

Running head: REGGIO EMILIA, A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST EDUCATIONAL MODEL.

The Reggio Emilia Approach:

A Social Constructivist Pedagogy of Inclusion

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Abstract

This article critiques the Reggio Emilia approach from a social constructivist viewpoint and explores the possibility of incorporating it in a democratic Canadian educational system. A brief history of the approach and its founder, Loris Malaguzzi, with a description of key principles and practices will be presented. Influential educational philosophers and the constructivist paradigm are reviewed. Connections to project-based learning (PBL) also are made. An initial critique of the approach as an ideal type will be presented followed by a second immanent critique outlining the delimitations and limitations of the approach and PBL. The conclusion presents possible ways of reconstructing the approach for use in Canadian Schools.

The Reggio Emilia approach:

A social constructivist pedagogy for inclusion

The Reggio Emilia approach was hailed in Newsweek magazine (1991) as the best early childhood education model in the world, “an international role model” “pioneering” and “an outstanding model” (p.1). Over the past six decades the Reggio approach to early childhood education has become a “gold standard” that many have tried to replicate (Moss, 2005). The Reggio schools pioneered a democratic educational setting, where teachers and students are co-contributors in a collaborative learning process (Moss, 2005). The Reggio approach has been of interest to early childhood centers and schools world wide, especially in the last thirty years, because of its inclusivity of all children and its many unique approaches to education (Gilman, 2007). The Reggio approach has not only been called the “gold standard” (Moss, 2005), but a stimulator for reflection and questioning of current educational practices (Warash, 2008), “an example of utopian thought and action” (Moss, 2005, p. 25), and as “one of the best systems of education in the world” (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 1993, p. 3).

The Reggio Emilia approach was founded in a specific cultural setting and idealized by others. An ideal type critique methodology will therefore be used first as an “analytical device for characterizing social phenomena in terms of the cultural ideals that give them meaning” (Skrtic, 1995, p.48). Sociologist Max Weber developed the typology of ideal type. He described it as:

a one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified

analytical construct... The ideal type “can be used to analyze a general, suprahistorical phenomenon or historically unique occurrences” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideal_type).

He goes on to say that the ideal type is:

an exaggerated mental construct [and noted that] in its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is Utopia. ... Ideal Types are not true in the objectivist sense; ... they are conceptual tools for analyzing the meaning and practical consequences of social and institutional practices (Skrtic, 1995, p.48).

Is it possible to achieve this “gold standard” outside the confines of its culture without the leadership of its idealistic founder Loris Malaguzzi? “David Hawkins reminds us, importing foreign models wholesale has never worked; each society must solve its own problems” (Edwards et al, 1993, p. 308). If this is indeed true then do educators in Canada have anything to gain by considering the Reggio Emilia approach in their classrooms?

This article will suggest an answer to that question by analyzing the Reggio Emilia approach from a postmodern social constructivist epistemology. The overarching critique will be the ideal type, with a secondary imminent critique presented to address contradictions between the idealization of the approach and the reality of using it. A short history of the approach and its tenets is necessary to understand the subsequent deconstruction and reconstruction.

History of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Historical Setting

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 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Fascism).

As the Second World War ended and the Fascist Regime fell “the state government was undergoing reorganization, and the Catholic Church was in no position to intervene. It was in this very period ... spontaneous attempts to establish parent-run schools” occurred (Edwards et al, p. 15). Dissatisfied parents analyzed existing institutional practices and yearned for their children to be educated in a Fascist free, democratic, collaborative setting. They wanted their children to be taken seriously and to learn how to be critical thinkers which they believed a key to developing a democratic society.

Founding Father

In 1946, Loris Malaguzzi, a young Italian educator alongside a group of parents began the first of many Reggio Schools. Malaguzzi, a constructivist, contested the modern ideals of objectivism. He believed that each person constructed their own knowledge in and through his or her own life experiences (Moss, 2005). Malaguzzi was influenced by many educational theorists and philosophers of the early to mid 1900's. “The network of the sources of [his] inspiration spans several generations and reflects the choices and selections [he] made over time.”

