

THE LEARNING INVOLVED FOR TEACHERS WHEN ADAPTING PRACTICES
TO REFLECT THE REGGIO EMILIA PHILOSOPHY

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Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Degree of

Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education

2017

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Abstract

This investigative study was formulated to determine the learning or changes involved in teachers' thinking while adapting Reggio Emilia philosophy in their teaching practices in non-Italian cultures. The study focused on teachers and directors from Reggio-inspired early childhood programs from the city of Pune, India, and in Southeast and Central Michigan, United States. Both the Pune and MI group of educators have adapted the Reggio Emilia Approach, an educational approach from a third culture, that of Italy. The participants were interviewed to gain insight on their understanding of the Reggio principles and the philosophy in their cultural context. The interviews were then transcribed, and the data was analyzed by comparing the similarities and differences across the teachers and directors within each culture, as well as cross-culturally. Results showed that to adapt the Reggio practices, teachers not only need to adapt the Reggio philosophical principles, they need to understand the underling concepts and values of reflection, collaboration, relationships, and reciprocity; moving from simply loving children to respecting them, the hundred languages, and importance of professional development in this progressive educational approach. The Reggio Emilia philosophy compels the educators to connect to their own cultures and communities when embarking on their journey to be Reggio-inspired.

Contents

Introduction.....	7
Review of Relevant Literature	9
Culture Matters.....	9
Origin of the Reggio Emilia Approach	10
Basic Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach.....	11
Image of a child.	11
Respect.....	12
Children, families, and teachers: central to the philosophy.....	12
Rights of children and parents.	13
Environment as a Third Teacher.	13
An Education Based on Inter Relationships.	14
Hundred Languages of Children.....	15
Interaction and Communication.	15
Community Based.	15
Documentation.....	16
Emergent and Negotiated Curriculum.	16
Teachers, Atelierista, and Pedagogista.	18
To Be Reggio-Inspired	20
Early Childhood Education in India	21
Early Childhood Education System in the USA	23

THE LEARNING INVOLVED FOR TEACHERS WHEN ADAPTING	4
Role of the Researcher	26
Research Question	27
Methods.....	27
Participant.....	29
Pune Teacher and Director Selection for Interviews.....	30
Michigan Teacher and Director Selection for Interviews.. ..	31
Analytical Results	34
Meaning of Reggio Emilia Approach for educators.....	35
Image of a child.	39
Community Plays a Crucial Role.	44
Unlearning and Relearning During the Transition to Working with the Reggio Philosophy.	51
Early Childhood Preschool is Preparations for Primary School.....	53
What are Elements in your Learning Environment that Reflect your Community, your History and your People?	55
Listening is One of the Essential Practices.....	57
Documentation.....	58
Teaching as a Profession	60
Teacher as a Researcher	61
Family Involvement	65
Environment as the Third Teacher	68

THE LEARNING INVOLVED FOR TEACHERS WHEN ADAPTING	5
Summary	71
Discussion	75
Reflection	76
Collaboration	77
Moving from Simply Loving Children to Respecting Them	77
Relationships and Reciprocity	77
Hundred Languages	78
Professional Development	78
School	79
Image of a child	81
Community	81
Environment as third teacher	82
The Teaching Profession	83
Listening	83
Documentation	84
Teacher as researcher	85
Implication and Recommendations	86
Form a Community of Learner's	88
Shared Image of a Child	88
Reciprocal Image of a Teacher	89
Overview of Reggio Principles	91
Defining the terms	93

THE LEARNING INVOLVED FOR TEACHERS WHEN ADAPTING	6
Visit to a Reggio-Inspired Center/Program.....	93
Teacher as a researcher.....	96
Advocacy for Children’s Rights.....	96
Teaching Team.....	97
Limitations	97
References.....	99
Appendix A.....	104
Appendix B.....	107
Appendix C.....	110

Introduction

Early childhood teachers play a crucial role in the lives of young children. Teachers have the ability to impact the future generations. To run a school well, intentional, and passionate teachers are needed. In a true sense teachers not only nurture the young minds, but they are nurturers of the whole community and culture in which they practice. Early childhood teachers and educators are largely underestimated for their efforts and hard work. In the work they do, and with the ever-changing needs of the children and society, teachers need to constantly update their practices to provide the best education for the children of the society. In a way, they are preparing the young citizens of the society for the future.

In last few decades' teachers and educators across the world have been observing the rise of an Italian philosophy of education, the Reggio Emilia Approach around the globe. Many educators, policy makers, teachers, scholars, and institutions from across the world have shown an interest in learning and adapting this philosophy. The Loris Malaguzzi International Center is engaged in hosting study tours and various International Reggio exchange initiatives for international delegations from North US, Europe, Asia, and Australia. According to the Reggio Children - International Center the Reggio Children has chapters across Europe, US, Asia & Oceania, and Africa. This network is claimed to be a collaboration of Reggio Children with educational communities worldwide, and aims to carry forward the vision of the founder, Loris Malaguzzi and the work of Reggio Children, 'For Defense and promotion of Rights and Potentials of All Children' and engage in international dialogue (Edward, Gandini, & Forman, 2012).

The teachers around the world who are willing to adapt this Italian philosophy in their non-Italian culture need to be prepared for a shift in their dispositions (Katz as cited in Carter and Curtis, 1994). This transformation, to working with Reggio philosophy in mind, requires a big change or shift in the teachers learning, mindset and attitudes. My primary goal for this research is to investigate this shift, to understand the learning and change involved in teachers' thinking when adapting the Reggio principles in their cultures.

Specifically, I want to examine Reggio-inspired early childhood teachers and directors from two different non-Italian cultures. One set of teachers and directors are from the city of Pune located in the state of Maharashtra, India (Pune culture). The other set of teachers and directors are from a group known as the Michigan Inspirations a group of Reggio-inspired educators in Michigan, United States (MI culture).

While framing, and revisiting my research question I held a vision of three different cultural contexts, which I am calling - the Italian, the US and the Indian. These three different societies represent three different cultures and their education system is also immersed in that culture. Therefore, it is important to investigate how culture matters in the education system before bringing in a change or encouraging a transformation.

Review of Relevant Literature

Culture Matters

Every individual within a culture constructs his/her own beliefs and values for children based on their social environment and upbringing (Millikan, 2004). The early childhood programs of Reggio Emilia are the result of the city of Reggio Emilia and its community's history, geography and culture (Gambetti, as cited in Goldhaber, 2004). A school is like a melting pot filled with influences of culture, community, values, and beliefs of the individuals within it. There is remarkable cultural difference seen between schools within each city, within each country and across the world. These cultural differences influence the ways in which the schools function and the thinking of the individuals that work within them. Julianne Wurm (2014, p. 38) rightly states, "When I work with teachers on Reggio-inspired practice, the conversation consistently circles back to culture." It is essential to connect with the local beliefs and values of a society, and being sensitive towards the local culture and taking it into consideration is at the heart of the Reggio approach (Bruner, 2000; as cited in Millikan, 2004).

Being reflective and aware about one's own culture will foster an educator's self-discovery and self-reflection. The higher level of cultural awareness and self-discovery can ignite the fire to bring change (Goldhaber, 2004). According to Canadian educator, Michael Fullan, change must not just focus on the structural features, policies, and regulations, but on the deeper issues of what he calls the "culture of the system" (as cited in Katz, 2004, p. 67). To understand and practice Reggio Emilia philosophy one should dig deep within one's own culture, and own community - children, families and educators (Rakin, 2004).

Origin of the Reggio Emilia Approach

It all started with a small but strong and powerful desire to bring a change by opening a school for the young children. This idea of a school was sparked by the women, men, young people, farmers and workers, all residents of a tiny working class village of Cella Vella, Italy, in 1945, who had survived the bombings and ground warfare of the Second World War and Fascist dictatorship (Gandini, 2004). Loris Malaguzzi, a young elementary school teacher and a psychologist, biked all the way from his native town of Modena to village of Cella Vella, just outside the city of Reggio Emilia, to witness the construction of the school for himself. He was astonished by the mere fact that common people generated the idea of the school.

According to Loris Malaguzzi, schools resemble pirate ships that need to be repaired and readjusted from time to time to keep their course through the sea. (Malaguzzi, 1993). Schools need to keep changing and re-adjusting their policies, regulations, administration, and teaching approaches with time, as the needs of the children, families, and the community change. Thus, like pirate ships, schools need to reflect and re-adjust their journey to be successful and this would constitute in a true sense progressive education. Loris Malaguzzi had strong belief in children's capabilities and potential, which made him join and lead the parent run school of Cella Vella. Initially, the community-run and teacher-directed school started off with a traditional approach. Under the direction and leadership of Malaguzzi the schools began to change and the basic principles of the Reggio philosophies were laid down (Rankin, 2004).

The Reggio Emilia Approach is a rich fabric, which is layered with multiple theories of pedagogy and learning, developed by scholarly researchers, psychologists,

educators, and philosophers. The theories are intertwined within this philosophy, resulting in a dynamic, constructivist and progressive approach. However, each layer is an in-depth study itself. For example, what is called in this approach Pedagogy of Listening is the essence of this philosophy and it plays a crucial role while forming the emergent curriculum, establishing intentional interactions necessary for constructive criticism and so on. Out of the numerous scholars, John Dewey's 'image of the child', Erick Erikson's 'continuum of achievement', Jean Piaget's 'stages of development', Lev Vygotsky's 'view of the child's learning', and Barbara Biber's 'concept of whole child' were major contributions in shaping the Reggio approach (Fraser & Susan, 2002; Gandini, 2012).

Basic Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Image of a child.

Our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not see them engaged in action with objects, does not emphasize only the cognitive aspects, does not be little feelings or what is not logical, and does not consider with ambivalence the role of the affective domain. Instead, our image of a child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all, connected to adults and other children – Malaguzzi (1993); (as quoted in Edwards, 2012, p. 147)

Loris Malaguzzi's understanding of the 'Image of the child' has made a historical impact on the early childhood education around the globe. The myth about children being empty vessels where the perfect teacher simply poured the knowledge in is demystified;

it has altered the notion of educators to seeing children being as *competent, capable, potential* (Malaguzzi, 1998; Gopnik, 2009) *and resourceful individuals* (Millikan, 2004) *and learners* (Rinaldi, 1998). Children are believed to be capable of constructing and co-constructing their knowledge and learning through curiosity, exploration, experiment, questions and with the help of adults. They are seen as researchers and protagonists, leaders of their own story of growth and development. This strong concept of ‘image of the child’ was coined after extensive observation through continuous work of child and teacher together over a period of time. The ‘pedagogy of continuity’ is practiced as a group of teachers and children are looped for over a period of three years (Gandini, 1993). This leads to strong connections within the teacher- child, teacher-family and family-school relationships.

