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The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education: An Introduction

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In the last decade, the Indonesian government has become more aware of the importance of the development and education of the early years of children's lives. Long before Indonesia started its journey in providing quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) for all young children, the people of Reggio Emilia city had developed sound practice in ECE that was well-known all over the world for its quality. This paper presented a literature review and described the Reggio Emilia Approach to ECE. Several suggestions as to how to adapt this approach in Indonesia's early childhood services were also discussed.

Keywords: early childhood education, Reggio Emilia approach, Indonesia

Dalam dekade terakhir, pemerintah Indonesia makin menyadari akan pentingnya pendidikan pada tahun-tahun awal kehidupan anak-anak. Jauh sebelum Indonesia memulai perjalanannya dalam memberikan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD) yang berkualitas untuk semua anak-anak, penduduk kota Reggio Emilia telah mengembangkan praktek PAUD yang terkenal berkualitas di seluruh dunia. Makalah ini menyajikan tinjauan literatur dan mendeskripsikan pendekatan PAUD Reggio Emilia. Beberapa saran mengenai bagaimana menyesuaikan pendekatan ini di Indonesia juga dibahas.

Kata kunci: pendidikan anak usia dini, Reggio Emilia a*pproach*, Indonesia

In the last decade, the Indonesian government has become more aware of the importance of the development and education of the early years of children's lives. In 2001, the Ministry of Education and Culture established a new directorate general dedicated to Early Childhood Education (ECE) (Hasan, Hyson, & Chang, 2013). This Early Childhood Education Directorate General of the Ministry of Education and Culture aimed to increase the participation rate of three to six year old children in ECE services from 28% in 2001 to 75% in 2015 (Directorate General of Out-of-School Education and Youth, 2004). In 2012, the gross participation rate for three to six year old children in ECE was 60.33% (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2013). In addition to the participation rate, the Directorate General also strived to increase the quality of ECE services (Directorate General of Out-of-School Education and Youth, 2004). Long before Indonesia realized the importance of education and care in the early years and start its journey in providing quality ECE for all young children, the people of the city of Reggio Emilia have developed sound practice in ECE that was well-known all over the world for its quality (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Jalongo, et al. (2004); Mawson, 2010; Walsh & Petty, 2007). The approach that the early childhood educators in this city use was known as the Reggio Emilia Approach. This paper summarized the key philosophy, theories, ideas, and practical implications of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Method

This paper is a study on the literatures that discuss Reggio Emilia Approach. The approach was an ECE approach that was well-known all over the world and has been used and adapted to suit the conditions of each country. Literatures used in this literature review paper were selected from the ones that described the Reggio Emilia Approach as practiced in the Reggio Emilia schools for young children in Italy and not ones that were practiced elsewhere. The primary key words used were "Reggio Emilia" and "Reggio Emilia Approach". Google Scholar and The University of Auckland library search engines were

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used in the attempt to find relevant literatures according to the aim of this paper. The relevant literatures found were mostly from books. The literatures were read and re-read, and cited wherever appropriate to give a thorough description of the most important aspects of this approach.

Results

The Reggio Emilia Approach: The Integration of Theories into Practice

Reggio Emilia is a small, affluent city in the Romagna Emilia region, northern of Italy. The history of Reggio Emilia schools for young children started only a few weeks after the Second World War in 1945 when the people of Villa Cella, a small village in Reggio Emilia, decided to build and run a school for young children. The school was built by the people themselves on a land donated by a farmer, and it was made from the bricks of bombed houses and sand from the river (Malaguzzi, 1998).

The first municipal preschool was opened in 1963 and the first Infant-toddler centre in 1970 (Millikan, 2003). The infant-toddler centres cater for children age three months – three years and the preschool is for children age three to six years. More than 14% of the city of Reggio Emilia budget goes to support this early childhood system (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012).

In these centres and preschools, the children are put in the same groups for their entire three-year stay. Each group will be taught by a pair of teachers during their stay at the schools. Every year, all the children in the group will move together to a new classroom with their teachers (Thornton & Brunton, 2009). In that way, children stay with the same teachers for their entire three years at the preschool (Abramson, Ankenman, & Robinson, 1995).

One of the uniqueness of the Reggio Emilia Approach is it does not "worship" one particular theory or practice. Instead, they learn from many and draw inspirations from them, at the same time critically examining them. Malaguzzi, the pioneer of the Reggio Emilia movement, believed that a unifying theory that can sum up all the phenomena of educating does not and never will exist (Gandini, 2012a). The teachers of Reggio Emilia read and contemplate on theories from existing literatures all around the world in philosophy, psychology, pedagogy and sociology. They read among others, the work of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Maria Montessori, Erik Erikson, Urie Brofenbrenner, Howard Gardner, and David Hawkins (Malaguzzi, 1998). In addition, they also read and use whenever appropriates the work of scientists, linguists, writers, artists, and poets (Hoyuelos, 2004, as cited in Thornton and Brunton, 2009). The Reggio Emilia theories come from different fields, and the Reggio Emilia educators adjust these theories in order to implement it in their own context to make it more appropriate. They also listen to and take into account the views of parents, teachers, children, and stakeholders (Soler and Miller, 2003).

