

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange



Transforming Leadership

Quotes and Provocations

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).

The intent of the session

- To understand the difference between leadership and pedagogical coordination
- Explore the question - What is pedagogical coordination in Reggio Emilia?
- Explore the role of the pedagogista
- Reflect on the image of the educator/teacher in a system of pedagogical coordination

History

"During the 1920's, a fascist regime established a stronghold in Italy. The policies of the regime suppressed the study of the social-sciences and excluded new educational theories being developed in the world by educators like John Dewey. The preschools run by the Catholic Church tended to receive more favourable support if they were allied or associated with Mussolini. Mussolini himself is purported to have believed that democracy was 'beautiful in theory, [but] in practice it [was] a fallacy. He was a totalitarian leader who used the educational system to indoctrinate students in fascist beliefs" (Wells, n.d. p.4).

"the commitment to the education of young children in those years was motivated by the desire to build a new society together as a reaction to fascism into the war, through giving a new meaning to human and civil existence" (Malaguzzi 1995 cited in Moss, 2013).

Was Malaguzzi a leader?

"leader or leadership never crops up anywhere in the book, at least in relation to Malaguzzi and Reggio Emilia, nor are these words I have ever heard used in my conversations with educators in the city. 'Leader' and 'leadership' are not terms that seem to fit comfortably with the ethos of this pedagogical project or the character of Malaguzzi. Perhaps, but this is pure speculation, the word 'leader' aroused uncomfortable memories and has negative connotations, a reminder of 'Il Duce' (the leader) as Mussolini was known and his 20 years fascist dictatorship, an experience that Reggio's school deliberately set out to contest and to prevent recurring" (Moss, 2015, p.15).



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Intellectual Leader

"He was a man of many interests, great curiosity and incessant border crossing, never losing his delight at encountering new ideas, new perspectives and new friends. A man who wrote poetry, loved theatre and drama, and was very well and very widely read. A man who kept abreast of the latest developments and debates in politics, economics, culture and science. A man who wanted a modern education that understood and responded to contemporary thinking and knowledge whilst never losing sight of its responsibility for the future" (Cagliari et al. 2016, p. xvii).

(Stamopolous, 2012, p.42) reminds us that to "successfully lead knowledge development, educational leaders need to 'lead with intent', to provide the intellectual stimulation that encourages thinking, learning and reflection".

Democratic Leader

"an ethos of cooperation and dialogue and practiced in close relationship with the 'frontline'" (Cagliari, et al, 2016, p.xvii).

"taking the pedagogical pulse, talking and listening" (Cagliari et al. 2016, p. xvii).

Democratic Professional

Paulo Freire (1921-97) writes, 'I must respect positions opposed to my own, positions that I combat earnestly and with passion (2004, p.66). The educator as democratic professional may offer her a "reading of the world', but at the same time her role is to 'bring out the fact that there are other 'readings of the world', different from the one being offered as the educator's own, and at times antagonistic to it" (Freire, 2004, p.96) cited in (Moss, 2014, p.90).

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"Early childhood education, I would argue, is in need of transformative change, moving away from the much-heard story of quality and high returns and from the up-and-coming story of markets, stories I find both implausible and unpalatable. We need, to quote the words of Toney Judt, to 'conceive of a different set of arrangements to our common advantage', and we need to 'know how to talk about these things'. We need, in short, to tell and hear more stories, old and new"". (Moss, 2014, p.75).

Neoliberalism

"education produces far more than what can be measured." If we look at the role of pedagogical documentation as an example, it is "shared to generate social and political debate about childhood, a new collective culture of childhood." (Giamminuti, 2020)



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Why do we talk so much about leadership today?

We talk about leadership because it is:

- Regulatory
- Dominant discourse
- Political

Pedagogical Co-ordination

- The promotion of a culture of children and of the infant toddler centres that affirms and realised at the same time the rights of children and families, of woman and of men.
- The development of guidelines that support the educational proposal of the infant toddler centres and preschools.
- The design of specific research plans.
- The realisation of the general policy guidelines in collaboration with the Consigli Inanzia Citta' and the Municipality.
- The elaboration of an (annual or –biannual) professional development plan extended to all operators and open to other state, autonomous or cooperative educational institution.
- Cultural exchanges at national and international level, the construction of collaborative plans with the service of Officina Educativa, in an optics of vertical continuity (0-14).
- Counselling in the field of zero-six school policies in relation to the local, nation and international context. (Fillipini, 2018).