Respect. Malaguzzi advocated for moving from just loving children to respecting them (Hawkins, 2012). The mere act of imparting respect to children makes the adult to take children’s work seriously. As adults, we often address children with the phrases ‘How adorable!’ and ‘so cute.’ Such phrases and words of love sideline a child’s capabilities and we often overlook the child’s efforts to make meaning and connections with the people in his surroundings (Millikan, 2004).

Children, families, and teachers: central to the philosophy.

To intensify and develop relationships between these three central subjects the Reggio educators set up caring spaces and thoughtfully organized environments (Gandini, 2012). Parents are considered equal partners in their child’s learning and development. Teachers

engage the families by listening to their questions and concerns and adjusting accordingly (Cavazzoni, 2000; as cited by Gandini, 2013).

Rights of children and parents.

Children are the heart of this approach. Thus, advocacy for all children's rights is the core of this philosophy. Reggio educators believe meeting children's needs is necessary but is not enough for children's overall development. According to Piccinini & Giudici (2010), children have a right to have: quality education, positive relationships with adults, and enriching environments. They also talk about rights of parents to: participate in the child's learning and development, and be part of the child's school.

Environment as a Third Teacher.

The schools in Reggio Emilia could not just be anywhere, and no one of them could serve as an exact model to be copied literally elsewhere. Yet, they have common features that merit consideration in schools everywhere. Each school's particular garden, walls, tall window, and handsome furniture declares: this is a place where adults have thought about the quality of environment. Each school is full of light, variety, and a certain kind of joy. In addition, each school shows how teachers, parents and children, working and playing together, have created a unique space that reflects their personal lives, the history of their schools, the many layers of culture and a nexus of well-thought-out choices. (Gandini, Educational and Caring Spaces, 1998, p. 177)

The reason to start this section with the above quote from Gandini was to provide the gist and feel of the Reggio environment. The space is designed to build strong relationships within children, families, and community by providing them maximum movement, independence, and interactions (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). Aesthetics of the environment is highly supported as the environment is referred as the third teacher. Here aesthetics means *'the pattern which connects'* (Bateson, 1997 as cited in Gandini, 1993, p. 310). The aesthetic approach acts as a connector of real elements with emotions and expression. The physical environment holds the ability to engage the children's interest (Wurm, 2014) and they are given the freedom to explore, experiment and discover. Teachers intentionally design the environment to reflect the values and beliefs about "the strong image of a child, the importance of relationships and of collaboration, the use one hundred languages, the curriculum as progettazione (see Appendix B, p.107) and provocations, with documentation, transparency in the environment and as a metaphor for openness and the environment as a third teacher" (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002, p. 101).

An Education Based on Relationships.

Reggio educators work towards creating an 'amiable' environment for the children, families, and teachers. They believe in education based on 'relationships & participation' (Malaguzzi, 2012). Adults such as care providers, program directors, teachers and families have a formal role in relationship with one other in support of the child's development which is also known as *'the dance of relationships'* (Edwards, 2004, p.115).

Hundred Languages of Children.

Other significant contribution of Loris Malaguzzi and Reggio educators to the field of early childhood education is the concept of how many languages children use to express themselves and make connections with the world. The Reggio educators' decades of research and study of children reveal that children are constantly engaged in communicating and developing relationships with others, and in constructing their skills and understanding by involving all their senses (Cooper, 2012). They have shown how children "use graphical, literate, verbal, symbolic and imaginative play" to understand and learn about their surroundings (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). 'The Hundred languages of children' is said to be a metaphorical expression about the multiplicity of the ways in which children express themselves and make meaning of their world.

Interaction and Communication.

Interaction and communication are essential aspects of facilitating learning and connections. According to Malaguzzi (as cited in Edwards, 2013, p. 150), "Adult and child roles are complementary, they ask questions of one another, they listen and they answer." These daily interactions of teachers/adults through asking questions or exchange of ideas with an individual child or within small-group activities create opportunities for learning through communication and listening.

Community Based.

According to Malaguzzi (1998), the society is the center of education. Consequently, teachers work constantly on creating opportunities for communication and

interactions with families. "City and childhood councils and community-based management' (Spaggiari, 2012) are organizations formed that are very strongly connected to the schools and facilitate educators', parents' and community participation in *democratic and collective* development of the educational system (*Malaguzzi, quoted in Charter of the City and Childhood Councils, 2002*).

Documentation.

Documentation makes learning visible (Rinaldi 2001; Fyfe, Hovey, Strange, 2004) for children, families, teachers and community. It is a tool for advocacy and assessment. It reflects teachers' intellectual thinking, gives them a window to study children, and acts as a guide/journal for their research and planning. Moreover, it is viewed as "*a democratic possibility to inform public the contents of the school*" (Vecchi, 1993, p. 121). As Malaguzzi has said, "*From the very beginning, curiosity and learning refuse simple and isolated things: they love to find dimension and relations of complex situations*" (*as cited in 1987, p.19*).

Emergent and Negotiated Curriculum.

Projects are an integral part of this approach. They help in making connections between children's learning and teachers, parents, and community (LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1998). Children are said to be the designers of their own learning and curriculum. Children's emerging interests and ideas form the basis of the curriculum; thus, it is known as 'emergent curriculum.' For example, during the first week of the class, a teacher provided different kinds of animals in the different areas of the room. She

added the dinosaurs to the sand, the farm animals to the construction area, and aquatic animals in the water table. A group of children seemed to be engaged with the dinosaurs and started to have long conversations with questions about 'From the very beginning.' Curiosity and learning refuse simple and isolated things; they love to find dimension and relations of complex situations within them: for example what do the dinosaurs eat; whether all the dinosaurs could swim. The teacher observed the children's interest in the first week and accordingly sets up provocations, books and ideas that would help develop children's interest in dinosaurs. Thus, children's emerging interest forms an emergent curriculum.

But the Reggio educators believe in negotiated learning where all the people (families, and other teachers) who are involved in developing the curriculum and projects share their thoughts about possibilities and directions in which the project might evolve. It is a constructed curriculum where teachers, children, and families become a community of learners (Rinaldi, 1996, cited in Forman & Fyfe, 2012). Teachers not only create experiences; they go further, by asking questions and engaging children in conversations.

Children and teachers share a reciprocity of thought provoking questions, listening and back and forth communication (Filippini, 1990; Rankin, 1998,). Teachers intentionally step back from providing answers to children's questions. Through this they involve the children in "negotiated learning" (Forman & Fyfe, 2004, p. 248) which encourages them to answer their own theories and inquiries, and makes the learning experience more personal and meaningful for the children (Katz, 1998).

Thus, "the curriculum is not child-centered or teacher-directed. The curriculum is child- originated and teacher-framed" (Forman & Fyfe, 2012, p. 248).

Teachers, Atelierista, and Pedagogista.

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 is both sweet and stern, who is the electrician, who dispenses the paint, and who is even the audience- the audience who watches, sometimes claps, sometimes remains silent, full of emotion, who sometimes judges with skepticism, and at other times applauds with enthusiasm. (Malaguzzi, cited in Edwards, 2012, p. 147).

The role of a teacher in Reggio Emilia is viewed as complex, multifaceted, and necessarily fluid, responsive to the changing times and needs of children, families, and society (Edwards, 2012, p. 149).

The above statements give us the scope of a teacher's role and responsibilities in the preschools of Reggio. The teacher is the key in playing multiple roles for the development not only of the child and family, but the whole community.

So, the question arises: What do the Reggio teachers do differently than the rest of the teachers from around the world? This question is beautifully answered by Susan Fraser and Carol Gestwicki (2000, pp. 51-53) as they describe how the Reggio teachers approach teaching differently:

- The role of a teacher as a curriculum planner changes to the role of the teacher *as a co-creator of knowledge.*
- The role of the teacher as program planner emphasizes the role *of a creator of the environment as a third teacher*

- The role of teacher in facilitating play changes to the role of the *teachers as an exchange of understandings*.
- The role of providing guidance changes to the role of *the teacher as a supporter of the competent child*.
- The role of a teacher as an observer is extended to *documenter and researcher*.
- The role of the teacher as parent educator changes to the role of *teacher as a partner with parents*.
- The role of a communicator with outside audience's changes to the role of the *teacher as listener, provocateur, and negotiator of meaning*.

This underlines that the basic role and responsibility of all early childhood teachers remains the same world-wide. However, the attitude and approach to the teachers' roles makes their work significant. In Reggio, the image of a teacher complements the image of a child.

Atelierista is "a teacher who is trained in the visual arts works closely with other teachers and the children in every preschool. A special workshop or studio, called an atelier, is set aside and used by all children, teachers and as well as the atelierista" (Gandini, 2004, p. 22).

Pedagogista is an individual that collaborates in "building relationships among all teachers, parents, community members, and city administrators" (Gandini, 2004, p. 18).

The team developed by teachers, atelierista, and pedagogista is a strong network of relationship intertwined by collaborative discussion of children's and teachers' work. The concept of 'co-teaching' is followed in preschool where there is no hierarchy

between the teachers. This cooperation and collaboration forms the backbone of the Reggio educational system.

After looking at the history, principles, and teaching team of Reggio, now we would take a glance at what it means to be Reggio-inspired.

To Be Reggio-Inspired

In Louise B. Cadwell's (1997, p. 60) journey to bring Reggio home, Loris Malaguzzi said to her, "Take one step forward, and two steps back. Think about what you are doing. Don't rush forward without stopping." As the Reggio Emilia approach is unique to the city of Reggio Emilia, it is deeply rooted in the Italian culture, history, and the city's community. All the preschools and schools that attempt to adapt or implement the Reggio principles within their educational settings need first to connect to their own culture, their own history. They need to be in sync with their early childhood educational challenges and situations. Moreover, they need to reflect on the needs of the children, families and community. Margie Cooper (2013) suggested, that we should look for *attitudes and dispositions* from Reggio Emilia instead of looking for techniques and strategies for the betterment of our children, families, and educators.

According to Fraser & Gestwicki (2002, p. 281), the Reggio Emilia Approach "is a living, organic system." It thrives in a culture that belongs to Italy and this specific region of Italy; this makes it difficult to be transplanted. Therefore, they ask, can this work take root in another cultural setting? They "concluded the answer depends on us all: the answers are with all the Reggio-inspired teachers, researchers, and educators who have started their journey to be Reggio-inspired."

To be Reggio inspired is to know your own cultural, historical, political, and economic background, and to know the needs of your children and people. The journey begins with you.

Early Childhood Education in India

India is the world's largest democracy, and it ranks number two in the list of countries by population size. It is a civilization that is claimed to span more than 5000 years. To understand the Indian education system, one must realize that it is a complex system, which has evolved through the influences of the Hindu/Vedic, Buddhist, Muslim, British period and the post-independence (Basham, 1998; Vyas, 1981; as cited in Gupta, 2013). The author, Amita Gupta, in a research study of the urban, secular, private early childhood/elementary education of India (2013) concluded that the basic aims of early childhood education in India are:

- Teaching of values and right attitudes, somewhat akin to character development;
- Intellectual development and developing the ability to think;
- Developing proficiency in academic skills; and
- Developing the recognition and support for the cultural and religious diversity.