Howard Gardner, the pioneer of the multiple intelligence theory, was astonished with how good the Reggio schools are able to integrate its philosophy and practice into a "seamless" and "symbiotic" relationship (Gardner, 1998). Reggio teachers believe that theory and practice have a reciprocal relationship and they cannot be separated. In fact, in Reggio Emilia schools, practice is prioritized over theory (Rinaldi, 2006). They believe that theory should come from practice and experience: "The traditional relationship of theory and practice, which makes practice the derivative of theory, must be redefined. Theory and practice must become reciprocal and complimentary, with practice even allowed some possibility of precedence" (Rinaldi, 1998a, p. 119). In the subsequent paragraphs, we will see how the Reggio Emilia teachers weave their philosophies and theories into practices in the Reggio Emilia schools for young children.

The Image of the Child

One of the focal points of the Reggio Emilia philosophy is the image of a competent child (Hewett, 2001). What do they mean by a competent child? What is the child competent in doing?

Our society usually brings out an image of the child as one who needs adults. They are often seen as needy and incapable beings. They need help, need to be fed, need to be taught to do things—basically, to live. But Malaguzzi argued that the people who dedicated themselves to study about children seriously "have ended up by discovering not so much the limits and weaknesses of children but rather their surprising and extraordinary strengths and capabilities linked with inexhaustible need for expression and realization" (Gandini, 2012a, p.53). As Samuelsson, Sheridan, and Williams (2006) said, it was the children's rights rather than their needs that were emphasized.

Reggio Emilia believe that "each child born is a 'could be' of humanity, he [and she] is a possibility, the beginning of a hope", and that they are "the most important citizen, because he represents and brings the possible" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 171). As a result of this strong belief in the potentials of children, the Reggio Emilia teachers do not only love children, they respect them. This belief was clearly seen by visiting visitors. Jerome Bruner (2012), following his visit to the schools in Reggio Emilia, felt that the teachers respect children as if they are Noble Prize winners.

The Reggio teachers believe that children are our present and our future. They are not only the citizens of the future but they are citizens from the time they were born. Seeing children as our future may cause us to oppress their dreams and freedom to be something that perhaps we would not want them to be, and this should not be the case. Children are the holder of rights who demand to be respected and valued for their own identity, uniqueness, and differences. This means that we must recognize and accept the uniqueness and individuality of each child (Rinaldi, 2000, in Gandini & Kaminsky, 2006). As citizens, children should be helped to cultivate their potentials so they could contribute to the society, not only when they grew up as adults, but right then, when they are children.

Malaguzzi, in "The Rights of the Child" in "A Charter of Rights" mentioned that children have the right to expand their potential (1993). Reggio Emilia teachers believe that our inability to understand and utilize children and childhood has wasted the potentials that perhaps could be of great contribution to humanity and to the human race (Malaguzzi, 1998). It is believed that the children potentials have to be acknowledged because neglect will result in "irreversible suffering and impoverishment of the child" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p.214).

Children in Reggio Emilia are seen as strong, rich, and powerful learners. This is stated clearly by Loris Malaguzzi, the leader of the Reggio approach development, as:

> In any context, children do not wait to pose questions to themselves and form strategies of thought, principles, or feelings. Always and everywhere children take an active role in the construction and acquisition of learning and understanding. So it is that in many situations, especially when one sets up challenges, children show us that they know how to walk along the path to understanding. (Gandini, 2012a, p. 44)

Rinaldi emphasized this view by asserting that Reggio teachers view children as:

> …strong, powerful and rich in potential and resources, right from the moment of birth. We see a child who is driven by the enormous energy potential of a hundred billion neurons, by the strength of wanting to grow and taking the job of growing seriously, by the incredible curiosity that makes children search for the reasons for everything. …who has all the strength and potential that comes from children's ability to wonder and to be amazed. A child who is powerful from the moment of birth because he is open to the world and capable of constructing his own knowledge. A child who is seen in his wholeness, who possesses his own directions and the desire for knowledge and for life. A competent child! (Rinaldi, 2000, in Gandini & Kaminsky, 2006, p. 123)

Reggio Emilia teachers believe that children bring all the needed resources to live and learn from the time they were born. They are the *researchers* of the meaning of life. They are always curious, always ready and eager to search and look for the meaning of everyday experiences, the meaning of the events surrounding them. In their queries in finding the answers, children play an active role. They ask questions, build theories, construct knowledge. They are the protagonists and they should be given the chance to shape their experience, not shaped by the experience (Malaguzzi, 1998). For Reggio Emilia teachers, the child is:

An active child who plays an active role in his/her learning and who always tries to understand the things that are happening around him/her and the things he/she sees. A child who is eager to explore.

