

# Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange



## Navigating Participation

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).**

### Children as protagonists

"active, curious, attentive to the world; a child with a mind provided with endless learning possibilities, a plastic mind that changes and takes shape through learning" (Giudici and Cagliari cited in Fler, 2018, p.1462).

Participation is enabled by:

- Listening to children to elaborate on their understanding and interpretations
- Creating new contexts to position oneself in the proximal zone of a child's thinking
- Creating new contexts for children to express their understanding through works, drawing, clay and other materials or experiences

### Citizenship

"Instead of assuming that the purpose is to help that individual become an autonomous and self-regulated decision-maker (the "informed voter"), we need to start from the point of view that democratic citizenship is fundamentally about participation--becoming a protagonist in a group, a community whose participation is continually transformed by, and transforms, the directions and activities taken.

The goal, therefore, is interdependence rather than independence, and the child who can think "with others" rather than "for himself or herself" is the one who best exemplifies the gift bestowed by education as relationship" (Edwards, 1995, p.11).

### Culture

A culture that welcomes and embraces democracy

Schools as cultural settings

Culture is not acquired as a process of transmission

Children are viewed as co-constructors of culture

### Democracy

"The process starts in the awareness that the more consensus and contributions it has, the more it can offer in terms of achievement. Progressive achievements capable of pushing forward with the themes of research, realisation and debate, uniting specific cultural situations with situations of organisation and practicality inside and outside the school" (Malaguzzi in Cagliari et al, 2016, p. 234).



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### Documentation/Exhibition – Bikes – lots of them

#### Documentation/Exhibition/Participation

"Creating exhibitions for the city and within the city, one of the activities of the Malaguzzi centre, is itself a form of participation and active citizenship" (Reggio Children, 2014, p. 15).

"The walls rise and fall, stop and then start with a new rhythm. The walk is long and in parts is dark with bends. Often against the dazzling light you can see people coming the other way.

Bells ring to warn of bicycles as yet unseen. Calm voices in many different languages are drowned by trains in transit. A multicultural world renewing itself each moment – always the same and always different".

#### Families as protagonists or partners?

"Quality Area 6 focuses on supportive, respectful relationships with families which are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children. Community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration also contribute to children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

As well, the child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation; they are part of a much wider community. Children benefit from services engaging with local communities because these partnerships strengthen children's interest and skills in being active contributors to their community. Collaborative partnerships are achieved when the service's philosophy has a strong commitment to valuing diversity, inclusive practice and connecting to the community" (ACECQA, 2018, p.248).

#### Families as protagonists

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.17).

#### Formazione

"...as a daily existential dimension, an attitude that deeply marks our personal and professional identities ...an indispensable vehicle for strengthening the quality of our interaction with children.

It is also the right of children to have a competent teacher who can enter into a relationship of reciprocal listening, who can change and renew herself dynamically with the utmost attention to the changes that take place in the reality in which the children live' (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 133)





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### History of the educational project

"The origin of public ECEC institutions was therefore rooted in the collective struggles of progressive movements for the promotion of civil rights: on one side there were women's movements claiming equal opportunities (such as the right to employment and maternity leave), while on the other social justice movements claimed a more equal society in which the right to education should be granted to all children, especially those from lower social classes" (Lazzari, 2012, p. 557).

### Participation is an invitation (Aurora 5 years, Reggio Emilia)

"Participation is the value and strategy that defines the way in which the children, the educators and the parents are the stakeholders in the educational project: it is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived day by day in the encounter with other and in the interpersonal relationships" (Reggio Children, 2010, p.10).

### Pedagogy of relationships

"We consider relationships to be a fundamental, organising strategy of our educational system" (Malaguzzi, cited in Edwards, 1995, p.1). "it makes possible the greatest density, richness and complexity of communications, negotiations and collaborative problem solving. The three years spent together allow the group to construct a history of relationship and a sharing of culture that creates the sense of community and guarantees the quality of life and wellbeing for children as part of families" (Malaguzzi, cited in Edwards, 1995, p.8).

### Social constructivism

"Learning is a subjective construction process that is strengthened by the group dimension where the cooperative exchanges of thoughts can enable progresses, new formulations, and new and deeper understanding – dimensions where also the play, the irony, the pleasure of making attempts, discovering and challenging the others and one's self are an integral part of the relational and learning dynamics" (Giudici and Cagliari cited in Fler, 2018, p.1467).

### Solidarity

Carlina Rinaldi said that "participation is an educational strategy that characterises our way of being school and doing school.

Participation involves the children, the families, and the teachers and is viewed not only as taking part in something but being part- the essence, the substance of a common identity, a "we" which comes alive through participating"(Rinaldi cited in Cagliari et al, 2006, p.28).



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### In conclusion

"...we need socio-cultural diversity, both as a value and out of self-interest to ensure our future. Reggio is an important example of that diversity...."

We also need more Reggios, not in the sense of Reggio clones, but of other communities which are prepared to embark on local cultural projects of childhood, to combine utopian thought and action, to dream about the future, to hope for a better world" (Dahlberg & Moss cited in Rinaldi, 2006 p. 21).

"Every single difference is like a musical note that vibrates; similar to the keys on a piano that play an interesting symphony" (Hoyuelos, 2020).

### Questions to critically reflect on:

- Are you a courageous educator or team? What possibilities do you offer for families to give you honest feedback?
- How do you think creatively about the organisational structure of your program so that it achieves your pedagogical values and intents?
- Do you really draw on the expertise of families?
- What strategies did you use so that parents see the value of being involved; to make the time to participate in the project?
- What is the vision of the leadership team to drive change and innovation?

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