Now let's take a glance at the image of a child in Indian context -

It might be reasonable to say that the young child in India is considered to be a gift from god: energetic, mischievous, charming, lovable, intelligent, competent, playful, and certainly not a blank slate. Until the age of five years, this infant-child may be suckled, carried around, crooned to,

snuggled, fed, clothed, and cleaned, all of which would be widely acceptable in Indian society. The child is filled with the belief that elders love and protect him/her, and the school-going child is also told that his/her teacher is a very important and respectable adult in his/her life (Gupta 2013, p. 103).

The child is physically interdependent and emotionally close to the family and adults in his surroundings. To 'baby' a child is appropriate in Indian context, but there are possibilities of variation in the image of a child as India is culturally and religiously very diverse. However, the image of a teacher remains to be same throughout India.

The importance that has been traditionally attached to a teacher in India may be compared and contrasted somewhat to the importance that has been accorded to an institution or one's alma mater in United States. Traditionally, teachers in India have been viewed in the image of the guru, a learned and highly respected teacher who would educate and care for one or more students in ancient India. The guru thus became the prototype for subsequent teachers in India. The "gu-ru" means pushing away (ru) and darkness (gu), and a guru thus referred to the one who leads from darkness to light, or, in other words, from ignorance to knowledge . . . Teacher whose duty it was to facilitate the development of the intellect, was thus also placed very highly regarded and respectable position (Gupta, 2013, p. 85).

The image of a teacher in India means to be an individual of high respect. It is believed that the learning of a child solely depends on a competent and committed teacher and less on the resources, and infrastructure available. A teacher's learning is not dependent only on training; rather, her upbringing and cultural values are a large influence on her teaching. The image of a teacher portrayed in the above paragraph is still relevant in the current Indian society.

Today western early childhood practices are being incorporated in the modern India, however teachers still struggle to fit in this westernized piece of puzzle into the Indian context. The child development theories that have originated in the US and European context (Western culture) are being implemented in the Indian education system. There is a huge difference in the ideology and practices of Indian and the western culture. For example, the concept of 'self' on the 'self-other' continuum is seen very differently in India as compared to the western culture. In the Indian context, 'self' is seen as a social nature, and the idea of 'me' or 'mine' is considered secondary to the idea of 'we' and 'ours' (Gupta, 2013).

Early Childhood Education System in the USA

By the end of this decade, let's enroll 6 million children in high-quality preschool. That is an achievable goal that we know will make our workforce stronger (Obama, 2014).

The 21st century has witnessed a huge investment in the early childhood education system by the US government to realize the benefits of investment in young children

shown in research. Such an investment would be beneficial to society as well as the stagnant primary and secondary education (Wurm, 2014).

Head Start and Early Head Start are programs of the United States Department of Health and Human services that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parental involvement to low- income children and their families, for 3 and 4 years-olds, and from birth until the child turns 3 years old, respectively. Head Start programming is responsive to the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage of each child and family.

In general, educational programs across US are either funded by federal, state and/or local sources, or they might receive funding from all sources in different proportions. The educational rules and regulations vary from state-to-state. Additionally, accountability and assessment are important aspects of US education system and its financing. Therefore, early childhood programs have to follow certain standards of learning, and are required to keep a track progress of the school, the children, and the teachers. If the programs are not able to meet the set goals and standards there are consequences. Laws like the Government Performance and Results Act as well as the No Child Left behind Act regulate the educational system (Report of the National Research Council of the National academies, 2008)

Image of a teacher in US.

Teachers are expected fill in checklists, portfolios, and conduct observations, to keep records and show results rather than document work in progress (Hendrick, 2004). Teachers are expected to close social gaps and reach for high ideals set by politicians, policymakers, administration, leaders, and parents. However, in areas where merit pay is

tied to accountability, teachers are paid bonuses depending on the children's outcomes. The higher the students' test scores, the higher they are paid. There are teacher-rating systems and performance assessments to evaluate teachers and their accountability (Goldstein, 2014; as cited in Alvarado, Deford, Laman, Oglan, Stowe, 2015).

Image of a child in US.

Michigan preschools that are Reggio inspired and that follow Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) view children as individuals with great potential, and adults must meet their needs and strengthen their areas of weakness. Children's interests and ideas are given attention to guide the curriculum, which sets a path for the teacher to plan her curriculum and activities. The child's role is to participate, and learn from the pre-planned activities and enhance cognitive skills by the material provided. However, "children are seen from a protective and restricted vantage" (Hendrick, 2004, p. 40). To meet children's needs and help them reach desired outcomes there are many policies, developmentally age appropriate guidelines outlined or articulated in the early childhood education system (Report of the National Research Council of the National academies, 2008). For example, according to the U.S. Department of Health Services Administration for Children and Families, 2016, Head Start has its own Head Start Child Outcomes Framework; and many other educational organizations have developed content-based standards.

Thus, accountability of the performance of the child, the teacher, and the school, as well as meeting the needs of the children, remain central to the US education system.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this project, it is important to examine the role of my background and experiences in the development of this study. I have the experience of being trained and working as preschool teacher in a Reggio-inspired preschool program in Pune, India. Additionally, I am pursuing a Master's degree in early childhood education in University of Michigan, United States, and simultaneously working at their University-based Reggio-inspired preschool center. I have been exposed to two-different cultures. Additionally, I grew up in one culture (India) and have studied and worked as a preschool teacher in both cultures.

The commonality between both the experiences was that the preschool settings in both the cultures were inspired by an Italian educational approach – the Reggio Emilia approach. This exposure to and experience in educational contexts in two different cultures following an approach that originated in yet a third culture, which has its roots in the Italian history, culture, and values of the community of Reggio Emilia gave me a unique perspective on both educational contexts. This experience has positioned me to simultaneously stand inside two educational contexts and see them both from the outside as adopters of a shared philosophy from a third distinct culture. Due to this experience and particular perspective, I had insight into the demands of adapting to the Reggio Approach and philosophy. Watching the teachers in each of these cultures ostensibly attempting to do the same thing, but arriving at different results, aroused my curiosity. I formulated a plan to study the learning or the changes involved in a teacher's thinking, or mindset when adapting a foreign philosophy that has no defined structure or a model.

Research Question

With this overarching curiosity to know the learning involved for teachers of two non-Italian cultures, the study involved Indian teachers who worked in Reggio-inspired schools of Pune, and MI teachers from some of the Reggio-inspired early childhood programs in Michigan. The MI educators are a part of a Reggio-inspired group of passionate early childhood educators known as Michigan Inspirations.

The research questions of this study: “What is the learning involved for teachers when adapting practices to reflect the Reggio Emilia philosophy in two non-Italian cultures (Michigan and Pune, India)?” This main question was backed with another complex sub-question:

What kinds of learning or changes in teacher’s thinking are needed about:

- a. School
- b. Community
- c. Families
- d. Image of a child
- e. Environment as a third teacher
- f. The teaching profession
- g. Listening
- h. Documentation
- i. Teacher as researcher

Methods

Procedure

This paper reports an extensive qualitative research study in which data was collected in the form of interviews. It is a comparative study of teachers and directors in Reggio-inspired preschools in two different cultures – Pune, India and Michigan. The main research question is ‘What is the learning involved for teachers when adapting practices to reflect the Reggio Emilia philosophy in two non-Italian cultures (Pune, India and Michigan)?’ To proceed to obtain information, this main question was backed with another sub-question. What kinds of learning or changes in teacher’s thinking are needed about:

- a. Community (Millikan, 2004; Spaggiari, 2004 as cited in Gandini, 2009, p.118)
- b. Families (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012; Fraser and Gestwicki, 2002)
- c. Image of a child (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012; Millikan, 2004)
- d. Environment as third teacher (Millikan, 2004; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002)
- e. The teaching profession (Millikan, 2004)
- f. Listening (Rinaldi, 2012)
- g. Documentation (Forman & Fyfe, 2012; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2012; Gandini, 1993)
- h. Teacher as researcher (Rinaldi 2003)
- i. Professional development needs and opportunities

For a detailed layout of questions please refer to Appendix A. All the interview questions are open-ended in order not to lead the respondents. Per Merriam (2009), interviews help us get access to other persons' perspectives.

Participants

The participants of this study were recruited by sending out email invitations to participate. Based on their willingness and availability, the participants were shortlisted. The basic and essential requirement for all participants was that they needed to be working in a Reggio-inspired setting.

The teachers and directors were interviewed and the interview was recorded for further analysis. For Michigan teacher and directors, a face-to-face interview was scheduled at their respective centers. Each interview lasted for about an hour. Due to distant constraints, as I was located in US, for the Pune, India teachers and directors, the interviews were scheduled through skype or direct call, and were audio-recorded. The interviews with the Pune teachers lasted just over ninety minutes. Consent forms were physically signed by the Michigan directors and teachers, and emailed over to the Pune teachers. The signed copies were also received via email.

This investigation is a comparative study between educators in two non-Italian cultures that have adapted or are in the process of adapting Reggio philosophy in their early childhood programs and teaching practices. There are two groups of participants, one from Pune, India, and the other group from various towns in Michigan, US.

At the initial phase of the study, the researcher thought of recruiting equal number of participants from both cultures that is eight participants from each group, 4 teachers

and 4 directors working in a Reggio-inspired early childhood programs. From the 8 participants for the Indian group, the final sample included 3 directors and 4 teachers representing Pune culture, and 4 teachers and 4 directors representing the MI culture, due to their availability.

Pune teacher and director selection for interviews. The participants from the city of Pune in India work in two Reggio-inspired schools, both run by a private preschool company. Therefore, the Indian culture represented here is restricted to few educators, in a particular town and religion and cannot represent the whole country of India. For simplicity of reference they are referred to as ‘Pune educators’ in this study.

The Indian directors chosen for interview have extensive experience in the field of teaching. The directors, Fiza, and Mona are current directors and third participant Neelima (all are pseudonyms) is a former and founding director of her school. They have worked in the field for 18, 34 and 37 years respectively. They all have at least a Bachelor’s degree. They have been in their current position at the current learning center, for more than 4 years. In their work experience, they have been exposed to different pedagogies, for example Montessori, theme-based, and the Reggio approach towards teaching. Two of the three directors also have been exposed to International Baccalaureate curriculum practices. Two of the three directors have also worked internationally. The schools follow the Reggio pedagogy of learning. All the directors in their teaching experience have been responsible for classes up to K2 level, which is equivalent to 5-year-old children. One of the directors has also dealt with children from 1st grade to 10th grade.

