

Pedagogical Documentation as an Effect of Globalization

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In this article, we review briefly some of the literature from the Reggio Emilia approach that relates to documentation and how it is connected to child observation. Further, we provide a brief account of the discourses of globalization as applied to Reggio Emilia education in general and the use of documentation specifically. We conclude that the importation of the Reggio Emilia approach can be seen in part as a search for a viable alternative to the standards and accountability movement, the availability of the global locally, and the accessibility of patterns of consumption and desire.

The educational approach used in Reggio Emilia, Italy, has received much attention in early childhood education. Reggio Emilia education is discussed in the literature and at conferences and is used by early childhood educators in classrooms around the globe. Further, particular practices in early childhood education are changing as a result of the accountability/standards movement and pressure for school reform, as well as global, social, technological and economic transformation. A specific example is the changing nature of traditional child observation as used in the field for curricular decision-making (Grieshaber, Halliwell, Hatch & Walsh, 2000; Hatch, Grieshaber, Halliwell, & Walsh, 2001; Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002).

Specifically, in preschools in one state in the United States, teachers reported that they used child observation for meeting external expectations for academic progress (Hatch, Grieshaber, Halliwell, & Walsh, 2001; Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002); preschool teachers in an Australian state appear to be moving in the same direction as their counterparts in the U.S. (Grieshaber et al, 2000). Although perhaps standards-driven, the conceptualization and direction of changing observation practices are also being influenced by the growing global attention to a particular Reggio Emilia method - the teaching method that is referred to as pedagogical document

The Reggio Emilia Approach

Shortly after World War II, the local authority in the northern Italian Reggio Emilia began the creation of a network of early childhood institutions to serve children from birth to age six. Under the leadership of Loris Malaguzzi, the pedagogical practices that emerged incorporated the work of theorists like Jean Piaget, yet were created by and within the community of children, part teachers working as partners. The community partners have expressed the focus is to continually make public the multiple voices and ideas of children. An educational method used within Reggio Emilia schools is the process of pedagogical documentation, a material content that records child activity and teacher/child work and a process that involves rigorous, democratic reflection within teach parent, and political relationships (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999).

There is a growing body of literature and video recordings that describe how the Reggio Emilia approach can be incorporated into early childhood programs in general. Some of these include the edited collections by Edwards, Gandini and Forman (1993; 1998), Fu, Stremmel and Hill (2002), Hendrick (1997), and Katz and Cesarone (1994). While a literature review is not the purpose here, we use some illustrations from Reggio Emilia-inspired publications to establish understanding about documentation, its purposes, and how it is undertaken.

The study and explanation of documentation has been widespread and includes dissertations (e.g., Rankin, 1996; Sussna, 1995), documentation as a technique for teaching young children (MacNaughton & Williams, 1998), and the in-depth discussion of documentation techniques and approaches (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Forman & Fyfe, 1998; Gandini, 2002; Goldhaber, Smith & Sortino, 1997; Helm, Beneke & Steinheimer, 1998; Malaguzzi, 1993; Vecchi, 1993). Vecchi (1993) describes a number of functions of documentation. They range from documentation being used as a "democratic possibility to inform the public of the contents of schools" (p. 121), to an indispensable approach to learning:

Recently our interests have also shifted more and more toward analysis of the processes of learning and the interconnections between children's different ideas, activities and representations. All of this documentation – the written descriptions, transcriptions of children's words, photographs, and now the videotapes – becomes an indispensable source of materials that we use everyday to be able to "read" and reflect critically, both individually and collectively, on the experience we are living, the project we are exploring. This allows us to construct theories and hypotheses which are not arbitrary and artificially imposed on the children. (p.122)

Documentation is a major characteristic of schools in Reggio Emilia and takes a significant amount of time. It is also an integral part of what is displayed in the schools. Machines essential for documenting children's ideas, activities and representations include cameras, tape recorders, slide projectors, typewriters, video cameras, computers and photocopiers (Vecchi, 1993, p. 122). Space is fundamental for displaying children's ideas and representations: "Throughout the school the walls are used as spaces for both temporary and permanent exhibitions of what the children and teachers have created: Our walls speak and document" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p.57). Time is another significant factor in the documentation process: "Documentation and time to study the documentation are essential for a successful project. This is perhaps the first priority in Reggio Emilia, with great emphasis placed on time to study the documentation" (Forman, Lee, Wrisley & Langley, 1993, p. 249).

