

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange



Navigating Human Rights

Instead of using these provocations for 'reflection', we hope that you will use them to assist in a process of 'diffraction' that generates uncertainty and new ways of thinking.

"Donna Haraway proposes diffraction as an alternative to the well-worn metaphor of reflection. As Haraway suggests, diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference" (Barad, 2007, p.29).

Agency

'agency is defined as being able to make choices and decisions to influence events and to have an impact on one's world. Supporting children's agency is about recognising that children have a right to make choices and decisions and are capable of initiating their own learning' (DEEWR, 2009).

"Article 12. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UNCRC, 1989).

Charter of Three Rights

The intent of the session is to explore the Charter of three rights, written by Loris Malaguzzi in 1993.

- The rights of children
- The rights of teachers
- The rights of families

Malaguzzi described children, teachers and families as a 'triad bound by the ties of interdependency who can only find a way to new conceptualisations of their identity together" (Cagliari et al. 2016, p.163)

Deb Mann

- "Reflecting on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the middle of a global pandemic and the Black Lives Matter revolution is challenging. Trying to articulate the emotions and truths of this concept for Black children seems absurd.
- Aboriginal children's rights are entwined
- Since time immemorial, Aboriginal rights have been nonexistent, hence the ongoing and systematic removal of children and the enslavement of these children...
- Current perception is that Aboriginal children are vulnerable and in need of intervention from the dominant mainstream education systems. Most funded early years programs that are implemented for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are expected to improve attendance, numeracy, and literacy. There has been minimal evaluation of the effectiveness on how mainstream educational programs promote community designed and driven programs that are derived from and mindful of a culturally safe perspective" (2020).



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Deb Mann continued

- “The historical and ongoing success of the educational project in Reggio Emilia, is in part because it was founded on a rights platform. It is timely that Australian educators listen to the global call for respectful relationships and consider the fact that First Nation Peoples do not enjoy the same rights as others. It is time for everyone to face up to the fact that what has been delivered in educational settings needs rethinking, change and new ways of teaching that truly respects and represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, priorities and knowledges if outcomes are to be improved. I believe Australian early childhood needs a revolution to challenge the status quo and make way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to design, determine and implement early education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children themselves”

Early Years Learning Framework

“Early childhood educators guided by the Framework will reinforce in their daily practice the principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention). The Convention states that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages” (DEEWR, 2009, p.5).

“The Council of Australian Governments is committed to closing the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade. Early childhood education has a critical role to play in delivering this outcome” (DEEWR, 2009, p.5).

Education is a right

“Education is a right of all, of all children, and as such is a responsibility of the community. Education is an opportunity for the growth and emancipation of the individual and the collective; it is a resource for gaining knowledge and for learning to live together; it is a meeting place where freedom, democracy, and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted” (Indications, 2009, p.7).

“Within the plurality of cultural, ideological, political, and religious conceptions, education lives by listening, dialogue and participation; it is based on mutual respect, valuing the diversity of identities, competencies, and knowledge held by each individual and is therefore qualified as secular and open to exchange and cooperation” (Indications, 2009, p.7)

Education is a political act

“as we reflect on our sense of responsibility, we undertake choices on behalf of and alongside children and families. This is about education as a political act, reflecting the values that we hold close and aspire to.



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Education is a political act continued

Malaguzzi's call to solidarity reaches us at a time when the urgency to come to terms with new things is stark and an overtly political stance is necessary. May we find new ways and engage in open dialogue in open exchange" (Giamminuti, REAIE podcast, 2020).

Image of the child

"During the last sixty years, we have taken a deterministic perspective with a determinist point of view. In this perspective, the child is considered a sort of sponge, a container and the child absorbs, as does a sponge, everything from their environment. The focus is on the extent that the child's surroundings affect their education. The child is still substantially a sort of teddy bear; it is a waiting child, a child that waits, that hopes to get the necessary stimuli from the environment, provided that he fortunately arrives to a secure port that will allow him, in one way or another, to take control of his life's circumstances" (Hoyuelos, 2013, p78).

"Our concept of the child no longer considers them isolated and egocentric where they busy themselves as performing objects. It does not highlight only the cognitive features and does not disdain the feeling or anything that is not logical. It does not consider the role of the reflexive domain with ambiguity. Far from it, our concept of the child is one that conceptualises a child that is rich in potential, strong, powerful competent and above all, related to adults and other children" (Hoyuelos, 2013, p.82).

Participation

'Parental participation' in this instance is a description of democratic practice rather than a means of social control or technological transfer. (Dahlberg, Moss, Pence 1999 p.77).

"the competencies of each person (child and adult) can be expressed and find appreciation ...where the concept of democracy is not based on who has the majority but on the construction of consent, of agreed meaning, of mutual consent" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.28).

"When school and parents are able to converge toward a cooperative experience, an interactive experience that is the rational and advantageous choice of everyone concerned (we are all pursuing more meaningful experiences), then it is easy to see how hostile and mistaken is the pedagogy of self-sufficiency and prescription, and how friendly and fertile is the strategy of participation and shared research" (Reggio Children, 2019, p.19).

"feel a solidarity of practice and ideals" (Cagliari et al, p. 353).



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Pedagogical Documentation

pedagogical documentation is to be shared to generate social and political debate about childhood for a new collective culture of childhood (Giamminuti, REAIE podcast, 2020).

"Our first concern should be how to make the life of the school and community understandable, visible, discussable, and shareable with other people. . .

Documentation is not there simply to inform people; it is there to involve people" (Elena Giacomini, 2007).

Penny Cook, the rights of children

"Young Aboriginal children have the right to belong when they come to early childhood centres – in curriculums and environments that reveal each child's strengths; in relationships that respect language and culture; and in partnerships with the families who know and love their children best.