Three out of the four Pune teachers interviewed have more than 4 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. Of these four teachers, Pooja, Rani, and Preeti currently hold a core (or head) teacher position. The fourth, Sath, holds a position of an Atelierista, and has a background in jewelry design. Most of these teachers started from an internship position, subsequently moved to an associate teacher and now serve as a core teacher. One of the teachers, Pooja, has a post graduate degree in English literature. All these teachers are a part of a pre-school brand in India, certified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This company follows the Reggio philosophy.

Michigan teacher and director selection for interview. Similarly, the MI culture represented in this study included a Reggio-Inspired group of educators known as Michigan Inspirations. The members of this group belong to different Reggio-inspired early childhood programs, among them are university-based centers, public programs, private centers, and homecare providers, operating in different cities in central and southeast Michigan. Thus, the US culture represented in this study is limited to the schools in the small cities of southeast and central Michigan, United States. These educators will be referred to as the 'MI educators' in this study.

The four MI directors interviewed have over 30 years of experience in the teaching field and all four of them are highly qualified, Lily and Madelyn, hold Master's Degrees, one in early childhood development with early childhood endorsement on a teaching certificate and the other has in educational administration and community leadership, respectively. Daisy has a Master's degree in Education. The fourth director,

Rosy, is a double graduate with a B.A. in philosophy and B.S. in psychology. Lily has been in the director position since 2008; Daisy has been a director for last 14 years; while Madelyn has been a director for 16 years; and Rosy has been director and a teacher of her own school for more than 15 years.

Madelyn and Daisy, belong to University-based programs and lab schools. Lily is in a public school whereas Rosy owns and runs a private preschool. All have visited Reggio Emilia in Italy, and were hosted at the Malaguzzi International Center and brought back some unique changes to their programs following that experience.

The four MI teachers interviewed have been in the education field for a very long time. Grace has experience of 27 years; Persie has experience over 25 years; Melanie has experience of over 31 years. Of these 31 years, she owned a pre-school by herself for 14 years. Sasha, being the least experienced among all of them, has experience of 11 years. Grace and Persie hold Master's degree in early childhood while Melanie and Sasha have Associates degrees in early childhood with a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Three out of the four teachers are in a head teacher position while Sasha is currently an associate teacher. Three out of the four teachers work in a university-based preschool while Melanie works at a public preschool. All the schools follow the Reggio Emilia approach.

Data Analysis

Each of the interviews was audio-taped and transcribed. The transcription was done by two methods, one manual and the other machine transcription. Machine transcription was done through two different websites, Voicebase and docwrite. As the machine transcriptions were not perfect, the transcriptions had to be manually corrected.

However, some time was indeed saved with the aid of machine transcriptions. Google's web speech app was also used in transcribing audio to text. Ambiguity was observed in the machine transcription due to differences between spoken language and written language. Also, the quality of recording was sometimes problematic.

Once the interviews were completely transcribed, data on each question asked was grouped separately for MI teachers, MI directors, Pune teachers and Pune directors. This division allowed the categories of response to emerge more visibly among the MI teachers, MI directors, Pune teacher, Pune directors, MI and Pune directors and MI and Pune teachers. Each of the interviews was analyzed as a unique case first, then entered into a single database to facilitate intergroup and cross-group comparison. As mentioned cross-case analysis was also done between the Pune and MI directors and teachers. The data was inductively analyzed. Important patterns, themes, inter-relationships between the respondents were identified (McMillan, 2012).

In this qualitative study, the data was analyzed based on emerging themes (McMillan, 2012). Using the categories in the research question (a-i, see p. 25) the researcher observed repeated words, similarities, and differences in the meanings of terms used, and key – words in context of each individual's response and framed by the Reggio Emilia philosophy and early childhood education principles. The aim was to understand the participants' understandings and perspectives related to this approach in their own cultural settings. The emerging themes were then categorized. Then emerging themes were identified as categories, first, within the teacher group, then within the director group within each culture, and secondly, across-cultural analysis between the teachers and directors in each group.

Analytical Results

The primary goal of this study was to examine the learning or the changes involved in teacher thinking or mindset when adapting the Reggio-philosophy in their non-Italian cultures. The findings under this section will be presented by the following emerging categories:

- a) The meaning of Reggio Approach;
- b) Image of a child;
- c) Community plays a crucial role;
- d) Unlearning and relearning;
- e) Early childhood preschool as preparations for primary school;
- f) Elements in your learning environment that reflect your community, your history and your people;
- g) Listening;
- h) Documentation;
- i) Teaching as a profession;
- j) Teacher as a researcher;
- k) Family involvement;
- l) Environment as a third teacher.

To present the views of teachers and directors from the Indian and MI culture, the following sections are presented under each category: Pune educators, and the MI educators. The reason for having these sections is to study the similarities and differences of teachers and directors' perspectives within same cultural under the same category. The

directors are the driving force within a school system and are responsible to set school rules and support teachers. The teachers are the catalysts between the school's philosophy and the children, the families and the community. So, it is essential to study the views of directors and teachers under same category. Additionally, as this is a comparative study between two different cultures following a same foreign philosophy, there was a cross-cultural comparison under the Pune and MI section for each category.

Meaning of Reggio Emilia Approach for educators

Pune educators: directors. Among the Pune directors there were three prominent themes that emerged when the question, 'What does Reggio philosophy mean to you?' was asked: 1) 'the child remains the center of teaching and learning' was the first prominent theme; 2) 'providing a rich environment with resources available in the surroundings' was of utmost significance; 3) 'Reggio is a way of life.' When discussing the second theme most of the directors considered, 'child's perspective or child's point of view,' 'a child's curiosity', 'child's interests or ideas,' 'giving them opportunities to make choices and explore' as of prime importance. The Reggio principles 'environment as third teacher' and 'child as a protagonist' have been largely observed under the Indian directors.

The third, unique point emerged was 'Reggio is a way of life.' Director Neelima stated:

The Reggio Emilia approach is very, very required approach today. Though it started long ago, the basics were started for the community, by the community and what was required. The children's point of view was taken into consideration.

It was the need to learn because of it I think the approach remains valid, remains relevant for years to come.

The above statement implies that Reggio philosophy was initiated because it was the need of the community and it originated for the children of the community. The principles and the core values of the philosophies were designed for educating the young children. It is the creativity, critical thinking, and self-discovery of the community. The philosophy is still evolving and therefore remains relevant even after 50 years. Thus, we can say that the approach is a way of life.

Director Mona shared a similar thought:

'Reggio is a way of life. In Reggio Emilia, it is a way of life in Italy. So, you cannot have a Reggio Emilia school anywhere in the world apart from Reggio Emilia. We can adapt very few things that are appropriate for your area, your parents' requirements, and your children's requirement.'

The first line of the above response suggests that for Neelima, the Reggio Emilia approach is an attitude towards life for the people of Reggio. Director Mona extends this point about a way of life to its 'adaptability.' As Reggio is a way of life and an attitude of the people of the community, if the attitude of creativity, critical thinking, and self-discovery of Reggio Emilia's people is applied in another culture or community, it would become that community's own authentic self-discovery. Thus, this philosophy can be adapted because it was for the people, but what makes the change is the attitude of the people. The responses of directors Neelima and Mona show their understanding of Reggio philosophy being as child-centered and community-based, and to their minds this enables the approach to be accepted and relevant worldwide. However, the philosophy needs to be adapted according to the needs of the specific children and community.

Some other ideas highlighted were *'partnering with parents'* and *'teachers and children learn together,'* which are crucial and reflected in the principles of the Reggio approach.

Pune educators: teachers. For the Indian teachers *'child remains the center of their teaching'* and *'creating environment of children's learning'* was equally emphasized. In addition the, *'teacher is viewed as a guide'* where teachers *listen, lead, guide, and share ideas* with children to take their curiosity and learning forward.

'Freedom for children and teacher' was another underlined theme. These teachers emphasized that the children have the *freedom to explore, experiment, and understand nature through self-curiosity.* This idea was not restricted to children, however. As the approach *'is very opened-ended,'* one of the teachers said, *'I feel I could explore however I feel, in working with my children.'* Another teacher stated, *'It gives liberty not only to the child but to the teacher.'* The idea of *'teacher is viewed as a guide'* and *'freedom to children and teacher'* were unique to teachers' learning.

MI educators: directors and teachers. It was interesting to see a similar theme emerging for MI directors and teachers. For example, Miss Lily stated, *'It's all about the children, first principle of Reggio'* which exemplified the perspective of all the MI educators, directors and teachers. These educators emphasized the centrality of the child. For example, Miss Persie said, *'I define it as well, constructivist, which means children build on their knowledge that they have and the work with the teacher and the children work together and learn together and build on their knowledge . . .'*

Secondly, the theme ‘teacher and child as collaborators’ was prominent among teachers. For example, ‘*teacher learns alongside the child,*’ teacher and child ‘*co-construct curriculum,*’ and they ‘*learn together*’ were a few typical phrases.

Thirdly, ‘*creating an aesthetically pleasing environment*’ was seen as essential for the child’s learning. Part of this idea of an attractive environment was seen to mean providing materials that provoke children’s thinking, a prominent theme among the directors.

Other significant topics from MI educators that emerged were ‘*community involvement,*’ and ‘*families as an integral part.*’

Directors: There was a marked similarity in thinking of directors from India and MI about ‘Reggio being a way of life.’ This was a common mindset of Indian and MI directors, evident in their responses:

‘Reggio is a way of being, a mindset, it’s holding a strong image of a child knowing that each child is capable and competent’ - Dawn

‘It is a different transfer a different culture. They go much slower in Italy, they take time to go deeper and not so dig into everything, everything at once.’ – Lily

These statements again highlighted the attitude and mindset of the way the directors saw the people in the city of Reggio Emilia, and their life style, evident particular in the responses of the Pune directors.

Summary of meaning of Reggio approach in this sample. According to this data, *'Image of a child', 'Environment as the third teacher'* and being aware about *'Reggio is a way of life'* are of the principles of utmost importance in the Reggio-inspired programs of these non-Italian cultures.

Image of a Child

Pune educators - teachers. Largely, these Indian teachers believe the child is an individual with *'freedom for self-expression,'* with unique abilities and capabilities. They view a child as a *co-learner, explorer, observer, and a decision-maker.* One of the teacher believes, *'the image of a child is very raw, very fresh, is natural and we can mold the way we want to. And when it can be molded in the way the child wants, then the image turns out to be more beautiful.'*

'The image of a child is very raw, very fresh and can be molded the way we want to', this line is contrasting to the Reggio principle of a child being capable, competent and resourceful. In the other half of the line, *'and when it can be molded in the way the child wants, then the image turns out to be more beautiful,'* the teacher takes child's perspective and views him as a co-constructor in his/her learning. This idea of viewing a child as a co-constructor might be a learning that comes from the Reggio philosophy.