The system of pedagogical coordination

- Pedagogical Director
- Pedagogical co-ordinating team - Pedagogiste
- The role of the pedagogista
- City Children's Councils
- The declaration of intent or statement of intent
- Progettazione
- Professional learning/Formazione
- The image of the teacher
- The value of organisation

"the responsibility of the pedagogical team and of the central administration office, must be recognised and recognisable, but also limited, respected and most of all 'participatory, in the sense that it should make people share in it" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.161).



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Pedagogista/Pedagogiste

The pedagogista.....

- Has direct management of the centres with particular reference to the stability of the educational context.
- The definition and predisposition of the environments, the organisation of the day.
- Interweaving among themselves, some variables such as interpersonal relations, the use of time and space.
- The identification of didactic projects and the accompaniment to their realisation is another role of the pedagogista (Fillipini, 2018).

Declaration of Intent

'It is essential to build an individual and group learning pathway, where good teaching practices are structured on a 'ecology' of relationships that can include places, times and conditions that are appropriate and valuable for children and adults, an ecology understood as a connecting structure that gives value to the dynamic of dialogue between the various protagonists of daily relationships that develop in infant-toddler centres and schools: children, adults, spaces, materials and tools" (Filippini, 2017).

"The declaration of intent is democratic and binds us together. People cannot say that they did not understand the direction of the team as it is written down at the beginning. It's the why and then we work out how it to do it" (Fillipini, 2018)

Progettazione

'Progettazione' is a strategy of mind an action that is respectful of an in agreement with the learning processes of children and adults; It welcomes doubt, uncertainty and error as resource is and is capable of modifying itself in relationship to evolving context. Progettazione Is realised through processes of observation, documentation and interpretation in a recursive relationship. Progettazione is realised through a tight synergy between organisation and educational research (Istituzione del Comune di Reggio Emilia, 2009, p.12) cited in Giamminuti, 2013, p.25.

Reconceptualising leadership

"Of course, there are well defined responsibilities and there is a strategy to manage them all" (Rinalidi, 2006, p.160)

Formazione

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.



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Formazione continued

"Our professional learning must be influenced by the world around us. Not just new approaches to education, but what is happening in the world. Local events and global events. Being in touch with the world enables you to be in touch with the world" (Fillipini, 2018).

Image of the teacher

The statement of intent declares an image of the competent teacher.

"Each year we ask our teachers to write a new 'statement of intents'; that is, what they intend to propose and why, to share with their colleagues, with the parents, trying not to make this declaration of intention a rigid plan, but a progressive route which is negotiated in everyday life with working group and families" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.163-164).

The value of organisation

"organisation is always an important pedagogical factor" (Cagliari, 2016, p.102).

"each figure is recognised for his or her value, including his or her pedagogical value, rather than for his or her role. Then we see that there may be the person who has an extraordinary skill for working out schedules or keeping the cash box, and it is good that they should have those defined tasks, just as it is good that there should be a person who has the task of planning weekly professional learning sessions, or keeping the records, all based on the value which the individual person can bring" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.160).



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In conclusion:

I would like to conclude tonight's presentation by thinking about the thread that has held this series together. The thread of transformation.

Peter Moss says, 'from time to time, [in early childhood education], there are moments where something new and different may happen, something that increases all participant's capacity to act and create interesting connections and features' (Moss, 2014, p.79).

I think now is the time to act. It is time to revisit our conceptions of leadership. To move away from autocratic styles and conceptions, which have been seen in recent months in different parts of the world, can lead to violence and democracy as a value, diminishing. It is time to embrace new frontiers. New frontiers which require courage and ethics. We would like to encourage you to explore new conceptualisations of leadership, if you wish to call it that.

We hope that our webinar tonight is an opportunity to reflect on how you grapple with your conceptualisation and actualisation of leadership and pedagogical co-ordination. We hope that we have opened a door to new conceptualisations; systems of organisation and metaphors of conductors. We hope that these conceptualisations open your hearts and minds to new perspectives and possibilities for the future.

A conceptualisation that reflects the interdependence of human beings and systems, that moves away from power and autocratic leadership and creates contexts of respect and re-cognition of the other; contexts of listening, contexts of learning, contexts of democracy. We hope that diffractive gazes on all aspects of your work results in you, your team and your pedagogy endlessly transforming and evolving year after year.

Reference:

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Questions to critically reflect on:

- What sits at the heart of your leadership practice or aspirations for leadership? Do you value the ideas of humility, equity, uncertainty, openness and difference?
- Are you a leader, a manager or a conductor?
- What do you aspire to be?



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