Influential Theorists

Malaguzzi was greatly influenced by five educational theorists: John Dewey, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Barbara Biber (Fraser & Gestwicki, p. 20).

John Dewey (1859 – 1952)

Dewey was a pragmatist who believed in democracy as “a method of social inquiry, ‘a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience’ [and] ... equal participation by

all” (Skrtic, p.46). He had a very positive image of children who he thought “should be given the material to ‘reproduce in imaginative form (their) own experience’”. He believed that children learned through play and that they needed to be considered part of their family and society in which they lived (Fraser et al, 2000, p.21).

Erik Erikson (1902-1994)

Erikson was a developmental psychologist influenced by Freud’s theories. He developed his own stage theory using eight stages of psychosocial development see (Appendix A). Each stage of development is based on a psychosocial crisis that Erikson believed were moved through stage to stage as each crisis was resolved. Erikson also had a very positive image of the child as part of a community both in his or her home and school environment. He saw children learning by doing and also through their play (Fraser et al, 2000).

Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980)

Piaget framed four stages of thinking or intellectual development that he believed children moved through sequentially see (Appendix A). Piaget was a constructivist who believed that the ability to think was developed prior to language acquisition. Piaget also believed that children learned by doing and exploring in an active setting and that they learned from each other. Intelligence grew from real life experiences of the children (Labinowicz, 1980). “Piaget was the first to pay serious attention to what children could do as opposed to focusing attention on what they lacked. He also demonstrated that learning is qualitative not quantitative” (Fraser et al, 2000, p.25). Like Erikson, Piaget held a positive image of the child.

Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934)

Vygotsky was the founder of cultural-historical psychology and a constructivist like Dewey. He believed that thought and language developed simultaneously not sequentially as

Piaget suggested (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vygotsky>). He also believed that learning was woven in a social context and enhanced through social contact, as long as the interaction took place where others could support the learning process. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vygotsky>).

Vygotsky is credited with developing the zone of proximal development. He thought that children had two levels of performance, one that they could do independently and the other that required some assistance. The level of performance between these two hypothetical levels was the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky had a positive image of the child as a social being who was “intelligent, strong, creative, and competent” (Fraser et al, 2000, p.30).

Barbara Biber (1904 – 1993)

Biber was an educator and psychologist who believed in the child as a whole being. She integrated the separate views of Erikson and Piaget’s psychosocial and cognitive concepts into a holistic image of the child. She “believed that relationships [were] central to the child’s education” (Fraser et al, 2000, p.30-31).

“As a teacher, Dr. Biber believed that the best early education programs develop[ed] the emotional life of children as well as their intellects, foster[ed] strong self-images, encourage[d] responsibility to others, and support[ed] imagination and curiosity” (<http://query.nytimes.com>).

Biber had a positive image of the child and considered the teacher a mediator supporting and leading the learning of a child. Malaguzzi incorporated this image of the teacher into his schools with one exception: in Reggio schools the teacher supports and facilitates the learning, he or she does not lead it (Fraser et al, 2000, p. 31).

Common Elements of the Theorists

Malaguzzi respected the work of all the theorists but did not agree with every facet of their beliefs. However there are common elements to each of the theories: a) a positive image of

the child, b) the idea that children learn by being active participants, and c) the belief that play was an important part of learning and early childhood development.

Lella Gandini, a colleague of Malaguzzi's, recorded the following in an interview with him in 1993.

Our theories come from different fields and we meditate on them as well as on the events that take place in our very hands. ... we do indeed have a solid core in our approach in Reggio Emilia that comes directly from the theories and experiences of active education and finds realization in particular images of the child, teacher, school, family, and community. Together these produce a culture and society that connect, actively and creatively, both individual and social growth (p. 81).