Child Observation

In early childhood education, child observation has a long history and was associated originally with the child study movement that began with G. Stanley Hall in the US in the late nineteenth century (Weber, 1984). The focus was direct observation of children for the collection of data, as it was thought that "The 'true needs' of the pupil would be revealed through direct study of the child in naturalistic settings" (Weber, 1984, p. 48). This led Hall to make a major claim on the basis of the data he was collecting: "the data of child development should provide the content of the curriculum" (Weber, 1984, p. 49). While child observation has since come to serve diverse purposes in the health, welfare and education professions, in early childhood education it represents an expression of the holistic philosophies informing the field, one of the central tenets of a child-centred curriculum (McAuley, 1993). Within this tradition, teachers are considered as gatherers of information about children "in order to build a more complete picture of them" (Perry, 1997, p. 27). Teachers also reflect on this information in order to "make connections between the new information and her [their] previous readings and knowledge" (Perry, 1997, p. 27). Recently, Mille Almy endorsed the idea that the core of early childhood education comes from observing children: "Carefully observing children as they plan and building curriculum that's appropriate for each child from what we see and hear. That should be the core" (Greenberg, 2000, p. 6).

Our studies of child observation in one state in the US and one state in Australia show a patterned relationship between the advance of accountability concerns and the retreat of traditional child observation. Teachers in both countries, but especially those in the United States, are moving from using child observation as a strategy for developing curriculum based on what children know and need, to using child observation as a technology for monitoring and evaluating academic progress in relation to a narrow set of externally imposed standards. We see the movement toward accountability and away from traditional child observation bringing about negative consequences for early childhood teachers and children. Teachers are feeling less professional and more stressed. Children are experiencing anxiety and sometimes failure because they are expected to perform at preset levels on a narrowly-defined curriculum that often excludes consideration of their individual interests and needs (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002).

Child Observation and Documentation

There are various interpretations of the relationship between documentation and child observation. For example, Katz (1998) understands child observation to have been subsumed by documentation: "The current term documentation, of which traditional observation techniques are a part..." (p. ix). We argue that documentation differs from child observation in several ways, even though many of the ideas that informed the work of educators in Reggio Emilia originated in the U.S. Malaguzzi (1993) has articulated the principles, philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of the Reggio Emilia approach and he has also acknowledged the contribution of theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Rousseau, Erikson, Bronfenbrenner, Kagan, and

Gardner. Significantly, Malaguzzi (1993) has also discussed how some of the ideas for which these theorists are well known have been re-worked in the Reggio Emilia context. Gandini (2002) too has indicated how "new theoretical interpretations, new hypotheses, ideas, and strategies about learning and teaching" (p. 15) have been developed through continuous research and analysis of practice in the Reggio Emilia schools.

Dahlberg et al (1999) state that pedagogical documentation is a tool for reflecting on pedagogical practice (p. 145), but that in Reggio Emilia programs "they have questioned the dominant ideas behind observation and documentation" (p. 145). So in Reggio Emilia schools, while pedagogical documentation is a major part of the approach, it is not oriented toward "mapping some universal and objective social reality" (p. 145), as can be the case with traditional child observation. Rather, the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogical documentation is local, contextual and a process of co-construction amongst children and teachers. Dahlberg et al (1999) clearly specify the difference between what they understand as child observation and pedagogical documentation:

As we understand it, the purpose of 'child observation' is to assess children's psychological development in relation to already predetermined categories produced from developmental psychology and which define what the normal child should be doing at a particular age. The focus in these observations is not children's learning processes, but more on the idea of classifying and categorizing children in relation to a general schema of developmental levels and stages... 'Child observation' therefore is mainly about assessing whether a child is conforming to a set of standards. 'Pedagogical documentation' by contrast is mainly about trying to see and understand what is going on in the pedagogical work and what the child is capable of without any predetermined framework of expectations and norms. (p. 146)

