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A. Educative Settings

1. Childhood Architectural Education or 2. Child Friendly Cities Network (UNICEF)

CHILDREN, SPACES, RELATIONSHIPS.

THE INFANT-TODDLER CENTRES AND PRESCHOOLS EXPERIENCE OF REGGIO CHILDREN

There are many forms of teaching and learning experiences that promote a type of so-called *advanced education*. Italy stands out with the experience of Reggio Children, in the city of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, in particular regard nursery schools and preschools, which invests the capabilities and potential of children, believing that *education is a public place of social cohesion*, made of participation and relationship between children, teachers, parents and citizens.

Howard Gardner, American psychologist, the most important representative of the theory of *multiple intelligences*, has written about the experience of Reggio Emilia Municipal schools with which he comes into contact in the '80s of last century: "My favourite example of an ethical community is a small town called Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy. In addition to providing high quality services and cultural benefits for its citizens, the city provides excellent child-care centers and pre-school. Children feel that the community takes care of them. So, when they grow up, return this respect by taking care of others. They become good workers and good citizens".

Reggio Children was founded in 1994 on the initiative of Loris Malaguzzi (1920 - 1994) and a committee of citizens to promote and defend children's rights and to organise the pedagogical and cultural exchanges already taking place between Reggio Emilia's Municipal early childhood centres and teachers, academics and researchers from around the world.

The Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy based on the image of the child and, in general, of a human with strong potential carriers of development and rights of individuals, who learn and grow in relationship with others. This global educational project which is being carried out inside schools in the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, inspired schools around the world, is based on some distinctive features: the participation of families, the collegial work of all staff, the importance of the learning environment and architecture, the presence of the atelier and the figure of artists, the educational and teaching coordination.

Following the centrality of "the hundred languages" in which the human being has, through the atelier and artistic spaces is offered daily to the children the opportunity to have meetings with multiple materials, multiple languages, multiple points of view, to have simultaneously active hands, thought and emotions, enhancing the expressiveness and creativity of each child and children in the group. Children have a hundred languages, and they want to use them all. They learn very soon how difficult it is for this right to be recognized and above all respected.

This is why children ask to their teachers and to the places they live to be their allies in resisting hostile pressures and defending spaces for creative freedom which, in the end, are also spaces of joy, trust, and solidarity.

On local, national and international levels Reggio Children through its International Network:

- Promotes research projects together with universities, foundations and ministries and companies working in various fields
- Carries out educational consulting activities
- Collaborates with ngos in co-operation initiatives with institutions for early childhood in various countries
- Publishes literature translated into 14 languages
- Runs *The Hundred Languages* of Children exhibition that has been travelling for 25 years across five continents invited by governments, museums, universities and art galleries etc.

THE PLACE AND THE AESTHETIC

The identity of a place, in this case a school for early childhood, must be generated by the amount and intensity of connections (links) and by activated experiences with other fields of knowledge, with other strategies of thought, with other identities. The Infant-toddler best in the world school, as it was defined in 1991 by the American weekly *Newsweek*, is the Municipal school for Reggio Emilia children's *Diana*, located within the public gardens of the city centre, which is based on the pedagogical method of Loris Malaguzzi.

The school is compared to a construction site, a permanent laboratory where the research processes of children and adults are intertwined in a strong, living and evolving daily. In Malaguzzi schools there is a large attention to the aesthetic sense, as there is the conviction that there is also an aesthetics of knowledge: The importance of the aestheticization of school buildings, as it speaks the Italian historian Gillo Dorfles, is an issue of extraordinary importance for the evolution of psychological thought of the child, who should share a highly stimulating environment of light, color, materials, furniture, works of art. And even if he can not understand all the things that will be proposed, the child will do with intuition and his own way.

According to the method of Reggio Children relational space identifies nursery schools and it is a place full of charm, with many identities, references, allowing different choices. An integrated space, which means that it does not consist of zoning functional, but rather by the fluidization of these: many specialized activities that can be implemented in a normal and rich space together.

EDUCATION AND RELATION WITH THE CITY

The Nobel Prize Dario Fo wrote: "After the war, Malaguzzi, communist pedagogue, proposed a new method for teaching kindergarten. Scoffed at by the heads of the P.C.I. (Italian Communist Party) did manage to create an extraordinary experience in infant-toddler school *Diana* of Reggio Emilia. In his asylum was taught to learn, but it helped. From conversations with the children emerged an interest around a particular subject area. So educators are put at the disposal of small games and experiments with encouraging research on that topic". The school context, therefore, even for its architectural spaces, becomes a "lovable" place to return in active relationship with the city. What are the architectural spaces in which the child needs? And not only the child, the main subject of a school, but the teachers who work within the school. Malaguzzi said: "In Italy the generation from 0 to 6 years doesn't exist, in Reggio Emilia we have regained a lot of places in the city for children, from swimming to museums".

Reggio Emilia schools are rich, attractive, well organized, they stand out in the Italian educational panorama, for the readiness and the respect with which teachers interact with children. The themes are chosen for their ability to involve children between disparate topics. Children will approach these issues by creating artificial objects and unpredictable able to capture their interest and enclose what they have learned. The key words in education, identified by Reggio Children are: relationship, osmosis, multisensory, epigenesis, communities, constructiveness, narration, rich normality. The open nature of the teaching is essential to the educational environment; that's why it becomes important to study these realities and record them. Reggio Emilia pre-schools are a reality that remains incredibly elitist and peculiar isolated within the Italian territory, for that reason in this memory for *Architecture, Education and Society* through the story of Reggio Children, it will highlight the crucial role and social/cultural functions of a well organized children's education for social and cultural growth of community.