As a social constructivist, Malaguzzi followed the tenets of a constructivist paradigm held to by theorists like Dewey who "argued that education must be experienced based, centering on ideals such as open-mindedness and discipline in aim-based activity" (Glassman & Whaley, p. 2).

The Constructivist Paradigm

Beliefs About Learning

The constructivist paradigm is explained in the following excerpt from *Education Week*, by Steven Webb (2007).

What is known as constructivism postulates that by reflecting on our experiences, we develop our own understanding of the world. Each of us generates our own mental models to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. Constructivist teaching focuses on creating, experiential and engaging activities for students.... This kind of learning also involves an element of play.

Each child constructing his/her own reality leaving no room for objective reality in this paradigm. Reality is subjective to a constructivist (Fosnot, 1996).

Malaguzzi believed that the child's culture, relationships and social setting were key components to their learning. He said that schools were a "sort of construction in motion, continuously adjusting" (Edwards et al, p. 56).

Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is to be a facilitator and guide. Adults are there to extend and provoke the learning of the children and to "provide students with opportunities and incentives to build up" their learning (Fosnot, 1996, p. 7). Teachers need to allow and encourage learners to "raise their own questions, generate their own hypotheses and models of possibilities, and test them for viability" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 29).

Main Principles and Practices of the Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio approach has several main guiding principles and practices that echo the constructivist paradigm.

The Image of the Child

"All children are regarded as resourceful, curious, imaginative, and inventive, and possess a desire to interact and communicate with each other and their environment" (Gilman, 2007, p. 24). Malaguzzi saw children as "having deep roots in the culture, society and family values of the people" surrounding them. He viewed them as strong, capable, and filled with resources and unrealized potential "with rights instead of needs" (Fraser et al 2002 p. 11). This positive image of the child was foundational to his pedagogy.

Environment as the third teacher

The environment has a powerful, long lasting affect on people. According to the Reggio approach this impacts how and what is learned in any given space. “A Reggio approach advocates that teachers pay close attention to the myriad of ways a space can be made to ‘speak’ and invite interaction” (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 41). Reggio classrooms use an abundance of lights, mirrors, windows, and items brought in from the natural environment to enhance the space the children are in. They also try to appeal to all the senses of children in order to pique interest and discovery (Strong-Wilson et al 2007).

Relationships

All the relationships a child has are important in the Reggio schools especially those with extended family and parents. Parents have been vital players in the Reggio approach from the beginning. They are very involved in the governance of Reggio schools which hold to a community-based management style where parents are included in the program and planning of all aspects of the school (Edwards et al, 1993).

Collaboration

Each group of children (group size is 28 in Italy) has a teacher and an assistant teacher assigned to them. Typically teachers stay with their group of children for three years. The teachers collaborate and reflect every day about what the children are interested in and how they can expand and provoke their learning to new heights. Time is built into their work day to allow for daily teaming as they spend 30 hours a week with the children and 6 hours a week in collaboration.

Documentation

During collaborative meetings the documentation of the day is reviewed. The person documenting events writes down questions the children have, on-target observations made by the children, actions taken by the children as they problem solve, and the verbal responses given by them to questions posed by their peers or teachers. Documentation is displayed on learning panels in the classrooms and shows a project from beginning to end.

Progettazione

“Progettazione” is one aspect of the Reggio approach that is a little hard to explain in English. One article defined it as flexibility, another defined it as long-term project work and yet another as projecting ahead. Carol Wien (2008) defines it as “Keeping in mind not a single plan for a unit to be followed like a pathway, but a sense of multiple possibilities and multiple routes to knowing, and many ways that teachers and children may together choose” (p. 11).

Provocation

Provocation is an important aspect of stretching the children’s learning. Teachers provoke the children to investigate further about a given topic by providing different materials and ideas for them to use. Children can also provoke or extend each others’ learning as they work in small collaborative groups.

The Hundred Languages of Children

This phrase is a metaphor for the hundred different ways a child expresses his or her learning. It is also the name of an art tour that travels the world and displays many of the different projects the preschoolers have done at the Reggio Schools.