Another teacher brings up the ideas, *"Treat children as you would treat adults That is what works for me in my classroom, if you start treating the children at their level, I do not think that I would be able to give my hundred percent."* It seems that here she is trying to portray a strong image of a child who needs to be 'acknowledged' and 'respected' the way adults are treated and respected. This idea of 'respect' is emphasized

by Loris Malaguzzi (1994, p. 52) in his writings, *“Those who have the image of a child as fragile, incomplete, weak, made of glass gain something from this belief only for themselves. We don’t need that as an image of children. Instead of always giving children protection, we need to give them recognition of their right (Malaguzzi, 1994)s and of their strengths.”*

Another idea highlighted in this answer was holding higher expectations and raising children to next level. This implies teachers’ belief about children being more capable and competent to meet the expectations when higher expectations are set by teachers for them.

Miss Preeti shared an episode:

The school had asked us to talk to all the children about their rights. What is the rights? And then I was even wondering as a teacher what rights am I talking about? What is wrong with my school? And what they wanted to know and why they wanted to know.

This episode shows that the teacher, herself, has not thought or spoken about children’s rights in her practice. It was a new concept for her. Either she was doubtful about children’s potential to understand the meaning of ‘rights’ or she thought ‘rights’ to be a complex concept for children. It seems *“Rights of children”* was a new concept for this teacher and thus this was her first attempt to understand it. These teachers seem to be learning with children. The teacher even mentioned that when she asked them, she was astonished to hear the children’s responses:

‘I have the right to choose my own clothes’, - Rahul

‘I have the right to pack my bag, to go for the holiday with my mom and dad and I will not be left with my grandparents during the holiday’ - Raj

'I have the right to eat a lot food?' – Ram

Children's answers seem to be logical, precise, and revolved around their basic needs. In this moment, the teacher learned that children have rights too. This incident is an example of how particular teaching moments have shaped the teachers views about children have potential, and are capable and competent.

Viewing children as individuals with freedom of expression, taking the child's perspective in their learning and engaging with them as co-constructors, keeping high expectations, treating children with respect and learning about children's rights all exemplify a change of Pune teachers' perspectives about children. Due to adaptations of Reggio principles, where child is seen as *protagonist*, it seems as though teachers' own beliefs about children are being challenged and questioned by their encounters and experiences with children. Thus, for teachers, the image of a child keeps evolving with their experiences.

Pune educators - directors. A glance at the responses of Indian directors in this context follows. It was interesting to see the way all the Pune directors approach this principle in their own ways.

Miss Neelima said, *'a child is somebody with endless potential, somebody with endless capacity and someone who is hungry to learn. One who comes into the world just to learn.'*

Miss Mona said, *'I would define the image of the child by knowing the child completely, knowing all the aspects, all the aspects emotional, social, physical and respect them.'*

Miss Fiza said, *'Capable, independent, confident, somewhere a little devil, smart, outsmarting teachers and parents, highly intelligent.'*

For Miss Neelima and Fiza, the child is born a natural learner with capabilities, and is highly intelligent, whereas for Miss Mona, to define an image of a child signified that she needed to know the child completely. From this it seems that each director's individual image of a child has been influenced by her work experience and encounters with the children.

MI educators - teachers. To view the image of a child from these US teachers' perspectives here are few example of the images teachers have of the child.

Miss Grace said, *'Usually we can't see what that is? where the child goes? But sometimes the smallest thing means the most. Like being able to feed a bird. Today I am translator to a child advocating for animals rights, maybe becoming a veterinarian or becoming a legislator who becomes a law to create laws, . . . the laws that protect wild life. You just never know . . .'* In this statement the teacher has brainstormed various possible avenues to investigate; she is seeing the children in the light of what they might become in the future. This shows the genuine attention and respect given to a child's actions and interests.

Miss Melanie mentions, *'they actually are capable of doing a lot more than what I thought they could.'* This teacher shows that by holding the belief in the Reggio image of a child, she has discovered that children are in fact more capable than her initial expectations.

Miss Persie said, "Image of a child is a human being, open to learning new things, sharing the things that they already know, being able *to have a perspective, a child's perspective, and respecting their perspective.*" Here the teacher portrays the child to be a

social-creator of his own learning, and she believes that children's ideas, interests and actions need to be taken seriously and respected.

Through the interpretation of these MI teachers' statements about the image of a child, we can see that children are viewed as individuals with endless potential and possibilities, and social-constructors of their learning and knowledge. Children's ideas, actions and interests are taken seriously and respected.

MI educators - directors. The MI directors in the sample think along on the same line as the MI teachers. Here are some examples:

Miss Lily believes, *'that the children are full. And it is based on what they are good at, their strength. Based on what they are not good at, you need to have them practice more or work on but it is also based on their interest.'* In this example, the thought of children being 'full' illustrates that children are full of possibilities, abilities, capabilities and potential. This results in more strength based approach to providing activities for the children.

Miss Rosy said, *'I do say children are so confident. It's hard for me to listen to teachers who talk down to children. It's just very annoying to me, I think they are little adults that we can learn a lot from. Isn't that lovely? Isn't that wonderful? It's just talking to another person. They're so capable of understanding that and they work to a different level when you expect more of them and soon if they are capable of doing.'* Miss Rosy views children as co-learners, individuals like adults, who have abilities and the capacity to rise to the expectations of the adults. She views them as co-constructors of their learning.

For these MI educators, the belief about the image of a child is rooted in the child's capabilities and endless potential. However, as per the data it seems that children may have always surpassed the teacher's expectations and beliefs about the capabilities and possibilities, but by upholding the Reggio image of a child they are more aware of children's capabilities than they were before. It seems like these MI educators' belief about children being capable, competent, and possessing endless potential comes out of their seriousness about children and their work as well as their respect towards children. Their concepts of the image of the child were aligned with each other.

Image of a child summary. For these Pune educators, their image of the child is influenced by their encounters with the children and the learning they see in them. In contrast, these MI educators' image of a child being capable and competent is infused in their work, and grows out of adaptation of Reggio principles. In different ways, by accepting the Reggio premise, each began to see more evidence of children's abilities than they had before.

Community Plays a Crucial Role.

Pune educators. Teacher and director responses:

'For me community is basically the people around you are living with' – Preeti

'So according to me community is a small gathering of people. They are a group of people that are helping each other' – Rani

'Community will be largely a place where the child comes from and where he spent most of his time, so community will be the close members who are around the child which interact on day to day basis' - Pooja

'Even if you want to do community service we need to be part of it. So, this year we are trying to reach out to that aspect along the environment issue. We are trying to combine the two and try to see how we can reach out or involve the community in our learning.' –

Mona

'By encouraging incursions with parents, when parents come as speakers. Then we have a 'Joy of giving week', where parents are actively involved in collecting donations, various kinds of donations and going to an NGO or an orphanage and donating it' - Fiza

As you can see from the above definitions and responses, the meaning of the word 'community' is varied. For these Reggio-inspired Pune teachers, the word community revolves around parents and grandparents and close relatives. Some teachers referred to community helpers, also identified as a part of their theme under the lines of inquiry (curriculum). Grandparents, parents are involved through *incursions* and *excursions*. For the Pune Reggio-inspired school in this study, an excursion means an activity organized by the school whereby students leave the school grounds to engage in educational activities. An *incursion* means an activity organized by the school, whereby an outside body is engaged to come into the school to run an educational activity for the students. Involvement in the projects or family member incursions are based upon the unit of inquiry, their curriculum.

The directors' responses were in aligned with the teachers' responses as community involvement was mostly constrained to the families, and the excursions and incursions were seen as *'need based and provision based'*. Directors Fiza and Mona mentioned 'donations' and helping the schools sponsoring Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) to be a big part of community involvement in their schools. The

only common thread among the directors and teachers was that they would like to extend their community involvement in future.

Interestingly, in contrast, director Neelima's response to this question stood out from rest of the Indian directors:

Right. See unfortunately what has happened is in India at least now basically is the community-connect to the preschool or raising a child somewhere there is a disconnect over there. Because of huge number of fear, people's ego [is involved] because people are feeling that they are my children and why should anyone interfere. You know that kind of mindset has started because of which I feel the community connect that used to be there is not there anymore in the urban areas. I would still say that it remains in the rural areas, but in the urban areas the connect is not there anymore. And because of the same reason the connect between the school and community also is fractured, I will not say it is disconnected but is fractured . . . In fact if you go to see our old school. I am talking about 20 years ago. If you see the kind of schools, we had 25 years ago we had a lot of interaction. Wanting to understand what happens about children we may have not known a lot about child development and its scientific terms in that point of time. But the feeling that the parents and the teachers meet to be involved in the child's upbringing, because the ultimate aim for the school, for the parents, and ultimately for the community is the same.

Miss Neelima has been in the early childhood education system over 3 decades. As she mentions ‘if you see our old school, I am talking about 20 years ago . . . we had a lot of interaction’ she refers to a shift in the attitude and mindset of parents and families in relation to interaction with the community. This response throws light on the cultural shift in the relationship between the community-school as well as the difference in level of community involvement at the urban and rural schools.

MI educators. ‘So in my class, the community is a big part of it. We take walks into the community throughout the year and there we visit a lot of businesses around. They’ll take us around, show us around, they answer questions for kids.’ – Melanie

‘At the other center that I was at, the community in the classroom was like, in the October we had a fire safety drill, so we would invite the fire department (part of curriculum). But we didn’t really go out in the community. Here like we go to the farmer’s market, we go to the library record.... So, kids are familiar with city here.’ – Sasha

‘We have done in a lot of different ways . . . a melting pot experience! You know we are inviting everyone to share their culture. And we have a wealth of diversity. To taste each other’s food, to hear each other’s music. The farmer’s market when they moved right across the university it was a miracle. Because now we have connections with all those people.’ – Grace

‘A big part of the community is being an on-campus program because there are a lot of people on campus and us also have a little bit but I have a lot of connections in my unit with gardening . . . I have lot of friends who are artist and so I have my husband come to play music. We’ve done ‘Campus Grow’, gardening here on campus . . .’ – Persie

These MI teachers extended the definition, the meaning, or the scope of the word ‘community’ to beyond the family members. This is significantly different compared to the sample’s Pune teachers and directors. For MI teachers, community involves the small businesses around the school, the people in the areas where the school is located or where the children live. The campus-based schools look forward to exploring the cultural diversity on campus, and the different places, professions, skills, or workers available around them.

MI directors. A general consensus on this definition emerged from the MI teachers. However, the two MI directors, Miss Lily, who runs a public preschool program and Miss Rosy, who runs a private early childhood program, had very different ways of approaching the word ‘community.’

