect each child's opportunities to participation and learning and the identification of the developmental paths.

As a result of the application of the observational device, the practitioners work out short narratives that represent prototypical episodes in their institutional settings. In turn, the episodes can become case studies that are characterized by all the contextual conditions that are relevant in the unfolding of an educational activity. Qualitative analysis (Erickson, 1987) may offer an evidentiary basis for:

- Recognizing the specific conditions that hinder the children's participation and learning according to the child-centered practice, especially the constraints to the recognition of children's voices, rights and agency;
- Promoting collaborative design of educational activities, in order to encourage children's exploration, dialogue and thinking processes;
- Conducting action-research projects within the services, in order to promote joint reflection among practitioner, to enhance the professional resources in the service.

The open observation scheme has been applied in different early Years educational settings, which, in turn, were analyzed according to the proposed Framework, and discussed with the practitioners, in order to reconstruct the practice and to identify opportunities to change. The different Child-centered approaches are introduced in the following examples. It is worth-noting that there is no single measure to characterize an educational event according to a given category, but the analysis highlights a system of possibilities that can evolve in specific directions.

The three examples differ in the degree in which the organization of the setting, the interactional patterns and the cognitive engagement of the activity combine together, to the establishment of the conditions for children's participation.

a. Instructional approach: learners' utterances evaluated in relation to an implicit ideal model; learners' contributions are valid only in relation to the teacher's perspective (strong classification and strong framing), as in table 3:

*Table 3.  
Example of the Instructional approach.*

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Episode</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
The activity lasts 40 minutes	The children are now disposed 2 for each table, one in front of the other; the objective is to make a drawing of a wood; they can pick up objects from the big box to make individually a collage. They work alone, but allowed to exchange ideas, tools, help. Ilaria is making a collage by placing all the light objects of a wood near the upper margin of her large paper sheet and the other objects progressively below, according to their weight. Therefore, clouds, small leaves and small fruits are above larger leaves and fruits. Accordingly, pebbles are above stones. the teacher tells her that she should draw	16 children, 9 f; 7 m, 5 year olds.  <b>WHERE</b>  The room is the largest of the school. It is called the "Color Room" but at 12am it is transformed in the lunch room	The teacher does not accept Ilaria's interpretation of the Wood and asks her to rely upon a "naturalistic model" of representation. She asks Matteo to follow the correct procedure in his artefact.

	<p>a “real” tree “otherwise one cannot understand that it is a wood” as the teacher says, “You have already put this [indexing a piece of bark] you need small branches”.</p> <p>The teacher suggests other children to draw a line to mark the separation of the wood and the underwood. She asks Matteo “try to make visible the water flowing from the spring”.</p>		
--	--	--	--

b. Learner-centered approach: learners’ experiences and differences are valued; multiplicity of voices. The teacher does not instruct; however, has set up the conditions for the learning situation (low classification, low framing, horizontal discourse):

*Table 4.  
Example of the Learner-centered approach.*

<b>Time:</b>	<b>episode</b> (.....)	<b>WHO</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<p>The activity lasts 30 minutes</p>	<p>The children sit in a circle and sing a song in unison. 6 children are very focused on singing; 3 listen and sometimes chat together; Mario dances. A child leaves the group and plays with a puzzle, another one enters in the playhouse. The teacher calls the children’s attention towards the singing group. She eventually asks each child in the circle to indicate her/his best friend. Marta is disappointed because the girl she has indicated as her best friend does not reciprocate. Progressively, the group loses its cohesion. Arianna goes to wash her teeth’s; Lorenzo plays with an airplane. There are 11 groups or individual children playing.</p>	<p>25 children, 12 females, 13 males. 5 years old.</p> <p><b>WHERE</b></p> <p>A large room in the pre-school/preparatory class</p>	<p>The teacher sets up the activity and tries to involve children by catching their attention; some children shift their attention toward other activities. The group activity gradually dissolves and some children begin individual activities.</p>

c. Constructivist approach: the teacher promotes exploration of new meanings and connects levels of thinking and arguing (Vertical discourse, low classification, low framing, encouraging multiple perspectives in conducting the activity):

Table 5.  
Example of the Constructivist approach.