We need to be in constant conversation with our pedagogies, practices and regulations, asking of them- which children are made visible and which children are hidden? Which children are heard, and which children are silenced? Whose truths are told?" (Penny Cook, 2020)

Partnerships

"Building partnerships with families can lead to other ways of seeing the world, deeper reflection on current practices and beliefs, opening the setting up to diversity and recognising who is 'invisible'. Approaching partnerships from this perspective provides social justice learning opportunities for all stakeholders".

(Hadley and Rouse, ECA, 2019)

- Do you have stories where you have seen the child differently, or the world differently because of your relationships with a family?
- Was it challenging/confronting?
- Does this become an opportunity for critical reflection to consider our biases, our blind spots, our potentially privileged ways of knowing?
- Are families' views/ideas welcomed?
- Does a culture exist where families can disagree or think differently?

Progettazione The right to research

This strategy of Progettazione, is a metacognitive process that entrusts teachers to orient the teaching and learning process. It affords teachers the right to research.

"The strategy of Progettazione is defined in a way that is not predefined" (Strozzi, 2019).



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Prologue

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE) would like to respond to the global call for respectful relationships and on behalf of our members declare that we stand in solidarity with Australia's First Peoples' and advocate to uphold human rights for all citizens. May these tragedies act as a catalyst for reflection and change, or as Malaguzzi said, "one of the many itineraries for orienting our walking together" (Cagliari et al., 2016, p.106).

Respectful Relationships

- The early years are a critical time to help children develop a secure sense of self and healthy respectful relationships with others to value diversity.
- Focus on play as a context for observation of emerging attitudes in young children.
- Intentional teaching as a strategy to plan experiences for children to develop empathy, problem solving and help seeking skills.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/respectfulrelationships.aspx?Redirect=1>

Rights and responsibilities

Rights and responsibilities are inextricably connected and coexist. Article 15. Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. (UNCRC, 1989).

Rhetoric or embedded in practice?

We must ensure that we talk about and profess to do, does not become rhetoric.

- The environment
- Pedagogical approaches
- Image of the child
- Relationships with children

Special rights

Ivana Soncini, a member of the Pedagogical Co-ordinating team in Reggio Emilia says,

"Our founder, Loris Malaguzzi, thought it was important to include children with special rights in our schools. He felt that we could improve our pedagogical experience and understanding for all children as a result of this inclusion" (Edwards, et al, 2012, p.189)

"We wanted to embrace, not ignore, the concept of differences among children" (Edwards, et al, 2012, p.189).



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Special rights continued

"Work with a child who has special rights is considered to be a shared educational task involving the parents, the child's classroom teachers, the pedagoga of the infant-toddler centre or preschool and myself" (Soncini cited in Edwards, et al, 2012, p. 193).

The rights of children

'Children have the right to be recognised as subjects of individual, legal, civil and social rights; as both source and constructors of their own experience, and thus active participants in the organisation of their identities, abilities and autonomy, through relationships and interactions with their peers, with adults, with objects and with the real and imaginary events of intercommunicating worlds' (Reggio Children, 2019, p.3).

The right to 'formazione' (professional learning)

Professional conversations and dialogue (formazione) shape the professional learning of teachers.

'formazione' is used for the process of self-formation, of continuous evolution, 'evolving' or 'evolution' being terms frequently used by Malaguzzi in preference to 'develop' or 'development' with their implications of linearity and predictability.

Evolving is about responding unpredictably to contingencies, "a-rhythmic and discontinuous", rather than the "uniform, regular advance" implied by 'professional development' (Moss, 2018).

The rights of parents

"It is the right of parents to participate actively, and with voluntary adherence to the basic principles, in the growth, care, and development of their children who are entrusted to the public institution.

This means no delegating and no alienation. Instead, it confirms the importance of the presence and the role of parents, who have always been highly valued in our institutional tradition" (Reggio Children, 2019, p.15).

The rights of teachers

"It is the right of teachers and workers of each school to contribute to the study and preparation of the conceptual models that define educational content, objectives and practices. This takes place through open discussion among the staff, with the pedagogical coordinators and the parent advisory committees in harmony with the rights of children and families; through cooperation on the choices of methods, didactics, research and observation projects; through a definition of the fields of experience, ongoing teacher self-training and general staff development, cultural initiative and the tasks of community management.'" (Reggio Children, 2019, p.9).



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The right to uncertainty

"Teachers have the right to plan and define educational content, objectives and practices" (Reggio Children, 2019, p. 10).

Malaguzzi dismissed the idea of an education built on certainty. He called this a 'prophetic pedagogy'.

Educational content, objectives and strategies for practice are not predefined in Reggio.

'The right to uncertainty is a consciousness of complexity' (Morin, 2008, p.46). It should not be condemned as 'not knowing'.

United Nations Convention on the rights of the child

Are these articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the child being honoured for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and other Indigenous children throughout the world?

- Article 3 All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.
- Article 28 Children have the right to an education.
- Article 29 Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.
- Article 30 Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live, as long as this does not harm others.

In conclusion:

REAIE recognises their ethical responsibility to advocate for reconciliation, social justice, democracy and equity, utilising respectful relationships, listening, reciprocity and participation.

Hope for a shared humanity can be realised through these rights in educational contexts with and for children.

[#blacklivesmatter](#)

Questions to critically reflect on:

- Does the UN Convention on the rights of the child, in reality, uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia and Indigenous children in other countries? Do you, in your practice, draw on the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
- What are the commitments embedded in the Australian ECA Code of Ethics that might help us?
- What are our responsibilities as professionals in education?



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