In response to this question Miss Lily said:

. . . [W]e do a lot of family events: curriculum night in which parents participate; PTO – parent teacher organization; group of parents that run library; group of parents that help with community share room which is donated household clothing that anyone can take; feeding families through a food bank; connecting with community agencies; hosting tours and meetings here for all civic groups:

Quintus, rotary; a church ladies group that came and did their evening meeting here.

For Miss Lily community involvement was not limited to the families, and the businesses around the school but even the people involved in the welfare of the community, for example the various service agencies and religious leaders, who are part of the city community on the larger scale. For her, connecting community has an intention that people that visit the center would be the *ambassadors* to go out. This is the way she said – *‘the word of mouth gets stronger than anything, I found.’*

On the other hand, for Miss Rosy –

We ask families to fill out a form at the beginning of the year that says, ‘what I did with children before (previous group of children)’ and they list what their interests are, what they would be interested in sharing with us . . . we go through it with the children and if the children are interested in something we bring in the parents and if they accept one of their interests. We still do a special person each week so let’s say, they bring in their baby pictures the parents come in for that too. I would like to expand into the community to do artwork or to do something more. . . We do fieldtrips but not a lot of them because we do not have our own transportation.

For Miss Rosy, community involvement is restricted to the parents and limited fieldtrips. This might be due to her school being a small private entity with access to fewer resources.

Miss Lily invites the community members with the intent of creating awareness about the school's environment and its philosophy, and to share the work of the children and teachers. She would like the school to serve as a platform for the families, service agencies, leaders, and social worker of the society to interact and collaborate. This ideology is aligned with the beliefs of Reggio philosophy of community involvement in Reggio Emilia. On the other hand, for Miss Rosy, the intent to involve community is dependent on the children's interests, need-based and educationally focused. From these two examples, it can be concluded that the intention behind community involvement is influenced by two factors. One, the type and size of the school, which directly affects the availability of staff and resources. Second, the personal beliefs and intentions of the director, which largely influence the extent to which the community will be involved.

For these MI teachers and directors, the meaning of the word community is the same. However, the scope of the word community for the teachers and directors varied, based upon the type of institution/program they were – public, campus-based center, or private.

Community plays a crucial role – summary. The data shows that the word 'community' is defined differently within the MI and the Pune cultures. For these Pune educators, the community involved family members and close relatives and there was a

difference seen in the meaning of ‘community’ between teachers and directors. The MI educators had a seeming consensus about the meaning of ‘community’ but the expectation of community involvement varied with each institution. In general, there is a difference seen in the scope of ‘community involvement’ based on factors like available resources, type of program, and the personal beliefs and intentions of the educators.

Unlearning and Relearning During the Transition to Working with the Reggio Philosophy.

The aspects of ‘listening’, ‘letting the child be’, and ‘not giving answers to the child’ were a few common practices that the MI and Pune educators had to learn while adapting Reggio practices. But largely what was observed was that every educator whether Indian or MI had a different response to this question of what they needed to unlearn and (re)learn in the adaptation process. The responses follow.

Pune educators.

Directly being accountable to parents so my learning has been an absolute listener. I think that is where I have done my learning and improving my skills by listening so I always hear about whether it is a child, a parent, or a parent” and “they have a right to be heard.”

– Mona

I loved children being involved in projects which have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Doing projects is very meaningful. – Fiza

For me, let the child be on its own, this is most important thing. Guiding them to explore, letting them figure out stuff; this is very first step. - Rani

I didn't have to unlearn anything. I had a complete free hand in what I am doing, and I think that was the most important thing for me. - Sath

In the above statements, it seems that every teacher and director answered this question differently. For director Mona, 'listening' required a key act of learning; for director Fiza, learning about 'projects' was meaningful. Teacher Rani had to learn to give children independence in their learning. However, atelierista Sath's answer was interestingly different when she claimed that she didn't have to unlearn or learn. Her response seemingly contradicts the Reggio philosophy that views the teacher as a researcher who keeps evolving and learning with children. Her response may be idiosyncratic and due to low educational qualifications required for the teaching profession, as well as her personal limited prior experience of working with children in a school setting.

MI educators.

I had to learn to observe children for their interest. Curriculum couldn't be planned in advance since interest of children could change day to day. Last few years we had to understand that believing that even if that person is an expert in early childhood development, they (parents) are expert in on their own child. – Dawn

You don't unlearn something, do you? I think you shift. You shift in your beliefs and I think all that emphasis on standards...I think you start with the children, then you start with what they need and behind your mind you have standards. - Lily

Keep going to groups like Michigan Inspirations; visiting other centers; Read books and talking to people and that just put it out there. – Melanie

As we study each of the above sentences we see that learning, unlearning, and relearning were different for every individual educator. For director Dawn, learning meant ‘learning to observe.’ Miss Lily had a different take on the ideas of unlearning and relearning. She emphasized – ‘*you shift in your beliefs*’. To me that is unlearning and relearning of old approaches to keeping the standards for children. Similarly, Miss Dawn had to work with the teachers to change their perspectives of parents. They had to learn to view parents as partners who are experts on their own child.

In summary. The data reveals that teachers and directors developed new dispositions, and these occur on an individual level depending upon their experiences. Each respondent showed a change of perspective about viewing the child, the families, or the role of the teacher. The child, the teacher, and the families lay the foundation of the Reggio Emilia approach. It is to be expected that the learning required in adaptation would be different for different educators even within same programs and regions.

Early Childhood Preschool is Preparations for Primary School.

MI educators. For the MI teachers, the purpose of early childhood programs is to prepare children for ‘life’ and ‘life skills.’ Some example of this preparatory role the educators expressed are: ‘It is a place where we provide the right foundations that the children can handle what comes after;’ ‘they get better in socializing and team work.’

On the other hand, these MI directors believe early childhood programs are intended to celebrate children for who they are and what they need. For example director Lily stated, ‘It is not always to get them prepared for something that is next. It’s what

they need now.’ The point of this statement was concern about the way the parents emphasize academic learning in early childhood programs.

[T]he generation that is raising children was really raised without play and so their idea of preschool is pretty academic . . . that is not considered to be best practice and there is so much research, not just Reggio research, but early childhood research. - Lily

It seems like people understand infancy a little bit, understand that there’s a special need for middle schoolers and high schoolers. But they want to rush preschools. – Rosy

The data suggest that these MI directors are aware of parents’ views and perspectives regarding the desire for academic learning in preschool. They are also aware about that this is not developmentally what preschool children need; so they realize a need to educate families about this. They seem to be working towards bringing about a change in the image of early childhood programs and their purpose.

Pune educators. Similar thoughts are seen across the Pune teachers and directors regarding pressure imposed by parents on early childhood programs to prepare children for academics rather than life skills. They too believe that early childhood programs are ‘not preparation for next level’, and preschool ‘should not be looked upon as a stepping stone for grade school.’ One director raised a concern that this kind of mindset also exists in schools and she believes that ‘being educators we need to make that change; parents cannot make the change first.’ Thus, they need to work towards changing the image of early childhood programs for educators as well.

This variation among the mindset of these Pune educators about the image of early childhood programs may be because teacher education in India is very unconventional in nature; there is a big gap in between theory and practice. Teachers are trained to acquire competencies and skills that are procedural rather than being trained for reflective practices and critical thinking. Teachers are hardly exposed to the new research and development in the educational context (Gupta, 2013).

What are elements in your learning environment that reflect your community, your history and your people?

The elements that reflect the community, history and people varied within the different early childhood programs in Pune and MI. ‘Celebration of various religious festivals’ is a big part of these schools in Pune, whereas most of the MI schools did not encourage religious or spiritual celebrations. In an Indian school one would find ‘cultural materials and articles’ representing different artwork of various cultures and regions, which was only to be seen in few in US schools. Having family photographs in classrooms was the only common element shared by both the Pune and MI schools. A significant aspect of Pune schools was that of ‘Khatirdari’ (hospitality), which is way to greet everyone who comes in the classroom or school with a smiling face and warm welcome. This idea of hospitality is deeply rooted in their Indian culture.

Pune educators. The data reveals for these Pune early childhood programs the cultural and religious diversity is portrayed through the *celebration of different festivals and the décor for every festival*. The *blast of color* within the materials and articles displayed from around the country represents their Indian culture. The photographs of

children's families and the child's work displayed on the wall represents the community of the school.

Miss Preeti mentions, 'Being in India, you believe in 'Khatirdari'(hospitality), where we welcome our guests as 'Aatithi Devobhava' (the guest is equivalent to God).' She believes, 'our ways probably speak more about our culture.'

The hospitality is one of the ways significant aspects of Indian culture that is displayed in their 'welcoming' culture. All these Pune educators have a similar notion about representing of their elements of history, culture and people. However, the director Miss Neelima claims, 'unfortunately we don't even respect or we don't even value our history because there are plenty of reasons but the major reason is the way our history and culture has been put forth in front of us is shrouded in the do's and don'ts and it is shrouded in all religious sentiments, because of which most of the people have rejected it. . . and that we show very little to our children today-Indianness.' She continues, '*even the ABCD we teach now-a-days, the fruit we teach our children. . . you should be talking about the fruits and vegetables you get in your own town, that is grown in Pune and which children are familiar to, that they eat every day. But we don't do that.*'

In these statements, Miss Neelima highlights the way the culture and values are fading as people flock towards the western educational practices. Her view as a director was a significantly different than rest of these Pune educators.

Photographs of families and children. Photographs of families and children were a common element that was seen across the MI programs too. However, it was interesting to see that university-based MI programs use *different language scripts* that represent the different families and the diversity. For example, multicultural books and

children's names were written in Arabic and Chinese depending on their nationality and culture. Another element of demonstrating connection to history and culture, unique to one of the university-based programs, was the initiative to represent the native Chippewa tribe through their music and materials. The public preschool also had its own way to make the community take part in their program. It was by letting the people in the neighborhood use their playground as well as inviting church ladies for the evening meetings.

Responses suggest that every program in the sample, whether Indian or MI, had its own way of involving the element of their culture, community, people, and history.

Listening is One of the Essential Practices.

MI educators. For MI teachers, listening, as addressed in this question, involves hearing, talking, sharing of ideas, thinking and reflection on the ideas and conversations. It is an ongoing dialogue. Listening to children means observing children's individual or group conversations, and listening to their non-verbal clues. It means listening to children's self-talk, and listening for it to reflect children's thinking. Listening is not limited to the child but also involves the teachers' interactions with children and colleagues. Listening means stopping and having patience.

The MI directors underlined listening as an essential practice for them to build a relationship with the staff. Listening means that someone is heard. It's not a onetime process. One of the directors mentioned, for listening 'you need to use all senses.'

Pune educators. For these Pune teachers, listening is of two types, a) verbal – listening to words, and b) non-verbal – such as observing child's gestures. Listening

(keen listening by teachers) helps the child to express his thoughts, ideas and emotions, boosts his confidence and gives him/her a sense of importance. To listen, a teacher needs to be alert, attentive, and have patience. The act of listening means making eye contact, coming to the child's level and not being judgmental.

