**The digital literacy and multimodal practices of young children (DigiLitEY)**

**WG 2 Young children's digital literacy and multimodal practices in early years settings, schools and informal learning spaces**

**Summary of Meeting 3**

**17-18 March 2016, Larnaca, Cyprus**

In-between the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the DigiLitEY COST Action, actions were taken to promote the goals of the Group, and particularly the attempts to identify the state of current knowledge on young children's digital literacy practices in formal and informal settings, and to elicit new understandings on teachers' roles, stances and uses of digital literacies in formal educational early years settings. Hence, interested participants received through email lists of resources identified for the review of related research through initial database searches. They also had a chance to examine and contribute to an interview protocol, which had been distributed through email and made available for immediate use through a shared collaborative platform.

During the 3rd meeting of the Action, members of the management committee and other interested delegates met in their respective working groups (WGs) over three sessions that took place on Friday, 18 March 2016. The three sessions of WG2 were organized in a way so that attention was paid to the themes and objectives of WG2 as those can be materialized through a review of literature/research, to areas of interest that may inform and expand the group's objectives and activities, and to issues relating to the continuing professional development of early literacy and primary teachers.

Discussion on the current state of knowledge in the area of young children's digital literacies in educational setting and in informal learning spaces (WG2 Objective 1) was introduced by the two co-chairs, who connected this to the preparation and expected publication of an extensive review of research in the next calendar year (2017). Lists of articles identified through a first round of database searches were distributed to participants to discuss possible key themes and identify gaps in knowledge in regards to young children's digital literacy practices in school settings and informal learning spaces. In the discussion that followed, participants suggested replacing the term "informal learning spaces" with "out-of-school contexts", challenging the distinction between formal (educational settings) and informal (learning spaces) and making the point that there might be three different types of learning (formal, non-formal, and informal), which might take place across spaces (e.g., school libraries may constitute in-school spaces of non-formal learning). Group members agreed that it was useful to (a) continue the discussion and problematization of this distinction as the review of research is developed, looking at what it might potentially offer to the broader discussion of the state of knowledge on related issues; and (b) to orient attention to the complexity of the out-of-school, non-formal learning spaces so that there is a balance between the group's objectives.

Other issues that were raised as points of interest in the review included:
- o The definition of "digital literacy" as well as methodologies that may be used in each of the studies, and might serve as criteria for organizing the review of literature;
- o The keywords and thus particular emphases of the published studies; it is important to note here that participants cautioned that the group and authors of the review should be (a) aware of their own assumptions or commitments in their use of keywords; and (b) alert to identify more keywords so that they become more analytic;
- o Attention to frameworks that might be specific to spaces (e.g., libraries, schools, synergies between schools and libraries)
- o The ways that users of digital technologies might be discussed (e.g., who is presented as an actor/agent, how librarians are collaborating with teachers, etc.)
- o The need to consider research that is published not only in English but also in other national languages.

At the end of the session, the group revisited the keywords that were identified in the second meeting in Tallinn (see Notes from Meeting 2) and combined keywords that seemed too similar (e.g., early primary years, early childhood). The group then decided to split the work among members, who volunteered to take the lead in reviewing articles in distinct thematic areas.

The second working group session included the following presentations that aimed at informing the objectives of the group and expanding the scope of its actions:
- *Artificial Intelligence in Education* – Isabel Machado Alexandre
- *Mediawise in Romania*: *A practitioner view on media literacy education* – Nicoleta Fotiade
- *Early childhood and primary teachers' digital biographies and pedagogical practices in Cyprus* – Maria Chrysostomou, Rafaella Marouletti, Kalia Georgiou, Stavroula Kontovourki

The first and second presentations focused on "alternative" ways in which artificial intelligence and media literacy education may inform early literacy practices, while the third presented preliminary findings from the exploration of early years teachers' uses of and experiences with digital literacies.

The third working group session ran in conjunction with the Think Tank that was held in parallel to the WG sessions and focused on teachers' in-service training on and through digital tools. In the WG2 session, participants were asked to report on the following (included in the group's plan that was emailed to participants prior to the meeting):
- Problems faced in early practitioners' (and primary teachers') in-service training as it relates to digital literacy
- Key research questions that may be developed
- Possible paths of action

Group participants reported on their individual and collective experiences in their respective countries to report that, across countries, there seems to be (a) an agreement

that there is little consistency across pre- and in-service training opportunities; (b) that training focuses more on broad terms like ICT (rather than digital literacy) and the use of technologies rather than pedagogical implications; (c) references to digital literacy and pedagogical practices may be integrated across training courses as well as in curricula that guide practice; (d) teachers' engagement in relevant professional development rests primarily on their own interest and need; (e) there is little evidence/information as per the quality of training (especially when sessions are offered by private companies) or as per the implementation of ideas in classroom practice; (f) there is evidence of some efforts to engage teachers in meaningful professional learning, e.g., through the organization of activities that provide teachers the opportunity to teach others, to share ideas, or develop plans of action at the school level.

In the last part of Working Group Session 3, WG2 was joined by Think Tank participants. Jackie Marsh referred to the work of the Think Tank and mentioned that a MOOC platform with cases deriving from teachers' action research may be piloted across countries. She added that other funding opportunities will be pursued, while a White Paper on teacher education and digital literacy will be developed to describe what's being done and what research questions are considered important in the early years teacher education.