Transparency

Transparency is understood both metaphorically and concretely. Metaphorically, it refers to the openness of the schools to families and a variety of new ideas. Concretely, it refers to the abundance of mirrors, light tables, and glass jars that catch and reflect light in the Reggio classrooms. The windows, glass walls and use of glass containers create an open transparent space for the children to grow and learn in. They are an important part of the environment as the third teacher.

Piazza

Each school has a Piazza that is the central meeting space imitating the socio cultural space of the Piazza in the centre of town. The Piazza is typically a big open space with lots of natural sunlight, plants, and furniture that is designed to be appealing to children and adults.

Atelier

Each Reggio school has an art studio or an Atelier. Malaguzzi described it this way “The Atelier is a place to explore with both the hands and the mind. ... It has allowed rich combinations and creative possibilities among the different (symbolic) languages’ of children” (Edwards et al. p. 68). The studio is equipped with vast amounts of art media for the children to use as well as musical instruments as well as puppets and costumes. This studio is run by a local artist. There are also rooms called mini-ateliers for technology used in the children’s inquiry like camera’s, computers, video cameras, etc.

Emergent Curriculum

Anne Lewin-Benham defines emergent curriculum as “an exchange of ideas, debate, and negotiation among children and teachers that leads to the initiation of a project and determines how a project will continue or branch” (2008, p.196). Emergent curriculum can be developed by

using a mind map that the teachers produce during their collaboration. The initial idea is drawn from children's conversations and the subsequent documentation recorder by the adults as a unit develops. New ideas the students and teachers have are added to the mind map which allows the course of learning to be tracked and monitored.

Children with Special Rights

Children with special needs are referred to as children with special rights and are given priority into the Reggio schools. "Inclusion is embraced in the Reggio Emilia approach" (Gilman, 2007, p. 23) as children with special rights participate in all areas of the program. Every child is considered an individual with their own unique way of learning but some children with special rights in Reggio schools have what is called a Declaration of Intent. "Included in this document are ideas and materials to be used for learning, as well as ideas about how the Childs work will be carried out". The Declaration of Intent is developed by a team including the health department, social services, education, and parents using a collaborative process. The use of documentation already described is a vital part of the ongoing revision and discussion of the Declaration of Intent (Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2003, p. 187-192).

Project-Based Learning

Definition of Project-Based Learning

"Project-based learning is a constructivist pedagogy intent on bringing about deep learning by allowing learners to use an inquiry-based approach to engage in issues and questions" that are relevant to their own lives (Wurdinger, Haar, Hugg, & Bezon, 2007, p. 160).

One expression of the constructivist paradigm utilized by the Reggio schools is long-term projects. Long-term projects that "stress continuous practical activity" are an "obvious vehicle for some of the issues that Dewey outlined in his philosophy, such as combining of experiences

and thinking...” (Glassman & Whaley, 2000, p. 2). The teacher’s role in a project-based setting is to “guide students through a problem-solving process which includes identifying the problem, developing a plan, testing the plan against reality, and reflecting on the plan” (Wurdinger et al. 2007, p. 151). Students develop the problem and discuss ideas about solving the problem then solve the problems in a social setting working in collaborative groups. One difference from the Reggio approach in this model is that the teacher is a guide, whereas in Reggio the teacher is a co-learner.

John Dewey first proposed the concept of project learning as “he was inspired to urge a method of education combining pragmatic philosophy ... mastery of content with enquiry [through] creative experiences for children. He envisioned all this, seeking a new relationship between educational and sociocultural research” (Edwards et al, 1993, p. 72).

Malaguzzi built on this inspiration and believed a constructivist approach to education was ideal. He utilized the concepts of the constructivist paradigm and project-based learning in his approach. However even an approach considered an ideal type like Reggio has its delimitations and limitations.