Connecting Observation and Documentation

A closer connection between Reggio Emilia approaches and child observation may exist where, as Almy (Greenberg, 2000) says, there is careful observation of children as they play, and curriculum that is appropriate for each child is built from what is seen and heard. This may be so where aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach have been used in programs in the U.S. For example, Goldhaber et al (1997) spent several years "trying to figure out how to integrate the Reggio Emilia approach" into their program (p. 199). Similarly, Rankin, Cannon, Corsaro, Damian, Perry, Rollo and Rochwarg (1993) have talked about how they did not

...intend to duplicate the Reggio experience... we want to use certain principles and ideas suggested by the Reggio experience. For example, just as the Reggio approach bases itself on listening to children and observing their work, so we can constantly guide ourselves with our observations of children. (p. 270)

According to Diane, a participating teacher, "Tape-recording children's conversations has become indispensable to me in assessing children's interests and planning curriculum" (p. 273). Tape-recording is just another way of recording child observations and using them for planning curriculum. However, it appears that the Rankin et al (1993) understanding of curriculum, like that of Almy (Greenberg, 2000), may well occur within the parameters of child development and a child-centred approach to curriculum, albeit one that recognizes that the philosophical premises underlying both psychology and education are not value-free. Diane's concluding comment is instructive in this regard, suggesting that things that were once part of early childhood curriculum have been summoned again:

...our experiences in Reggio helped us focus anew on concepts - beauty and order, the multiple languages of children, letting go of the clock, listening and observing as a basis for teaching - that have often been forgotten or deemphasized in our society and classrooms. (p. 281-282)

While the Reggio Emilia publications may have helped teachers recognize that such concepts have disappeared from early childhood curricula, the reasons for the disappearance may be tied to the accountability demands on teachers.

Another point of connection between documentation and child observation is the matter of assessment, and along with it, accountability. Forman et al (1993) state: "If done properly, good documentation can serve all masters simultaneously, from individual assessment, to curriculum planning, to instructional accountability" (p. 249). Houck (1997) provides an example of how individual assessment (and perhaps instructional accountability) is possible, using two drawings

by Carlotta that are part of "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibition. She explains that the two drawings of poppies (one before and one after a visit to the fields where they grow) "indicate a child's developing understanding in the course of an investigation" (p. 30). Indeed, the differences in the drawings are significant, with the second showing much more detail about the shape, petal formation, colour, stem and leaves of the

poppies, and serve well as evidence of Carlotta's growth of understanding about the physical appearance of poppies. Others, such as Goldhaber et al (1997), have discussed the aspects of Reggio Emilia that are useful for curriculum planning, describing how they have used documentation in teacher education courses, as "a tool to teach our undergraduates to be keen observers, more reflective interpreters, and more individualized curriculum planners" (p. 199).

Documentation and portfolios can also be used for instructional accountability. Julie, a teacher from the U.S. (cited in Saltz, 1997) explains: "I use documentation to tell a story about their [children's] learning. Teacher, parents, and the children use this so-called documentation to piece together the learning that has occurred during a given project" (p. 172). In a more recent publication (than Forman et al, 1993), Forman and Fyfe (1998) indicate that documentation might not provide all the assessment answers: "Strictly speaking, documentation is not a form of assessment of individual progress, but rather a form of explaining, to the constituents of the school, the depth of children's learning and the educational rationale of activities" (p. 241). This less enthusiastic description of documentation and the caution against using it as an individual assessment tool differs considerably from the recommendation made previously by Forman et al (1993). Despite this, and while recognizing that assessment techniques used in schools in Reggio Emilia are very different from those used in schools in the USA, Horn-Wingerd (2002) concludes that "it is possible for standards, accountability assessment, and developmentally appropriate Reggio-inspired classroom practices to productively co-exist and mutually support one another" (p. 58).