A curious and critical child who is able to ask questions, to ask "why". A child who is always looking for meaning and who from the very young age is able to give meanings to events. A child who has the need to understand the reasons, who always wants to know about how things work and about how to do things.

A creative child who is able to create original ideas (Rinaldi, 2006). A child who is open to new possibilities, to new things, to differences. A child who thinks big.

A child who is able to build his/her own knowledge. He/she is able to give explanations and to express his/her points of view. A child is capable to interpret and to understand reality. He/she does not only ask 'why?' but he/she is also capable of finding the

answers to his/her whys and to create his/her own theories (Rinaldi, 2012).

A child who is capable to build relationships. A child is a social being that right from the moment of birth was eager and able to communicate and to form relationships. He/she is competent in relating and interacting (Rinaldi, 2006).

Hence, a competent child is a child who is competent in living, learning, and in forming relationships. How do these beliefs about children affect the way Reggio teachers teach in the schools?

The Reggio teachers try to cultivate children's intention to question, to get into research and to build theories as explanations to their questions. They do not want to destroy the children's tendency to find meaning, to ask whys, and to find/construct explanations. They do not give quick answers that may destroy the children's desire to find out for themselves, to search for the answer, to do research and construct theories and explanations (Rinaldi, 2012). Instead, the children are encouraged to develop their own theories about the world and how it works and to explore it.

As to cultivate children's identity as social beings and to value their capacity to interact, the children in Reggio municipal infant-toddler centres and preschools were put in the same class for the entire three years of their time in the centres and preschools (Millikan, 2003). This is to allow deep and strong relationship to form throughout the years.

The Reggio Definition of Theory and Research

> Can children build theory? If we accept the idea that our search, as human beings, to find the meaning of the world around us is essential to life, then we can accept that we can build the answers to our questions. We tend to build theory as a satisfactory explanation that can help us to understand the whys that are inside of us. (Rinaldi, 2012, p. 239)

Reggio teachers define theory as expressions of what one knows about things and about life. We cannot live without meaning. From the time we were born, we have the innate tendency to search and re-search for meaning. In the attempt to find meaning, we become researcher. Consequently, every human being is a natural researcher (Rinaldi, 2006). Reggio teachers stresses on the 'normality of research'. They believe that experts that reside in the university buildings are not the only ones that can do research. Rather, research is an attitude and an approach in everyday living (Rinaldi, 2003).

The Hundred Languages of Children

Reggio Emilia teachers believe that children express themselves in many different ways. This view was expressed in the famous poem by Loris Malaguzzi entitled the "Hundred Languages of Children", that stated that children have:

A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred, always a hundred
Ways of listening,
Of marveling, of loving,
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding.
A hundred worlds
To discover,
A hundred worlds
To invent,
A hundred worlds
To dream

This belief motivates the teachers to find ways to help children express themselves—their opinions, theories, understandings, and feelings—in many different ways. They believe that children use graphic, verbal, literate, as well as symbolic languages (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). The teachers encourage children to represent their theories and feelings in and with drawings, paintings, collages, clay sculptures, wires, words, music, dance and movement, dramatic play, numbers, block constructions, and shadow plays (Cadwell, 1997).

Creativity

At Reggio Emilia, children are seen as creative beings. They are creative because they build and re-build their ideas continuously, not overly attached to it. Children are ready to explore, discover, and change their point of views (Malaguzzi, 1998). Malaguzzi stated that children's creativity will be clearer when adults try to be more attentive to children's cognitive processes when they are thinking or understanding or when they are doing or working on something rather than the products/results they produce (Gandini, 2012a).

What does it mean to be creative? For Reggio teachers, creativity means: "the ability to construct new connections between thoughts and objects that bring about innovation and change, taking known elements and creating new connections" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.111).

According to them, to be creative means to be able to make new connections between different concepts or things, even if perhaps at first it looks or sounds unusual and bizarre to the normal or common. Therefore, adults should accept expressions that kind of different and unusual and must avoid expressing judgments too quickly, which may inhibit their creativity.