Delimitations and Limitations of Implementing Reggio Emilia in Canada

Delimitations

The following delimitations are suggested in an article written by Russ Firlik (1995). The delimitations are expressed in generalized terms for the purpose of this paper and should be read with that mindset. The term American has been extended to include Canada and is referred to as North American (NA).

European thinking is very different from NA thinking. North Americans tend to be more distrustful of things that cannot be measured or standardized for success. This lack of trust can be

traced back to the 1920's when Dewey was proposing his constructivist approach to education. In NA, the theory that was chosen over Dewey's was the "Science of Measurement" proposed by Edward L. Thorndike. Thorndike's model of standardization had far reaching consequences. Values such as IQ, grade level work, specific grades for specific ages, are still considered with high regard in most NA schools in the 21st Century.

North Americans, are, generally inductive thinkers who look at facts first, then ideas. The opposite is true in the Reggio approach, where ideas are encouraged and provoked based on the children's interests as Dewey suggested.

The political climate in northern Italy and North America are vastly different. North Americans follow a constitutional democracy while Italy emerged from a social-communist state.

Tim Loreman suggests that the differing paradigm each country follows is a further delimitation. NA operates from a modern paradigm which views children as "reproducers of knowledge, identity and culture." p.8. The Reggio [Italian] approach is based on a postmodern paradigm that believes that children gain knowledge through social interaction and construction.

"No [North] American Reggio-inspired school ... has a Malaguzzi" (Lewin-Benham, 2008, p. 164). Relocating an approach that is entwined with its culture but also its utopian thinking leader is a large delimitation that anyone contemplating the adoption of the Reggio approach would need to consider. Howard Gardner states this well in his comment about Lewin-Benham's Reggio inspired American school "Like meteors, they go up high, and then crash. There are two separate phenomena, the difficulty of taking an example from one place and replicating it elsewhere and the disappearance of a charismatic leader" (Lewin-Benham, 2006, p. 155). Lewin-Benham had great success initially implementing the Reggio approach in

Washington but the program closed after many struggles. Her insight will be presented in the reconstruction section to follow.

A further delimitation of incorporating the Reggio approach in NA is the diversely different historical and cultural setting of NA cities compared to the city of Reggio Emilia. It is virtually impossible to duplicate the cultural, social, economic climate of Reggio in Canada, and as Malaguzzi pointed out there should be no such desire to do so.

Limitations

The first limitation to be considered is that the Reggio approach has been designed for use in preschool settings. Elementary settings are inherently different so immediate changes would need to be made in order to implement it in the new context. Susan Fraser and Carol Gestwiki spent six years investigating the Reggio Approach in the classroom. Following are some of the limitations they saw in implementing the Reggio approach into the Canadian education system. These observations are taken from their book *Authentic Childhood, Exploring Reggio Emilia in the Classroom*.

Providing teachers with support in terms of collaborative partnerships has been impossible to duplicate in our current system, partially due to financial restraints. The lack of finances is also a limitation to forming a partnership with an atelier. Schools have music and sometimes art specialist but have not been able to afford to hire a local artist as part of the school staff.

Contemplating new ways can be intimidating and even frightening for educators who may start to feel incompetent. Personal limitations get in the way as teachers feel they are not ready for changes such as: a) becoming a co-collaborator in the learning process instead of a leader, b) using an emergent curriculum instead of a prescribed package provided by the

provincial government, c) becoming part of a collaborative team, d) documenting children's learning in an effective manner, e) inviting parents into the "heart of the classroom", f) letting go of practices that make educators feel safe, g) becoming critical thinkers, h) reevaluating symbolic play, and i) and reconsidering the image of the child held in Canada. In many ways Canadian educators still have the image of children, especially those with diverse abilities, as being "incompetent, fragile, having 'special needs' and lacking in skills relating to communication" (Loreman, 2007, p. 5). The Canadian educational system encourages teachers to "protect children from failure - both physically and psychologically - in order to safeguard self-esteem" (Loreman, 2007, p. 13). This deficit-based image of the child is the polar opposite to the one upheld in Reggio Schools.