Horn-Wingerd (2002) suggests that early childhood educators can shape the development of standards and accountability assessments to make them developmentally appropriate. She also assumes that there is a close similarity between developmental appropriateness and Reggio-inspired classroom practices. We suggest that this does not necessarily follow, and raise the issue of understanding the revised theoretical perspectives on which the Reggio Emilia approach is based, and the differences between these new interpretations and developmentally appropriate practice, some of which are articulated by Dahlberg (2000) and Dahlberg et al (1999).

Challenging the Connection

Dahlberg et al (1999) articulate a major difference between the approach used in the schools in Reggio Emilia and other approaches in early childhood programs. This is the difference between cognitive developmental constructivism and social constructivism; the latter is used in Reggio Emilia, while Piaget is associated closely with the former. While both approaches see children as active and able to construct understandings of their contextual surroundings, the Piagetian constructivist perspective of knowledge sees it as "something absolute and unchangeable, as facts to be transmitted to the child, and thus as separate from the child, independent of experience and existing in a cultural, institutional and historical vacuum" (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 55). Working from a social constructionist perspective means that children are encouraged to think and create alternative understandings "before encountering scientifically accepted constructions" (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 55).

While there are some practical similarities between child observation and documentation, there are also theoretical and philosophical differences. Whether teachers in the U.S. and Australia using documentation in a Reggio-inspired approach understand these differences is not known. Much of what is discussed and much of what has been published about the Reggio Emilia approach focuses on practical implementation (e.g., Fleet, Hammersley, Patterson, Schillert, & Stanke, 2001; Helm et al' 1998; Hill, 2002; Bersani & Jarjoura, 2002; Goldhaber & Smith, 2002), rather than the consideration of theoretical ideas (e.g., Dahlberg, 2000; Dahlberg et al, 1999; Johnson, 1999).

Discourses of Globalization

To be understood, the influence of Reggio Emilia educational methods must be placed in the contemporary world context in which global technology, transportation, communication and even migration of people and ideas abound. Increasingly, transnational, border-crossing

perspectives and practices have been labeled globalization. However, globalization is a contested term, used in different ways, by different people, in different places, to mean different things. Scholte (2000) identifies five broad conceptualizations of globalization:

- (1) Globalization is interpreted as 'internationalization', where globalization indicates "a growth of international exchange and interdependence" (Scholte, 2000, p. 15), evident by the movement among countries of people, ideas and messages.
- (2) Others have understood globalization as a form of liberalization, with the removal of "government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an 'open,' 'borderless' world economy" (Scholte, 2000, pp. 15-16). This perspective includes the elimination of trade barriers, foreign exchange restrictions and in some instances visas (p. 16).
- (3) Globalization has also been discussed as universalization, meaning the spread of "various objects and experiences [such as cars and Chinese restaurants] to people at all corners of the earth" (Scholte, 2000, p. 16).
- (4) Globalization has been used in terms of westernization or modernization, particularly the American form (Spybey, 1996). In this conception, globalization is "a dynamic whereby the social structures of modernity (capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, bureaucratism, etc.) are spread the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures and local self-determination in the process" (Scholte, 2000, p. 16).
- (5) Finally, globalization has also been understood as de-territorialization, or the "spread of supraterritoriality...a reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders" (Scholte, 2000, p. 16).

In what follows, we analyze aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach, drawing on the above understandings of globalization to argue that in the U.S. and Australia, the uses of child observation have changed (and are changing) due to external assessment pressures that can be linked to aspects of globalization like neoliberalism. Further, we contend that the Reggio Emilia approach offers a viable alternative to early childhood teachers working under pressure for standardized assessment, and that this pressure, in conjunction with aspects of globalization, may account partially for the way in which teachers in both countries have acclaimed the practices of Reggio Emilia. However, and conversely, we also attempt to demonstrate an understanding of what Johnson (1999) has described as the colonialism, cargo-cult mentality and "fanaticism" (p. 63) of teachers in the U.S. toward the Reggio Emilia approach. Further, in relation to globalization, we argue that the case of Reggio Emilia has features that contradict the dominant discourses of globalization (Scholte, 2000), and therefore that the adoption of Reggio Emilia-inspired ideas in the U.S. and Australia has not necessarily always been "determinist, causal, and unidirectional... north to south, west to east" (Luke & Luke, 2000, p. 276).

