

Impact of Curriculum Approaches on Equity in Early Childhood Settings

Kamini Kamdar

Kindergarten Teacher,

York Region District School Board

An 'aha' moment



Learning Objectives

- 
- A brief introduction to Te Whāriki and the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education

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- What are Funds of Knowledge?

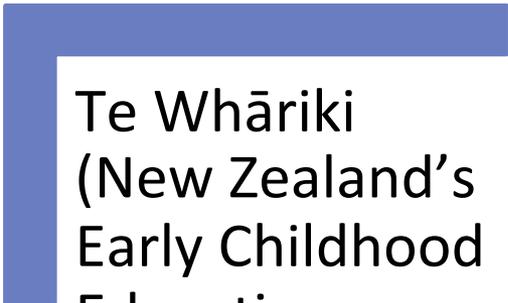
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- How can educators identify Funds of Knowledge and use them to engage families and young children?

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- Issues of Power & Family Engagement

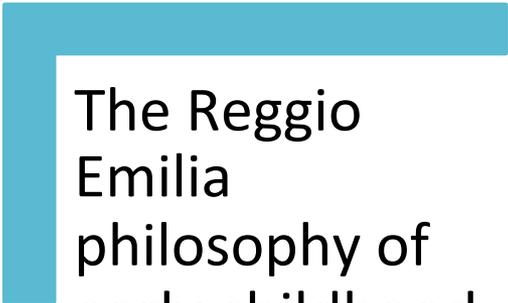
A quick look at some global perspectives of early childhood education



Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Curriculum



Te Whāriki
(New Zealand's Early Childhood Education curriculum)



The Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education

Ontario's Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten curriculum

A brief introduction

- First official Kindergarten curriculum document published in 1998
- Move to 'play based' in 2010 (draft document); revised in 2016
- Targeted to four and five year olds
- Encourages a planned learning framework that supports both holistic goals (self regulation, social skills, health and well-being) and traditional development such as cognitive and physical development
- Children's acquisition of knowledge is promoted through the pedagogy of play (curriculum led play).

Te Whāriki: A closer look

A brief introduction

- Created in the spirit of collaborative partnership which included Maori leaders, consultations with communities, experts and early childhood educators
- Reflects the unique historical, political and social contexts of New Zealand – bi cultural document
- Supports a diverse range of early childhood education services which include kindergarten (ages three to four), Playcentres (birth to five, run by parent collectives), childcare (community and private) and family daycare.
- Is inclusive of infants and toddlers in addition to school age children.
- Promotes a open ended play-based approach to learning.
- Has gained international acclaim for its holistic and inclusive philosophy of early childhood education based on “broad principles, values, and goals, open to interpretation” (Moss, 2006, p.10)

The Reggio Emilia Philosophy

- The Reggio Emilia philosophy can be traced to traditions of collective life and networks of civic engagement in the political contexts of World War II.
- Schools built to manage schools created by families, and involving the strong commitment of children, families, educators, administrators and politicians (Rinaldi, 2006).
- Created 'social capital' through democratic practice (Putnam, 2001), political commitment and citizen participation, leading to a space for dialogue from which a collective view of children and their relationship to the community was produced (Rinaldi, 2006).
- Emphasis on understanding public services as a collective responsibility, and belief that schools are sites of democratic participation, interaction and dialogue. (Moss, 2007; Rinaldi, 2006).
- Two main types of early childhood services: *nido* – centers for infants and toddlers *and scuola dell'infanzia* – centers for young children ages three to six.

Funds of Knowledge

- “Classroom learning can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn *more* not just about students’ culture in an abstract sense, but about students (emphasis in the original) and their students’ households”
(Gonzalez, 1995, p. 3).
- The concept recognizes teachers as researchers, and places an emphasis on the development of relationships

Funds of Knowledge Activity

1. Form small groups to review the categories of Funds of Knowledge.
2. Reflect on the Funds of Knowledge that are unique to you and your family.
3. Brainstorm/jot notes on the activity sheet provided.
4. Within your small group, share the aspects of Funds of Knowledge that you feel comfortable sharing/discussing.