One of the Pune directors mentioned that they practice listening, however, she has not read any literature on the pedagogy of listening. Teachers under her are still learning to listen to the children. Miss Mona mentioned, that she has been working to be 'an absolute listener.' For her listening means to know the child and his needs, and listening to teachers and parents gives them a sense of validity. It involves thinking and reflection on the part of the director.

Listening – summary. Thus, listening is practiced in both these MI and Pune programs and all the sample educators acknowledged its benefits. However, the extent to which it is practiced varies from individual to individual, depending on their years of experience and personal beliefs as an educator.

Documentation.

MI educators. The type of program and its requirements largely influenced the director and teacher responses for the documentation section. Therefore, the analysis in this section is presented by the type of program, rather than by category of directors and teachers.

University-based Program. The two university-based programs used documentation as a form of assessment and communication with parents, and to display teachers' thinking. However, Miss Dawn and Miss Persie's program used documentation

as a way of connecting their research within the classroom and the school. They largely relied on iPads to collect their data. Both programs displayed documentation in the hallways. Miss Grace mentions the use of private Facebook pages as form of documentation at her center.

Public Preschool Program. Miss Lily, the director and Miss Melanie, worked at a public early childhood program. Their major purposes for documentation was assessments, displaying children's and teacher's thinking, and communicating with parents. One other purpose that they emphasized was of revisiting the documentation by children and teachers in order to ground their projects.

Private Preschool Program. The private EC program owned by Miss Rosy used documentation to display the progress of children to the parents. Here documentation included children's pictures with captions that were sent out weekly.

Pune educators. For the director and teachers from Pune, India the documentation was used as a tool of assessment, a way to show how numeracy and literacy were involved in projects. Pictures with teachers' reflections are frequently used. They send monthly newsletters. They have used flex boards, hung outside the school, to display children's learning. Portfolios are one more way of documenting children's progress.

Documentation summarized. Documentation serves multiple purposes in the Reggio Emilia approach. To name a few, documentation is: a tool for assessment, children's and teachers' thinking and interactions made visible to children and teachers themselves, a method of communication with families, staff, and the community. It was interesting to see that each program in both the cultures had adapted this principle of

documentation for meeting the individual needs of their school. I wonder if all the MI and Pune educators have explored the multiple use of documentation or if they are even aware about the variety of possibilities.

Teaching as a Profession

All participants' responses expressed a common notion to the MI and Pune teachers that 'teaching is learning' and 'it's beyond academics, it's preparation of life.' In addition to this, these Pune directors viewed 'teaching as a huge responsibility' whereas for MI directors 'teaching begins with the child.'

The MI teachers view teaching as:

- A noble profession
- Being professional and serious
- Holding standards in mind
- Learning alongside the child
- Knowing oneself and the child, and the child's perspective
- Beyond providing information, it is scaffolding children's progress from one level to another
- Being a listener
- Connecting with people and building relationship with students, other teachers, and families.
- Trial and error
- Researching and build one's own thinking as an adult

- Teamwork

The Pune teachers view teaching as:

- A great profession, provided one knows one's responsibility
- Never a job; it's a passion
- Making a difference in a child's life
- Being a role model for children
- Educating parents
- Providing freedom to the child
- Updating oneself constantly
- Trial and error

Teaching as a profession, summary. Thus, overall the emerging themes about the teacher's role in Reggio-inspired teachers from both cultures centered around the child and teacher learning together. Trial and error, listening, being, and knowing oneself seems be similar practices that are being followed by these MI and Pune teachers.

Teacher as a Researcher

This principle has been widely accepted in both the cultures, however, it was interesting to see the difference in how research content was defined by teachers and directors from Michigan, US and Pune, India.

Pune educators. For these Pune educators, teachers and directors held similar perspectives towards the principle ‘teacher as a researcher.’ For them ‘research’ implied reading background reading in adult resources to inform practice. The content of teachers research was collecting information from the internet on topics related to units of inquiry, looking for activities and engagements for the children, for art and craft ideas as well as literacy and numeracy activities and materials, or looking for answers for behavioral problems. Talking to other teachers or their principal, who also acts as a mentor, about questions and concerns related to a child, a behavioral issue, or topics about academics or inquiry was also seen as a part of research.

In addition to this, Miss Neelima mentioned that their company has a separate research team at the head office, who is dedicated to curriculum development based on teachers’ feedback. She added that the CEO of the company is ‘the biggest researcher’ who often attends international conferences at Harvard as well as other places.

MI educators. The teachers in these MI early childhood programs showed a slight variation in the ways they have accepted the philosophy – of ‘teacher as researcher.’ The university-based program lead by director Madelyn, has three parts to this principle, at the school, teacher, and student teacher level:

- Research question for the school:

In this school, the educators develop a research question that becomes an overarching question for the school and the staff as a whole. For example, Madelyn shared that for last two years their overarching question for the school was ‘How do children learn and show kindness to one another?’

- Research question for each teacher, individually:

Every year each teacher selects a research topic even before the children come in the classroom. They are required to research some articles related to their topic before implementing inquiry in the classroom. The teachers generally conclude their research with a project or at times they are open-minded and accept their questions staying unanswered and they would move on to something more meaningful.

- Research question for student teachers as it is a lab school:

In this school the student teachers are also seen as teacher-researchers. Like the classroom teachers, they are required to select a topic in an area that they would like to develop even before they meet the children, and they are expected to find and read a couple of articles to develop the topic. Then they review their assessment tool practiced by the center, Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold). It is advised that they select indicators evaluated and turn this into their research question. For example, How do children learn to write? How children learn to become friends? They pick one and they work to document this throughout the semester beyond the course assignments that term.

In the other university-based lab school, director Miss Dawn said:

I see this role in two parts. First for the teacher it provides a means to grow and learn in the field by developing questions of study to further your own interests and understanding. Second in regard to documenting the children's learning the teacher is researching the child's interests and learning of a topic and making their learning visible to others in a variety of ways that fits the results of the study.

In this school, each teacher chooses a research question based on their interest and the child's interest and then their research is documented or presented in many suitable ways.

In the public school under the direction of Miss Lily:

The teachers practiced this principle in a similar way to Miss Dawn's Lab school. Lily mentioned that this was their second year developing individual teacher research projects. The research question is based on each teacher and child's interests or their current projects undergoing in their classrooms. She also mentioned that, "*teachers are really seeing the benefits and are getting deeper in their practice because the teacher research drives the reflection*"

In the private owned preschool, director Miss Rosy acknowledges that they as a school are far from practicing the idea of teacher as researcher as compared to the other MI preschools in this study. They have not had a specific research question for their school as whole or teachers individually, and but demonstrated the inclination to adapt and practice this principle in future. However, she highlighted that their teachers and children are involved in inquiry and research on a daily basis as part of their classroom projects.

As we are discussing the 'teacher as a researcher', it is important to point out that all these programs are part of the Michigan Inspirations group that holds book studies and professional development conferences and seminars. These activities demonstrate their shared belief and practice about 'teachers as a researchers.' This shows collaboration and interaction to be a big part of their practice, which is also an essential part of Reggio philosophy.

Summary for 'teacher as researcher.' From the above data, it is evident that these Pune educators had a completely different meaning in mind for 'teacher as a researcher' from that of the MI educators, referring only to background information and searches for materials and activities to provide. Within the MI programs, the meaning of the topic was shared across all educators, although there was variation in the ways this principle was implemented in each program. The type of school and the numbers of years they have been practicing this principle were the factors that influenced the variation in implementation.

Family Involvement

Pune educators. Family involvement is emphasized in these Indian EC programs. The families include the parents, grandparents, and close relatives of the child. Families are involved through –

- Incursions - family members are invited to come into the classroom or school to share an activity based on the unit of inquiry.
- Excursions – the class travels out of the school, for need based or provision-based experiences where parents can volunteer to join
- Festival celebrations – This is a major aspect of the programs, and families are invited to participate alongside of the children.
- Events – like the 'pajama party', 'literacy week', and 'joy of giving week' are held to keep families involved
- As needed - if a parent or a teacher feels a need for conversation, an appointment can be made easily or drop off or pick up are the time for interactions

- *'Friends of xyz'* was a program initiated for parents to volunteer, mentioned by one director; however it was unsuccessful.

Miss Neelima showed a contrasting image of regular public school as she claimed, 'truthfully speaking in the most of the schools which we are talking about the regular school (not Reggio-inspired) that is almost zero involvement or interaction with the family.'

MI educators. Family involvement is a major aspect of these MI programs, however, each program varied in the ways it involved parents. The university-based programs invited parents to share varied activities, for example play music, or do art with children, depending on the strengths of the families. The other university-based program focused on what the parents can volunteer for in their child's learning, and a closed Facebook page was created for families of each classroom to share their children's learning as well as serving as a platform for parents to communicate and interact with teachers and other families.

The public school involved parents in a slight different way; as described by director Lily:

Parents are welcomed into the school here. We do a lot of family events. We have a curriculum night every year. The parents participate and use the materials like the children want. We also have a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). We call the parents as "active 'Name of the school'." In these meetings their voices are heard. We also have a group of volunteer parents that run a library. There used to be a program called 'Successful kids = Involved Parents.' We had a separate class where the

parents would come and have their child do a music, do an art, do a story time, do a gross motor, or do a play time. We had a 'Pizza pen and paper night' where families made pizzas and children did activities.

Curriculum night, parents' group running the library, a community room for donations is also set up, a group of parents have been working on building the community are additional opportunities. The director also lends the space to community members to hold their evening meetings, and to invite the community to view their school. All these methods of family engagement are unique to this program. This response shows again how the public school has approached families in multiple ways to be involved.

Here is the response of the director of the private program:

We have Social Time three or four nights a year, when we meet for happy hour with the parents and without children. We have an art gallery right at the beginning of the year . . . Second third week of school the parents come in and we have a wine and cheese gallery walk, because we are an independent school. So the parents use and encourage parents to do classroom Facebook page . . .they can keep up with we have had playdates in the summer with the new each new class and have a class with ready so that you can interact with each other and we have seen children grow up in graduate and I think when they are really good friends and so it appears from this address list . . . There's not so much talk about specific children and it's just having the community gather here and even parents and talking to me like and not judge an instructor at work has worked perfectly for us. We have staff doing parent teacher conferences . . .

This private center brings advantages; for example, having a wine and cheese gallery walk would be not acceptable in a university based-center or a public school. The private program can be much more flexible in the ways of developing connections and they find, friendly ways of building relationships with parents.

Summary of family involvement. In the data collected, the common desire to involve parents was clear, so it was surprising to see that an effort to set up a group for parents' participation/volunteering in both a MI and Pune setting fizzled out in a short span of time.