Reggio teachers do not seen creativity as an extraordinary thing but as a thing that is likely to be a result from everyday experience. Creativity is regarded not as a special aspect of knowledge. It should not be seen as different from intelligence. Instead, creativity should be seen as a characteristic of our way of thinking, understanding and making choices. Malaguzzi was convinced that creativity and intellectual ability is complimentary (Gandini, 2012a)

According to Malaguzzi (1998), creativity often emerge when a confident person who knows how to express himself/herself and what he/she knows and has the courage to explore the unknown, meet with various experiences in her life. Malaguzzi believed that:

> The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences. We must widen the topics and goals, the types of situations we offer and their degree of structure, the kinds and combinations of resources and materials, and the possible interactions with things, peers, and adults. (Gandini, 2012a, p. 54)

Based on this belief, children are provided with wealthy resources and wide variety of situations to foster creativity and to stimulate exploration, investigation, and imagination. Their projects stem from the children's interests on what they encounter in everyday life, which could be anything. The origin of their projects may range from their curiousness of shadows in "Everything has a shadow, except ants" project (Sturloni & Vecchi, 2006), their interest in "dinosaurs" (Rankin, 1998), their experience being in "the crowd" (Vecchi, 1996), or their excitement playing in "the puddle" after rain (Malaguzzi, 1996). They are encouraged to explore different types of unusual, interesting materials and to value these resources and look upon them as 'intelligent materials' with high creativity possibility. The resources provided in the preschools and infant-toddler centres among others are: opaque, translucent and transparent materials such as beads, glass nuggets, buttons, small bottles, plastic and metal discs to be investigated using light boxes and OHP; glass, in the forms of containers, mirrors, pendants, balls, and bottles; driftwood, stones, shells, cones, leaves, seedpods and feathers; clay and wire; paints, inks, pens, colour pencils and markers with fine and large tips, and papers in range of colours, shapes, sizes and textures (Thornton & Brunton, 2009).

The Environment

Reggio Emilia schools strive to be amiable schools where children, teachers, and parents feel at ease. To achieve this goal, attention was paid to build the structure and design of the rooms and spaces in the infant-toddler centres and preschools. The centres and schools are seen as places of shared lives and relationships among adults and children (Malaguzzi, 1998). Spaces and rooms in the centres and preschools are designed to support social interactions, encounters, and exchanges (Gandini, 2012b). Children are given spaces to meet and play together with children from their class as well as from other classes, spaces to talk to their teachers and spaces to welcome or say goodbye to their parents. Parents are given spaces to meet with the other parents and to have a discussion with the teachers. Teachers are given spaces to share their experience and observation with colleagues and parents.

In Reggio Emilia, environment is seen as the third teacher: if the environment is not helping learning process, it is inhibiting it (Cadwell, 1997; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002; Lewin-Benham, 2008; Samuelsson, et al., 2006). The environment in Reggio Emilia schools was built to give children a rich, complex environment that provides a wealth of sensory experience and foster creative expression. The construction of the schools pays close attention to aesthetics and takes light, colour, materials, smell, sound, and microclimate into considerations (Ceppi & Zini, 1998).

In Reggio preschools and infant-toddler centres there are large open spaces, small spaces, and outdoor environments designed with certain purpose. Rinaldi (1998b, p. 120) explained that the spaces are built with the children, teachers, and parents in mind:

> The objective is thus to construct and organize spaces that enable children: (1) to express their potential, abilities, and curiosity; (2) to explore and research alone and with others, both peers and adults; (3) to perceive themselves as constructors of projects and of the overall educational project carried out in the school; (4) to reinforce their identities (also in terms of gender), autonomy, and security; (5) to

work and communicate with others; (6) to know that their identities and privacy are respected.

The construction and organization of the space should enable the teachers: (1) to feel supported and integrated in their relationships with children and parents; (2) to have appropriate spaces and furnishings to satisfy their need to meet with other adults, both colleagues and parents; (3) to have their needs of privacy recognized; (4) to be supported in their processes of learning and professional development.

And finally, the spaces should ensure that parents can: (1) be listened to and informed; (2) meet with other parents and teacher in ways and times that foster real collaboration.

The main spaces in Reggio municipal preschools and infant-toddler centres are (Millikan, 2003; Thornton & Brunton, 2009; Gandini, 2012b):

Piazza. A large open space at the heart of the building, where children, parents, and teachers can get together. It is a place for meeting and encounter between children of different ages and the space one passes through on the way to the other rooms in the building. This space reflects the image of the city of Reggio Emilia with its piazzas. The other rooms in the building are physically attached to the piazza and are visible from it.

Atelier. It is sometimes known as the studio, workshop, or laboratory. It was built to reinforce the integration of imagination, creativity, expressiveness, and aesthetics into learning process. The atelier is used for research, experimentation, and manipulation of variety of materials (Ceppi & Zini, 1998). It is a place for children to meet with exciting, interesting, and unusual materials, tools, and equipment. These materials, tools, and equipment are organized in such a way to attract the children's attention to explore, investigate, or to use it creatively. Atelier is also built to be a place for children to explore their many different languages (Malaguzzi, in Gandini, 2012a). Atelier enables the weaving together between expressive languages with cognition which could extend learning in a richer way. It is seen as a way to protect the complexity of the learning process by using imagination as an element that brings together the different activities to complicate and to enrich the learning process. In the atelier, visual language is seen not as a separate discipline but a means of inquiry and investigation (Vecchi, in Gandini, 2012c). It is used "to build bridges and relationships between experiences and languages", and in keeping "cognitive and expressive processes in close relationship with one another" (Vecchi, in Gandini, 2012c, p. 310).