A Few Things to Consider ...

1. What similarities or differences did you notice among the Funds of Knowledge in your group?
2. What methods might you use to gather the Funds of Knowledge of children in your classroom or program?
3. What are some of the ways we can use the concept of Funds of Knowledge to inform and create culturally relevant programming such as approaches to family engagement, curriculum, and instructional practices?

What the Research Says

- Children's' learning is greatly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they experience identity (Bernstein, 1975, Carr & May, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006).
- Family engagement and the contexts within which families participate in the early childhood curriculum is of great significance (Cowie, & Mitchell, 2015; Mac Naughton, 2003, Rinaldi, 2006).
- Over time beliefs about family engagement have shifted from activities designed for family involvement to a desire to build relationships based on feelings of trust, mutual respect, belonging and meaningful communication (Chan, & Ritchie, 2016; Rinaldi, 2006).

Issues of Power in Family Engagement

- The inequitable power balance characterized by the role of the teacher and learner between educators and families is built on the assumption that educators are in a position to 'teach' parents appropriate ways to support their children's learning. Implicit in this power dynamic is the presumption that parent knowledge is inadequate (Hughes, and Mac Naughton, 2002; Mac Naughton, 2003).
- In order to to interrupt conforming to the knowledge-power link relationships, efforts to encourage family engagement must examine the interrelationships between social categories such as race, gender, socio-economic status and differences in relation to how young children and their families are actively involved in the construction of their identities (Mac Naughton, 2003; Robinson-Jones-Diaz, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006).

It Takes A Village to Raise a Child

Reggio Emilia

- Families are considered by the Reggio Emilia philosophy to be an “intrinsic feature of the culture and conduct” of its municipal schools (Rinaldi, 2006; p. 37).
- Considering schools first and foremost as public spaces that are sites of democratic participation (Rinaldi, 2006). The Reggio Emilia approach values the distinct roles families and educators play in early childhood education, arguing that they each provide “complimentary but different contributions to the child’s growth, learning and development” (Edwards, 1993, p. 64).
- Family participation: Participating in the creation of pedagogical documentation, visits to parent’s workplaces and children’s homes.

Te Whāriki

- Similarly, Te Whāriki values the knowledge families bring to children's learning by stating: "...parents and caregivers have a wealth of valuable information and understandings regarding their children" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 30).
- Sharing parallels with the Reggio Emilia philosophy, the engagement opportunities offered to families in *Te Whāriki* also promote and encourage the negotiation of legitimized knowledge by having input in the learning opportunities provided to children (Carr, & May, 1993; Ministry of Education, 1996), and the inclusion of the "voices" of families in Learning Stories (Carr, et. al, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2004).
- *Promotes democratic participation by collaborating with families to transform shared meanings and understandings about young children.*

Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Curriculum

- The FDELK curriculum shares the beliefs of *Te Whāriki* and the Reggio Emilia philosophy that families are valuable partners in early childhood education, bringing with them “rich knowledge and varied viewpoints about child-rearing practices, childhood and development” (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 109).
- *Offers suggestions such as:*
- *Invite parents, other family members or members of the community to read stories in their first language*
- *Invite parents or community members to contribute to children’s inquires in the classroom by sharing their expertise (cooking, providing artifacts, etc.).*
- *Contribute objects in their first language (newspapers, magazines)*

Concluding Comments

- Efforts to engage families and their diverse experiences must focus on opportunities that are respectful, equitable and take into consideration issues of socio-economic class, race, gender, and power (Mac Naughton, 2003; Robinson, & Jones-Diaz, 2005).
- It is important to promote the collaborative and democratic inclusion of families, their diverse cultures and funds of knowledge in early childhood settings.