Education and Globalization

Changes to the economic, political, and cultural circumstances throughout the world have meant that, in many countries, such changes "promote and reinforce a more global perspective on social policy" (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 9). Accordingly, education is affected in many complex ways, but in the U.S. (Apple, 2000) and Australia (Lingard, 2000), education has been shaped mainly by neoliberal approaches to globalization. Neoliberal approaches are reflected in "an educational agenda that privileges, if not directly imposes, particular policies for evaluation, financing, assessment, standards, teacher training, curriculum, instructions, and testing" (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 15). Apple (2000) notes that "Efficiency and an 'ethic' of cost-benefit analysis are the dominant norms" (p. 59) and that students are seen in terms of human capital theory. There are many examples that illustrate this neoliberal perspective: Hatch and Grieshaber (2002) have linked child observation to accountability in terms of standards and potentially in terms of tests; Head Start has developed a child outcomes framework identifying domains that will be part of outcomes assessments now required by law.

Against the backdrop of neoliberal education agendas, the Reggio Emilia approach has grown over many years in a community in northern Italy valuing a particular approach to children and their education. This has been transported in various ways throughout the globe, perhaps not with the aim of direct replication, but certainly with the aim of using the techniques and approaches that work so effectively in the Reggio Emilia schools (cf. Fu, 2002; Goldhaber et al, 1997; Rankin et al, 1993). Documentation is one of these techniques. Much of what has been written by U.S. academics about Reggio Emilia concentrates on the practical aspects of the approach, focusing on describing specifically how projects are completed and how documentation forms an integral part of the ongoing project work. One way in which the ideas of

the Reggio Emilia schools have been transported to other countries is through situated descriptions of how the approach has been used in local contexts in the U.S. (e.g. Haigh, 1997; Saltz, 1997) and Australia (e.g., Fleet et al, 2001; Millikan, Mauger, Thompson, & Hobba, 1996; Robertson, 1999).

Air transport, global publications, and telecommunications, including the Internet, have made the Reggio Emilia phenomenon a global product, subject to global sales strategies and universalist market perspectives. International exchanges of educational ideas between Italy and countries like the U.S. and Australia have grown considerably as many teachers use the Reggio Listserv and even make the pilgrimage to Reggio Emilia. Some (e.g. Johnson, 1999) might argue that the ideas are spread to all corners of the earth and represent a large-scale colonization that would impose the belief in a universally applicable model of early education for everyone when discussing globalization. Others stress that many factors must be taken into account, including the "overlapping complexities and concurrent relations of the local site, community, nation, and region" (Luke & Luke, 2000, p. 278).

Further, the mass acceptance of Reggio Emilia (and the method of documentation) can also be interpreted within the U.S. and Australia through models of consumption and desire that are often associated with American institutions like McDonald's, Hollywood and CNN - instead of ensuring that you "Mac your day," teachers passionately set about to "Reggio their program." Teachers are developing the desire to re-create the Reggio Emilia approach (or aspects of it) in their own classrooms. This desire has been fuelled by regular conferences that are held in the U.S. and Australia that focus solely on Reggio Emilia approaches and often feature teachers from the Reggio Emilia schools or those who have visited. It is also fuelled by those well-known early childhood educators from the U.S. who have visited the Reggio Emilia schools and who have publicized their visits widely through conference presentations (e.g., Forman, 1996) and other early childhood educational media (e.g., Katz, 1990; New, 1990). As well as the Reggio Listserv enabling online discussion groups, there are also "Reggio Emilia support networks" (New, 1998, p. 263). Johnson (1999) is critical of the large amounts of money charged for attending such conferences in the U.S. and of the publications that have been produced as a result of the huge amount of attention directed at Reggio Emilia approaches to early childhood education.