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Episode</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<p>The activity lasts 15 minutes</p>	<p>The teacher asks the children to represent their daily route from home to school, by using small wooden sticks and blocks. The children look at the map. The route has some turns and inclinations. They recognize some elements of the landscape they went across (trees, stones, meadows, animals) and reproduce them using the objects on the table. A:” I shall mark the path with the small sticks M:” I put those high trees right here; here, I put the school because we started over there and arrived there [higher] Teacher: Why do you make the turn in this way? A: I would have made also the climb but I wasn’t able to G: “you can make a kind of ladder” Teacher: “How can you made the ladder?” A: “Make use of the sticks, a lot underneath, fewer on the top” Teacher “How many do you put on the bottom and how many on the top?” A “I try with 3 on the bottom, then 2 and 1 on the top M: “we should build it on the chair, which is the hill, how can we make it stable?” A: “We balance them”.</p>	<p>The children collaborate in small groups of 4, on a common task. In the observed group there are 4 children of mixed age (4 and 5 year-olds) and gender (2 males and 2 females)</p> <p><b>WHERE</b></p> <p>The setting is a multifunctional room. Previously, the children sketched a map of the route the school bus takes to bring them to the preschool. The map is projected onto a wall. The teacher also predisposes a construction set of small wooden sticks and other stuff.</p>	<p>During the activity the children discuss and develop strategies to represent their route to the preschool. They are collaborative and respectful of their peers’ ideas. Some children show good metacognitive competencies and reflect on their strategies (i.e. ‘if I lean the sticks on the wall, they don’t fall down and I ‘ll be able to make the climb’). The teacher’s interventions invite children to reflect on their strategies. This activity promotes competences in diverse experiential fields as: language, knowledge of the world, graphical representation.</p>

In the first example (Instructional approach), the setting is organized to support the individual activity (strong framing); the teacher adopts a strong implicit prescriptive model of a “naturalistic representation” of a woodland (strong classification); as a consequence, Ilaria’s abstract representation is not recognized as appropriate and she is asked to modify her artefact; Matteo is invited to add more conventional signs in his representation (vertical discourse). The children’s divergent points of view are not considered acceptable and not encouraged.

In the second example (Learner-centered approach), the teacher tries to direct the children’s attention toward a unified and structured activity (low classification), consisting in a common participation in a choir. However, the children tend to have a limited role in developing the activity (horizontal discourse) and soon feel disengaged; some show limited attentional clues, others start to play individually, creating 11 centers of interest (low

framing). As a result, the group is loosely connected, there is not a common center of attention, to exchange ideas and to construct new understandings.

In the third example (Constructivist approach), the teacher promotes the development of integrated competences in the children, by engaging them in a complex task (vertical discourse) consisting in a connected representation of their daily route from home to school in different formats: a collective drawing, a three-dimensional model (low classification), encouraging dialogical interactions and multiple perspectives in conducting the activity (low framing). Furthermore, the teacher's interventions are not directive, but oriented to promote the children's reflection on their cognitive strategies ("Why?", "How?").

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Quality Frameworks are useful tools to register a great amount of information about the magnitude of relevant dimensions of the Early Years educational settings. However, their usefulness relies in understanding their implicit rationales and as an opportunity to promote critical reflection among practitioners, as the principal agents of change and improvement of the internal quality of the setting. Through reflective documentation, practitioners can recognize the quality of their child-centered practice, by recognizing potential boundaries to the children's participation, the degree of control of the communication between adults and children, the opportunities for learning created by the curricular design, dialogic communication and meaningful experiences.