"The educators in Reggio deplore the way Americans 'hurry' children and deny them the long blocks of time they need for project work" (Edwards et al, 1993, p. 308). Unless the daily schedule of children was changed in North America the implementation of long-term projects is already limited.

According to Loreman over 40% of children who had intellectual disabilities in Canada in 2004 were reported to be in segregated classrooms. In Italy segregated classrooms are almost non-existent. Differences in children are valued and respected in Italy. Children with Special Rights are treated the same as all the other children in "positive ways consistent with the philosophy of the ...schools" (p. 15).

Due to these delimitations and limitations the Reggio Emilia approach would not live up to the standard of ideal type in its purest form when relocated to Canada. However by reconstructing the approach it is possible to consider a similar pedagogy that could be viable in the Canadian educational system.

Reconstruction of the Reggio Approach

Theoretical Suggestions

Canadians image of the child must change in order for any part of the Reggio approach to be successful since the image of the child is the foundation of Reggio. Existing curriculum would need to be evaluated as well as who directs curriculum choices. Presently curriculum choices are made by the teacher but the Reggio approach allows for students to have a voice in what and how they learn. In order to accommodate a project approach consideration of reconstructing the school day would be necessary so that concentrated amounts of time for projects could be provided. Canadian schools would need to reevaluate their response to children with special rights and ask if the Reggio approach would provide a natural way for them to be included in the classroom?

Practical Suggestions

Russ Firlik suggests several ideas for reconstructing Reggio in North America beginning with increased communication between school and parents as well as inviting parents into the classroom on a regular basis. This would help develop a true sense of community. Teachers could allow more time for building on the children's interests if they spent more time listening to the student's interests. Teachers should encourage group planning and cooperative learning among the children as well as with their colleagues. This would require ample time for co-planning and sharing of ideas amongst the teachers. Documentation could be implemented by providing space in the school and classrooms for display. Then finally provide budget money for the purchase of digital cameras, printers, computers etc. needed for documentation and display.

Ann Lewin-Benham the founder and director of the Model Early Learning Center in Washington D.C wrote:

Creating Reggio-inspired practices requires support for the teachers and a culture of enlightened leadership, penetrating scholarship, extraordinary dedication, and long hours. It requires financial support not usually available in America, and release from the constraints of the teach/test mentality currently driving policy. As long as these requirements run counter to the political will, Reggio-inspired schools will remain outside the mainstream, boutique instances with little effect on typical practices and disconnected from low-income families (p.165)

In her written works Ms. Lewin-Benham provides expert suggestions on ways to reconstruct the Reggio Approach. She suggests that we weave the practices of the school into the community system and ensure administrative support because the system needs to change in order to sustain itself. We need to address how we train future teachers. “We must stop teaching how to use preplanned lessons and start teaching meaty content and big concepts” (2008, p. 168). Schools will need to rethink the assessment process and purpose as well as how to involve families more. She believes that having two adults per class up to Grade 3 will allow for small group collaboration and discussions which could be done by pairing an experienced teacher with a less experienced one. Classroom libraries are vital to the inquiry process along with video and still camera’s for documentation so schools need to ensure ongoing finances to sustain the inquiry process.

Conclusions

It is clear that the Reggio Emilia approach is unique, and meets the criteria of an ideal type when grounded in: the local Italian culture, its many-layered history, a long-standing left-wing political tradition, and distinct geographic and demographic surroundings. The approach also had a strong, visionary, utopian leader named Loris Malaguzzi. ... For these contextual

reasons, the approach cannot be directly adopted in any other part of the world (Loreman, 2007, p.18/19).