Classrooms. These are subdivided into two to three spaces to offer children opportunities to work in small groups and be in a space without teachers. Each classroom has a mini-atelier attached to it, designed to integrate the use of atelier into the children's daily activities. If possible, a quiet zone area exists in the classroom for children to have their private time. The classrooms are equipped with low platform areas for group meetings, light tables, pull-down screens, and construction areas. They have direct access to piazza and outdoor spaces, allowing children free access to outside of the classrooms environments with teacher's permission.

Dining room. This is seen as a place where children have the opportunity to interact with each other and build friendship and the *kitchen*, where children are encouraged to appreciate the time and care the cooks provide when they are preparing the meals. The kitchen is located next to the dining room and is visible through large windows. The dining room is also seen as a place where children learn to be part of the community and take responsibility by taking turns to set the tables for lunch. A kitchen can also serves as a laboratory or workshop where children do their projects, such as investigating foods and trying out recipes.

Internal courtyard. A 'room without a roof' that is clearly visible through large glass windows from the piazza, and *outdoor spaces* that have wooden play structures and areas for play and performance. The internal courtyard serves as a bridge between the indoor and outdoor environment, heightening the awareness of the time of the day, the weather, and the seasons.

Spaces perceived as marginal or less important. Over time, as the result of on-going research, Reggio teachers also pay close attention to spaces that people otherwise will see as marginal or less important to learning or relationship. All of the environment within the school area are thoughtfully planned and organized, including for example, the bathroom.

Time

> One has to respect the time of maturation, of development, of the tools of doing and understanding, of the full, slow, extravagant, lucid and ever-changing emergence of children's capacities; it is a measure of cultural and biological wisdom. If nature has commanded that of all the animals, infancy shall last longest in human beings—infinitely long, says Tolstoy—it is because nature knows how many rivers there are to cross and paths to retrace.

> Nature provides time for mistakes to be corrected (by both children and adults), for prejudices to be overcome, and for children to catch their breath and restore their image of themselves, peers, parents, teachers, and the world. (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 80)

What Malaguzzi asserted explains the Reggio teachers view about time. In Reggio, time is valued through the richness of everyday experiences. There is no sense of urgency to push the children to learn or master certain skills in a limited time frame. The teachers respect the children's pace of learning, of understanding, and of doing. The time are arranged to help children fully develop their potentials (Wexler, 2004). The children are given enough time to eat, to have a rest and to sleep, to meet, to talk and to listen, to think and reflect, and to do things for their physical, social, and intellectual wellbeing (Thornton & Brunton, 2009).

The day is structured to give children as much autonomy as possible over their use of time, which reflects the Reggio belief that children should be protagonists in their learning. The transition of the various times in a day are not guided by bells, showing respect for whatever activities children are doing at that particular time (Strozzi, 2001). There are general rules about the use of time that act as a guide but it is not rigid. As Strozzi said, "We need rules, but we also need to be able to break away from them" (2001, p. 73), and "once an overall time frame has been set (9:00 for arrival, 12:00 for lunch, 3:30 for snack, and 4:00 or 6:30 for departure [in preschools]), what determines the beginning or end of an activity is primarily the children's interests and desires" (2001, p. 74).

This flexible schedule gives children the time they need to become immersed in the activities and experiences that interest them. It gives them the time to work in their own pace and at the same time give them the opportunity to learn to be responsible with their use of time. Being able to work in the same project for a long-period of time signifies a deeper involvement and it is thought to help children gain higher understanding (Tarini & White, 1998).

The encouragement and time that the teachers give for children to develop their own ideas and share to it to the group tell the children that their thinking and ideas are important and valued. This helps to build the children's self-confidence and develop their courage to try new things, not afraid of making mistakes. They are also given enough time to interact with each other which help them to become confident in presenting themselves in the social environment.

Besides the children, the teachers are also given time to know and respect the rhythm of children's learning. The three year period that a teacher spends with the same group of children gives the teacher opportunity to understand them individually and build strong relationships over time. Teachers are also given time to document, to reflect, to interpret, to share with colleagues and with parents. Besides, they are given time to develop their professional competencies in activities such as trainings, seminars, and workshops (Millikan, 2003).