By the comparative analysis of different educational events, it is possible for researchers and practitioners to identify the particular structure of interaction, the opportunities and constraints that are offered to the children's participation and learning. In turn, this analysis allows for both a reflection on the implicit model of Child-centeredness and a progressive transformation of the educational practice.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, H., Short, E., Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Bogatić, K., Melia, R., Sanchez-Blanco, C. Teasley, C., & Sorzio, P. (2017). *Interpreting Child-Centredness to Support Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Care* (2017-1-UK01-KA201-036798. Project: "Interpreting Child-Centredness to Support Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Care"). Retrieved 21st June 2021 from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338690759\\_Observation\\_Framework\\_-\\_Interpreting\\_Child-centredness\\_to\\_Support\\_Quality\\_and\\_Diversity\\_in\\_Early\\_Childhood\\_Education\\_and\\_Care](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338690759_Observation_Framework_-_Interpreting_Child-centredness_to_Support_Quality_and_Diversity_in_Early_Childhood_Education_and_Care)
- Alexander, R. (2008). *Education for all, the quality imperative and the problem of pedagogy* (CREATE Pathways to Access. Research Monograph n. 20). Institute of Education, University of London. Retrieved from [http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf\\_documents/PTA20.pdf](http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA20.pdf)
- Bernstein, B. (1973). *Class, Codes and Control, Vol. III: Towards a theory of educational transmissions*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bernstein, B. (1999). Vertical and horizontal discourse: An essay. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(2), 157-173.
- Bruner, J. (1978). The role of dialogue in language acquisition. In A. Sinclair, R., J. Jarvella, & W. J. M. Levelt (Eds.), *The Child's Concept of Language*. New York: Springer.
- Child-centred Competences for Early Childhood Education and Care (2021). Retrieved 19th January 2022 from <https://early-education.org.uk/child-centred-competences-early-childhood-education-and-care/>

Enlarging the View. A Model to Promote Quality in ECEC Services by Integrating the Indicator Framework Approach to The Situational Perspective of Children's Learning

- Chung, S. & Walsh, D.J. (2000). Unpacking child-centredness. A history of meanings. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 32(2), 215-234.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2013). *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. Languages of Evaluation*. London: Routledge.
- Erickson, F. (1987). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.
- Erickson, F. (2006). Studying side by side: Collaborative action ethnography in educational research. In G. Spindler, L. Hammond (Eds.), *Innovations in Educational Ethnography. Theory, Methods, and Results* (pp. 235-257). New York: Psychology Press.
- Fuller, B. (2007). *Standardized Childhood. The Political and Cultural Struggle Over Early Education*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hendy, L. & Whitebread, D. (2000) Interpretations of independent learning in the Early Years. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 8(3), 245-252.
- Hammersley, M. (1995). Theory and evidence in qualitative research. *Quality and Quantity*, 29, 55-66.
- Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., & Cryer, D. (2004). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Moss, P. (2016). Why can't we get beyond quality? *Contemporary Issues in Early Education*, 17(1), 8-15.
- Pastori, G., & Pagani, V. (2020). *Coniugare valutazione standardizzata e approccio partecipativo-riflessivo. Un'esperienza di ricerca collaborativa nei servizi per l'infanzia italiani*. [Complementing standardized evaluation and reflexive-participatory approach. A collaborative research in Early Years Educational Services in Italy]. Retrieved 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021 from <https://boa.unimib.it/retrieve/handle/10281/276214/424926/6.%20Valentina%20Pagani%2c%20Giulia%20Pastori.pdf>
- Pastori, G.G. & Pagani, V. (2017). Is validation always valid? Cross-cultural complexities of standard based instruments migrating out of their context. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(5), 682-697.
- Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System Pre-K Manual*. Baltimore, MA: Brookes Publishing.
- Stipek, D. (2004). Teaching practices in kindergarten and first grade: different strokes for different folks?. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 19(4), 548-568.

## AUTHORS' INFORMATION

**Full name:** Paolo Sorzio

**Institutional affiliation:** Dept. of Humanities, University of Trieste

**Institutional address:** 8, via Lazzaretto Vecchio, 34123 Trieste, Italy

**Short biographical sketch:** Paolo is associate professor of "Qualitative Research Methodologies" and of "Educational Design" at the School of Education, University of Trieste. His interests are related to innovation in Early Childhood Services. He is co-author with Caterina Bembich of *La ricerca empirica in educazione* [Research Styles in Education], Rome: Carocci, an introductory text about different reasoning styles in educational research.

**Full name:** Caterina Bembich

**Institutional affiliation:** Dept. of Humanities, University of Trieste

**Institutional address:** 8, via Lazzaretto Vecchio, 34123 Trieste, Italy

**Short biographical sketch:** Caterina Bembich is Researcher at the University of Trieste, where she teaches "Experimental Pedagogy" and "Tools and techniques for educational research". Her research focuses on risk and protective factors in vulnerable educational contexts; on child-centred competences for early childhood education and care; on methodological reflection in education; on inclusive processes addressed through innovative methodologies. Among her publications with P. Sorzio (2021). *Misurare e Interpretare i processi di contrasto al rischio educativo* [Measuring and Interpreting the Educational Interventions to Contrast Risks in Education], Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia Publisher.