“The Reggio approach sheds light on what is meant by inclusion. The vision embraces children with special needs whereas the teachers and parents share the child’s achievements” (Gilman, 2007, p.28). Our approach to inclusion and our image of the child would be affected positively if we adopted the approach found in the Reggio schools. “Our attitudes can be expanded, commencing with our values, ethics and beliefs about children” (Gilman, 2007, p.29). Envisioning all children as competent learners instead of weak learners who need to be protected and spoon fed, would help change our pedagogical practices and ultimately impact students in a positive way. Adopting the Reggio image of the child would provide us with a lens to view all the practices and policies used in Canada (Loreman, 2007).

Along with a different image of the child we need to adopt a new image of the teacher. Teachers should have a “deep respect for and curiosity about children, an unquenchable curiosity about the teaching-learning process and a capacity for exploration and innovation that could be sustained through collaborative relationships with other adults” (New, 2007, p. 10). We should recognize the dynamic role culture plays in the relationship between education and culture (New, 2007). We are part of a multi-cultural community and we should embrace and celebrate that in the classroom.

We should adopt the use of the constructivist paradigm and encourage and support our students in constructing their own learning. This would mean letting go of the control in the classroom but I think ultimately it would make the classroom a more desirable environment for both student and teacher. All “educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it’s as simple and complex as that’... without teacher acceptance, implementing innovative

approaches in the classroom like project-based learning are dead in the water” (Wurdinger et al, p. 158).

We should give consideration to the environment as a third teacher “because it is so close to children’s ways of interacting with the world.” “Teachers can then examine classroom and school environments for what they allow and what they prevent children from exploring and investigating” (Strong-Wilson et al, 2007, p. 45)

We need to develop a pedagogy of listening, “listening to thought – the ideas and theories, questions and answers of children – treating thought seriously and with respect ... treating knowledge as constructed” (Moss, 2005, p. 25). Listening is the key to the documentation process and is something that I think as a teacher I need to do more of.

We also need to rethink the home-school relationships and determine how we can develop more meaningful connections (New, 2007, p.11). Connections through programs like Families and School Together, preschool and parent programs, family literacy nights, cultural celebrations, sports programs, teaching English and computer skills to new immigrant families, parent volunteer opportunities and even providing transportation for parents so they can attend meetings regarding their children.

The success of adopting any part of the Reggio pedagogy lies in the hands and minds of educators who allow themselves to imagine something new.

Merely to criticize the dominant paradigm, though crucial, is not enough. We must also define the emergent paradigm this being the really important and difficult task... The only route, it seems to me, is utopia. By utopia I mean the exploration by imagination of new modes of human possibility... and the confrontation by imagination of the necessity of whatever exists – just because it exists. (Moss, 2005. p. 25)

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Appendix A

Table 1 - Erik Erikson’s Stage of Psychosocial Development

| Stage | Psychosocial Crisis | Age |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Stage 1 | Trust vs. mistrust | Birth – 18 months |
| Stage 2 | Autonomy vs. shame and doubt | 18 months – 3 years |
| Stage 3 | Initiative vs. guilt | 3 – 5 years |
| Stage 4 | Industry vs. inferiority | 6 years - teens |
| Stage 5 | Identity vs. role confusion | Teens – 20’s |
| Stage 6 | Intimacy vs. isolation | 20’s – 40’s |
| Stage 7 | Generativity vs. stagnation | 40’s – 60’s |
| Stage 8 | Ego integrity vs. despair | 60’s and up |

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson%27s_stages_of_psychosocial_development#Value_of_the_theory

Table 2 - Piaget’s Stages of Development

| | Stage | Age Range | Characteristics |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preparatory – prelogical stages | <i>Sensori-motor</i> | Birth – 2 years | Coordination of physical actions; prerepresentational + preverbal |
| | <i>Preoperational</i> | 2-7 years | Ability to represent action through thought + language; prelogical |
| Advanced logical thinking stages | <i>Concrete operational</i> | 7-11 years | Logical thinking, but limited to physical reality |
| | <i>Formal Operational</i> | 11-15 years | Logical thinking, abstract and unlimited |

(Labinowicz, 1980), Fraser, & Gestwicki, 2000.