Progettazione

Reggio teachers believe that learning does not proceed in a linear or stage-like way where individuals have to go through a certain stage before he/she can proceed to another stage (Rinaldi, 1998a). Knowing this will help us understand why the project work in Reggio Emilia does not proceed in a fixed way but take form in many different ways (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006). Dahlberg & Moss (2006) described this kind of learning as a rhizome, where there is no hierarchy of roots, trunks or branches. A tree has to grow from its root then the trunk and branches, but a rhizome shoots to all directions without a specific order. It is like the development of the projects in Reggio Emilia schools.

Reggio teachers do not follow a planned curriculum (Malaguzzi, 1998). It is at the same time "defined and undefined, structured and unstructured, based more on flexible strategies than rigid plans" (Rinaldi, 1998a, p. 119). The curriculum is perhaps best described by the term negotiated curriculum instead of emergent curriculum or any other types of curriculum (Fraser & Getswicki, 2002). Forman & Fyfe described negotiated curriculum as a curriculum that is "not child centred or teacher directed". It is "child originated and teacher framed" (1998, p. 240).

The development of a project begins with what Malaguzzi (1998) stated as *reconnaissance*, the educators' observation of what is interesting for the children and what it is that they want to explore deeper. This way, the educators plan activities that were built on as well as deepen the children's interest (Strong-wilson & Ellis, 2007). From the observation, teachers discuss various possibilities that may take place in the course of the project (Rankin, 1998). Some of the hypothesis will happen, some don't. The teachers do not force their thinking and ideas about

the project to the children. This step is taken so that teachers may be prepared for all the possible ways the project might take and could anticipate of how it would evolve. Then, from this observation and interpretation of what is going on and what might happen next, the teachers prepare and organize the space, materials, thoughts, situations, and occasions for learning to facilitate the realization and exploration of children's ideas (Rinaldi, 1998a). As Malaguzzi conveyed, "This expectation helps the adults in terms of their attentiveness, choices, methods of intervention, and what they do concerning the relationships among participants" (1998, p. 90).

The process of observing and predicting the project for planning is on-going. The teachers are always observant at all times to the children and interpret their spoken words, gestures, and actions as the work is going on, adjusting the plans they have in minds to accommodate the children's thinking, ideas, or feeling. It is not meant to steer the children to the direction the teachers perceived the children will be interested in, but to prepare the teachers in all the stages of the project, while leaving room for change and for the unexpected as the project develops (Rinaldi, 1998a). The teachers have plans, but "the teachers follow the children, not plans" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 88).

In the next step after discovering the children's interest in a particular topic, the teachers then prepare a set of questions to access the children's knowledge about that topic (Rankin, 1998). In the words of Forman & Fyfe, "children are encouraged to talk about what they know before they begin their projects" (1998, p. 240). In this way, the teachers may predict what may come next. Through this, teachers lead the project from the children's interest, what they already knew, and what they want to know more. This practice captures the principle of teachers and children as co-constructor of learning and knowledge (Forman & Fyfe, 1998).

Because learning does not proceed in a linear way but instead they may shoot in all directions, "it is clear that our *progettazione* must involve multiple actions, voices, times, and places" (Rinaldi, 1998a, p. 119). The many different routes children may take in a course of a project enable them to switch from one strategy to another, abandoning some and trying others. This way, the children will feel comfortable and motivated as they are not afraid of making mistakes (Malaguzzi, 1998).

The role of teachers and other adults (such as parents and community members) in projects should not only be one who answer the children's questions, but instead help them find the answers themselves, and more importantly, to "help them ask themselves good questions" (Rinaldi, 1998a, p. 115). In the course of a project, adults should intervene as little as possible whenever needed, and continually reassess what has been happening, setting up situations to scaffold children's learning and decide when to intervene to keep their motivation high (Malaguzzi, 1998).

Pedagogical Documentation

Progettazione cannot be separated from pedagogical documentation. What is pedagogical documentation? It is an on-going process of observing, recording, and interpreting children's thinking, behaviour, ideas, feeling, etc., through various ways. According to Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999, 2007), pedagogical documentation refers to both the process and the content in that process. It is a process in which educators reflect on their pedagogical work which they do either by themselves or with other people involved in the process, such as other educators, the children themselves, parents, or policy makers. This process is helped by the content, the material which records observations on the children, what the children are saying or doing and their work. The content helps educators to reflect on what they observed. It acts as a reminder that is stronger than memory which may be vague and distorted. Thus, content makes visible the process of pedagogical work, and by making it visible, it can be shared and contested (Dahlberg, 2012). The result of documentation that is interpreted and re-interpreted, discussed and contested with others is abundant knowledge that is enriched by the contributions of many people. The content can be in any form available: drawings, written notes, sketches, children's finished work, photographs, video recordings, audio recordings, transcripts of fragments of conversation, etc. (Strong-wilson & Ellis, 2007).