Consistent with Luke and Luke (2000), we suggest that the educational and cultural effects of globalization associated with Reggio have unfolded "locally, regionally, and nationally in uneven and not always centrally predictable ways" (p. 292), resulting in hybrid forms that are dependent on local contexts. What appears to have happened (from an analysis of the literature available in the U.S. and Australia) is the emergence of a hybridity of Reggio Emilia-inspired local programs. Such hybridity is born from complex and intersecting local contexts with ideas available globally (such as those found on the Reggio Emilia Listserv, conferences in the U.S. and Australia, and publications), aided by international travel. At the macro level, then, we propose that basic Reggio Emilia methods like documentation have been homogenized through both consumer consumption and the creation of desire. At the same time, because of local U.S. and Australian adaptations, elements of heterogeneity are retained. Perhaps the global is influenced by the local.

Our concerns are the seemingly uncritical transfer of ideas and preferences for the practical evidenced in both the literature and quick-fix practices (e.g., Helm et al 1998; cf. Johnson, 1999). There are few theoretical or philosophical analyses of Reggio Emilia approaches (Dahlberg [2000] and Dahlberg et al [1999] are exceptions) and even fewer analyses of the adoption of Reggio Emilia approaches by those outside the Reggio Emilia region in Italy (e.g., Johnson, 1999). While some of the practical descriptions of projects in the Reggio literature involve language that may be associated with postmodernism (e.g., Forman [1993] discusses multiple symbolization and Edwards & Forman [1993] talk about a multisymbolic approach to teaching), it is not unusual for the reference list to include publications that are definitively modernist in orientation (e.g., Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). We see this as problematic and another indication of specific effects of globalization, consumption and desire and the way in which they have intersected with demands for accountability in early childhood education.

We question why there has been so little theorizing of the type exhibited by Dahlberg (2000; Dahlberg et al, 1999) or Johnson (1999), and suggest that the acclaim with which Reggio has been met in the U.S. and Australia may have something to do with the connections made between early childhood educators and the metanarratives of Piaget, Rousseau, Gardner, etc., well-known in early childhood education, but perhaps not so well-known for the ways in which their theories have been re-invented in the Reggio approach. The difficulty is that the focus on

the practical application of the work of these well-known theorists appears in many instances to occur on the basis of the original understandings and not the ways in which the ideas of these theorists have been re-worked in the Reggio Emilia context. Dahlberg (2000) and Dahlberg et al (1999) address some of these differences theoretically.

Given the pressures on early childhood teachers for accountability, it is also likely that the documentation that is an integral part of the Reggio Emilia approach has served a particular purpose for teachers implementing some of the Reggio Emilia ideas. While documentation can serve purposes of assessment as discussed previously, it has further appeal for parents and teachers, seemingly because of its ability to satisfy the consumer and the system, and so presents a viable alternative in these times of demands for accountability.

Much theorizing about globalization has come from the west and tends to be in terms of inside-out theories; that is, about the impact and articulation of dominant economic and cultural practices on regional, emergent, smaller and less influential economies and cultures. While this approach risks theorizing the other, or theorizing the effects of "us" on "them," the importation of ideas from Reggio Emilia, at least to some extent, contradicts this globalization metanarrative. Although certainly a traditional western power, a region of Italy could be considered smaller and less influential, yet early childhood educators from the U.S. and Australia have flocked to visit the Reggio Emilia schools - they can't get enough of the ideas, the people and the pedagogical approaches from this regional, emergent, smaller, and less influential economy and culture.

Conclusion

Contradicting discourses on globalization in which the local is portrayed as always victim, without agency and authenticity, Reggio Emilia schools in Italy are local and contextual but are lauded as the epitome of authenticity, as the powerful approach to be adopted by the U.S. and Australia. The local method of documentation is even being used as a specific response to power-oriented calls for standards and accountability. Characterized by both homogeneity and heterogeneity, the international importation of Reggio Emilia and documentation does resist the notions of centrality and unification. We suggest, however, that the Reggio Emilia approach be met with more critical analysis at the macro level and that critical consideration be given to why documentation is used as a vehicle for selling the products and effects of teaching young children in these times of demands for accountability from early childhood educators in Australia and the U.S. Who is being 'othered' by globalization of this local method? Perhaps it is those in the U.S. and Australia who don't succumb to the "fanaticism" (Johnson, 1999, p. 63) of Reggio Emilia? Or those who would hope to problematize notions of accountability? Or those who would challenge concepts of surveillance and observation?

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