Documentation as developed in Reggio is not a collection of documents at the end of an activity but rather documents or artifacts collected during the activity and experience. These documents and artifacts are used to plan the next direction of the activity (Rinaldi, 2012). The purpose of documentation is not about finding answers but instead to formulate questions (Turner & Wilson, 2010). Therefore, it is prospective and not only retrospective (Mardell & Krechevsky, 2003). Although pedagogical documentation involves observing children, it is not child observation which tends to see children through a set of pre-

determined developmentally appropriate criteria (Dahlberg et al., 2007). In many parts of the world, documentation as inspired by Reggio has begun to be used as a pedagogical tool (Buldu, 2010; MacDonald, 2007; McLellan, 2010; Moss & Dahlberg, 2008).

Pedagogical documentation is a multi-purpose tool (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006). It is a tool that is beneficial for all involved in the educational endeavour, whether it is children, educators, parents, or policy makers. For children, it acts as a stimulator of learning, proof that their work is valued and their voices listened to. For educators, documentation helps them to be learners, to assess the children's progress, to plan from the children's interests, to scaffold their learning, to listen to children, to communicate with the parents, and to share their work to a wider audience. For parents, documentation helps them to get involved in their children's learning and it often helps them in building a closer relationship with their children and the educators (Kroeger & Cardy, 2006). For policy makers, it is a tool that may help them to formulate regulations based on evidence.

Rinaldi (2006) describes documentation as a spiral of observation, interpretation, and documentation. She explains that documentation cannot be separated from observation and interpretation. Similarly, Gandini & Goldhaber (2001) describe documentation as a 'cycle of enquiry' and propose that pedagogical documentation start by framing questions; observing, recording, and collecting artifacts; organizing observations and artifacts; analyzing observations and artifacts; building theories; reframing questions; and planning, projecting, and responding. This cycle is not a linear process or steps that have to be followed step by step, but it is a 'messy' work that requires jumping forward or going back several times.

The Role of Teachers

> Loris Malaguzzi once said that we need a teacher who is sometimes the director, sometimes the set designer, sometimes the curtain and the backdrop, and sometimes the prompter. A teacher who is both sweet and stern, who is the electrician, who dispenses the paints and who is even the audience – the audience who watches, sometimes clasp, sometimes remain silent, full of emotion, who sometimes judges with skepticism, and at other times applauds with enthusiasm. (Rinaldi, 2006, p.73)

The roles of the teachers in Reggio Emilia are complex (Edwards, 2012). From the charter of rights Malaguzzi stated that teachers should have the right to "contribute to the study and preparation of the conceptual models that define educational content, objectives, and practices" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 215). A teacher should not be a person who carries on the plans already made by other people. She cannot just be an implementer of a theory that was developed for children in different context (Rinaldi, 2006).

A teacher is a protagonist in the process of learning and teaching. As a protagonist, a teacher possesses many roles which are interconnected with each other:

Teacher as *researcher, co-constructor of knowledge,* and *learner*. The teacher's role as researcher stem from the belief that theory and practice cannot be separated (Rinaldi, 2006). A teacher should be both a practitioner and a theorist, and to fulfill that role the teacher should be a researcher. Teachers in Reggio Emilia are expected to become co-constructors of knowledge rather than merely dispensers of knowledge (Fraser & Getswicki, 2002). Teachers, along with children, construct knowledge together (Hewett, 2001). They are co-protagonists in the knowledge building processes (Rinaldi, 2006). As co-protagonists, like children, teachers must also become learners. Malaguzzi stressed the importance of teachers as learners: "learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 83).

Teacher as *partner*, *nurturer*, and *guide*. In the 'rights of the child', Malaguzzi used the term alliance to describe how teachers and children relationship should be: "and this is so much truer when children are reassured by an effective *alliance* between the adults in their lives, adults who are always ready to help, who place higher value on the search for constructive strategies of thought and action than on the direct transmission of knowledge and skills" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p.214, emphasis added). In this type of relationship, children and teachers are partners. It is not a hierarchical or vertical relationship that often defines the traditional role of teachers. As nurturers and guides, teachers are expected to provide support and encouragement, including loving care when the children are having bad times (Edwards, 1998). At times, they prod the children forward or provoke them to create crises (Fraser & Getswicki, 2002) and to encourage them to think more deeply or from another perspective (Millikan, 2003).

To accomplish her roles, a teacher should be an *observer, listener, documenter,* and *interpreter*. According

to Malaguzzi, teachers "must realize how listening to children both necessary and expedient" (Gandini, 2012a, p. 49). By observing, listening, documenting, and interpreting, teachers learn when is the right time to intervene the children's work to sustain their interest. The Reggio Emilia teachers are careful not to give children quick answers and not to express judgement too quickly which may ruin the children's interest to find the answers for themselves and build their own knowledge. Based on their observations, teachers decide when to assist children with information or when to lend their skills needed by the children to carry out their ideas (Fraser & Getswicki, 2002). They observe what the children are feeling or thinking and act according to their observations and interpretations to provide whatever the children need.

Discussion

Though the Reggio Emilia Approach was well-known for its quality, Reggio Emilia educators never intended that their approach will be wholly adopted in other cultures. The Reggio Emilia educators believed that an effective curriculum takes into account the history, culture, environment, and situation of that particular place (Rinaldi, 2006). The Reggio Emilia Approach was not developed to be a model approach with a set of guidelines to be followed by other educators in other places. It must be redefined according to one's own culture in order to be an appropriate and valuable practice in that culture (Hewett, 2001).

In Indonesia, the Early Childhood Education Development Directorate issued 14 ECE principles that guided the implementations and practices of ECE services (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2013). These principles included providing a supportive learning environment and stimulating creativity and innovation, which were similar to the Reggio Emilia Approach. However, there were little guidance and/or examples on how Indonesian early childhood educators should interpret these principles into actions and practices. The following paragraphs discussed several ideas on how to implement the Indonesia ECE principles based on the Reggio Emilia schools' practices. First, the Reggio Emilia educators believe that the environment is the third teacher. If the environment is not enhancing learning experiences, then it is inhibiting it. Therefore, ECE services' environment must be arranged in such a way that it will enhance children's learning experiences. Every aspect of the building should be purposefully designed, built, and arranged to give the maximum benefit to children's growth and learning (Strong-wilson & Ellis, 2007). For example, as toddlers are multi-sensory learners, their room should provide a wealth of sensory experiences. The design and arrangement of the room must take into account the colour and textures of the wall, floor, and ceiling, as children of this age spend much of their time in contact with or looking to these environment. The Early Childhood Education Development Directorate also stated the importance of environment in enhancing children's learning (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2013). In Indonesia, teachers may provide a variety of sensory stimulation such as hanging bamboo wind chimes which produce a beautiful sound when the wind blows and providing aromatic scents to provoke their olfactory. A variety of materials of different density and textures may also be provided for the children to explore. Light and smooth materials such as feathers and silk can be placed next to hard and rough materials such as glass and pebbles, taking care to supervise them when exploring these materials. Second, the Reggio Emilia schools provide a wide variety of situations as well as materials to give children the means to express themselves and their creativity in many different ways (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). The Early Childhood Education Development Directorate also stated that ECE should stimulate children's creativity and innovation and that teacher must give children opportunities to use different materials to explore (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2013). In Indonesia, early childhood services may provide materials to be explored, manipulated, and used, such as: beads and buttons; ribbons, threads, yarns, strings, and ropes; crayons, colour pencils, pens, markers, and paints; papers in range of colours, shapes, sizes, and textures; colourful play dough; cottons and fabrics in range of colours, patterns, and textures; and pebbles, shells, leaves, tree bark, and feathers. Recycled materials such as packaging boxes, bottles, and old Compact Discs (CDs) may also be used. Besides, children should also be provided with a variety of ways to express their ideas, understandings, and feelings, such as through drawings, paintings, collages, play dough sculptures, words, music, dance & movement, dramatic play, shadow play, shadow puppet play *(wayang)*, and block constructions. All of these materials and activities provide opportunities for children to explore, to create, to be creative, and to express themselves.

Third, the Reggio Emilia educators saw professional development as a life-long process (Rinaldi, 2006) and they believed that teaching and learning should not be separated (Malaguzzi, 1998). In Reggio Emilia, a significant amount of working time was set aside for educators' professional development. Professional development in these schools can be in the forms of discussion with other teachers within the school as well as seminars and workshops outside the school (Thornton & Brunton, 2009). ECE services in Indonesia can also provide support, resources, and time for its' educators professional development. Weekly or monthly meetings where educators come together to discuss children's learning is a great way for them to learn from each other. This meeting would provide a platform for the educators to share and solve problems related to everyday teaching and to improve their teaching practice. Financial support and time allocation for regular and continual relevant professional development programs could also be organized.

Conclusion

In Indonesia, there is not yet a national early childhood curriculum. In the Early Childhood Education Development Directorate's 2013 technical guidelines for the implementation of early childhood services *(petunjuk teknis penyelenggaraan)*, 14 ECE principles were stated, but there were no guidance and/or examples on how early childhood educators could turn these principles into sound practices. This paper described the Reggio Emilia Approach, a well-known ECE approach that could be used as an example for Indonesian early childhood educators to provide better ECE for Indonesian young children. Several suggestions as to how to adapt this approach in Indonesia's early childhood services were also discussed.

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