A common challenge seen in both culture groups was the availability of working parents, which was an obstacle to having complete parent participation.

Still *building relationships, partnering with parents in their child's education, collaboration and interaction* are evident in early childhood programs, even though the level of family participation, and the opportunities for participation differed depending on the culture of the school, its community, and availability of parents. Across the sample, the teachers' responses were in alignment with their directors' statements about family involvement.

Environment as the Third Teacher

Pune educators. These Pune Reggio-inspired programs' core ideas about designing their space centered on the child. They set up their environments to provoke the children's thinking and learning, encourage children to ask questions, provide freedom for the children to make choices, and make the environment welcoming for the children and parents. They seem to believe in creating 'cute' and 'cozy' environments where the 'child is not afraid to make mistakes.'

Interaction and collaboration were evident as teachers created opportunities for interconnection within classrooms, encouraged by means of sharing projects between the classrooms and an open-door policy for parents by the directors and teachers.

Flexible use of space and material was emphasized in all the programs and all used recycled materials in their classrooms and projects, as consistent with other Reggio-inspired programs. A contrasting view was put forth by one teacher when she claimed that her center was, ‘not having lots of resources for children to explore.’

The Pune Reggio-inspired program’s building was a residential ‘bungalow’ which means a low house, with a broad front porch, having upper rooms set in the roof, typically with dormer windows. In addition, ‘restricted space’ was a challenge for most of the educators in the Indian context as they compared their spaces to their classrooms in Reggio Emilia. The centers in general seemed open to change and responsive to children, parents, and teachers.

The Pune atelierista, Miss Sath, and the teachers of the same program mentioned having a theme-based atelier like the Light and Sound Atelier (Reggio Children Exhibit, 2017) for children in the school.

Natural elements like having a tree house, sand area, glass windows for the natural light to come in, as well as having a garden area and adding twigs, plants and fish tank were a few of the ways mentioned to incorporate the elements of nature in their settings.

MI educators. In the MI context of Reggio-inspired schools similar themes emerged in the responses. The environment was set up to give a home-like comfort and security, and to provoke children’s thinking. The MI university-based programs spaces

were designed specifically for an early childhood program, the public programs were based in an elementary school building, whereas the private school was an old-fashioned garden setting in a cottage-like private structure. Though these programs belong to different institutions that differ in their structural set up, space and size, whether university-based, public or private, the environmental elements included were common across the responses.

Natural elements were brought into the classrooms in the form of sticks, stones, twigs, bamboo fences on the walls, gardening opportunities and also through big glass windows and walls that allow natural light.

A special emphasis was given on representing different languages and cultures that constituted the school community by the programs.

Summary of ‘environment as third teacher.’ Overall sample educators responded similarly. All the Reggio-inspired programs in this study designed their environment with the image of a child in mind. They set up their environment to stimulate the child’s thinking and learning, for children to be encouraged to ask questions, to provide freedom for the children to make choices, and to make the environment welcoming for the children and parents.

However, Pune educators faced space-restrictions and identified this as a big challenge in setting up their environment. This was not a big issue for the MI educators. Another challenge was associated with creating pleasing environments. The majority of the MI educators believe that creating an aesthetically pleasing environment was not expensive; on the other hand, Pune directors and teachers had mixed thoughts on this aspect.

Summary

Meaning of Reggio Approach

Pune Directors	Pune Teachers	MI Directors	MI Teachers
Child remains center of teaching and learning.	Child remains center of teaching and learning.	It's all about children.	It's all about children.
Providing rich environment with resources available in the surroundings'	Creating environment for children's learning.	Creating aesthetically pleasing environment.	Creating aesthetically pleasing environment.
Teachers and children learn together.	Freedom to teacher and children. Teacher is viewed as a guide.	Teacher and children are seen as collaborators	Teacher and children are seen as collaborators
Reggio is a way of life.		Reggio is a way of life.	
Partnering with parents, grandparents		Close relationship with families, Inviting	Families are an integral part;

and other community members.		the community in	community involvement is a key element.
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Table 1. Emerging meaning of Reggio Emilia philosophy in these Pune and MI settings.

The above table shows the themes that emerged as the Pune and MI Educators shared their idea of what Reggio Emilia philosophy means to them. In the above table, the child, the teacher and the environment can be seen as the central ideas for the Reggio-inspired Pune teachers, and directors and the Reggio-inspired MI teachers and directors. The idea of ‘Reggio as a way of life’ was only emphasized by the directors from both the cultural groups.

Both cultural groups had a different approach towards looking at children as each culture holds a different attitude and mindset in child rearing practices. Another reason for this difference might be because these MI educators have been practicing the Reggio Emilia approach for longer than the Pune educators, there are more literature and resources available, and more research is done on the Reggio Emilia approach in US.

A difference seen in the scope of ‘community involvement’ based on factors like available resources, type of program, and the personal beliefs and intentions of the MI and Pune educators.

It can be concluded that teachers and directors develop new dispositions on an individual level depending upon their years of experience, educational qualifications, their positions – teacher/director/atelierista, and their personal beliefs and practices. For everyone there is a new learning when beginning to adapt the Reggio approach and this seemed to be different for educators, even within same programs and countries.

The common challenge faced in these Pune and MI preschool cultural settings was the parents and families emphasize academic learning in early childhood programs. There is a significant difference in the way parents and educators view early childhood programs in both non-Italian cultures. Thus, educators in both cultural settings are working towards bringing about a change in the image of a school, and in ways early childhood is viewed within their communities.

There was a significant difference in the cultural values practiced, that expressed the history and people of the non-Italian cultures. In the Pune Reggio-inspired settings, the schools are immersed in cultural values and beliefs, as was evident since the schools encouraged festival celebrations, décor with cultural and regional articles, and emphasized the value of hospitality and its great importance to their cultural importance. On the other hand, most of the MI Reggio-inspired programs involved in this study restricted religious and cultural celebrations due to the policies and regulations of their respective institutions even though the State of Michigan is also a culturally diverse country.

The act of listening was practiced in both the Pune and MI settings. All the Indian and MI Educators acknowledge the benefits of keen listening. However, the extent to which it is practiced varies from individual-to-individual depending on their years of

experience and personal beliefs as a teacher. However, the remarkable difference was very limited literature is available to Indian teachers and directors on the concept of the pedagogy of listening.

The concept of documentation was widely practiced in both the Pune and MI Reggio-inspired schools, although the degree to which it was incorporated and the purpose varied from school-to-school.

In the Pune programs, documentation was extensively used as a tool of assessment and to show the academic concepts like numeracy and literacy involved in projects. On the other hand, the use of documentation in MI programs depended on the type of program and their requirements. Also, the mediums of documentation varied from program to program depending upon the availability of resources such as technology and print media.

The common notion about these MI and Pune teachers was that “teaching is learning” and ‘it’s beyond academics, it’s preparation of life’. In addition to this, Pune directors viewed ‘teaching as a huge responsibility’ whereas for MI directors ‘teaching begins with the child’. It seems that the idea of teaching was influenced by each educator’s experience with schooling, cultural values, and personal beliefs.

The Pune and MI educators approached the principle of ‘teacher as a researcher’ in remarkably different ways. For these Pune educators, the concept of research was restricted to collecting information from the internet on topics related to projects, and classroom management. In addition, research on curriculum and program development is carried out by a separate research team and teacher involvement is minimal. However, within these MI programs, this principle was adapted and executed differently depending

on the structure of the institution: University center-based, private program, public program. The goal and vision of the director also played an important role in implementation and execution of this concept.

The Pune Reggio-inspired programs as well as MI Reggio-inspired programs support and encourage family involvement in their programs. Although, the availability of working parents was an obstacle faced in both cultural settings.

All MI educators agreed that creating aesthetically pleasing environments can be accomplished with a minimal budget, whereas the Pune educators held a different opinion about this. The Pune educators faced space-restrictions and identified this as a big challenge in setting up their environments. This was not a big issue for the MI educators.

Discussion

The data shows that the non- Italian cultures have adapted aspects of the ideology of the Reggio approach in their practices. They have adapted the principles of the Reggio approach according to their needs and the requirements of their programs. However, adapting only the Reggio principles will not make an abiding change in the school, in teaching and in the society.

Being Reggio-inspired is a journey. It is very open-ended, with no defined beginning or end. It is a living organic system, which has been growing for years. It is not like any other preset curriculum or a model that can be transferred completely in any setting. Fraser and Gestwicki (2002 p. 269), explained this idea in a beautiful way, “in this journey to be Reggio-inspired, the Reggio principles become the signposts in the journey, whereas the ideas of aesthetics, transparency, reciprocity, provocation, collaboration are

the interconnecting routes in the journey.” The result of this study show that relationships, reflective practice, collaboration, critical thinking, respect, and understanding the ‘hundred languages’ are some of the concepts that teachers need to address.”

The data shows the non-Italian cultures have adapted some of the principles like ‘image of a child’, ‘child as a protagonist’, and ‘environment as a third teacher’ to a detail, and principles like ‘documentation’, ‘teacher as a researcher’, and ‘pedagogy of listening’ have been accepted aptly. However these educators adapted and practiced values of aesthetics, transparency, reciprocity, provocation, and collaboration more sporadically. It seems that some of these educators have never even been exposed to these concepts. Teachers and directors have been inspired by the philosophy but have not been inspired enough to study, reflect, and analyze their own practices as the Reggio educators do. Teachers need to understand and practice the following concepts in their daily living while adapting the Reggio principles.

Reflection

It is essential for teachers to practice the act of reflection, as it is needed in implementing all the principles. For example, listening provides opportunities to reflect on one’s thinking; documentation reflects teacher’s thinking about the children and the learning process, and can act as a tool for teachers to reflect on their research questions; setting up the environment for children reflects teachers’ and families’ image of a child, and teacher as research is also a reflective practice of their work.

Collaboration

Collaboration is another essential concept that needs to be understood while adapting Reggio philosophy. These Pune and MI teachers work independently in classrooms, working with a team of teachers though they do not have a culture to comfortably engage in debate, argument, and critical dialogue. Following Vygotsky's belief that learning does not happen in isolation and knowledge is co-constructed in a group by collaboration and working together, in Reggio Emilia educators are organized to always work together and collaborate. This is one of the essential elements to develop when on a journey to become Reggio-inspired.

Moving from Simply Loving Children to Respecting Them

Respect resembles love in the implicit aim of furtherance, but love without respect can blind and bind. – Hawkins (2012, p. 79)

David Hawkins reiterates Malaguzzi's notion of respecting the children as fundamental to the Reggio approach. Respecting children changes an educator's attitude to take children's actions and efforts seriously. It is essential for teachers to understand that merely loving children is not enough; it is essential to value, respect and appreciate children's thoughts, opinions, questions, goals, activities, and accomplishments.

Relationships and Reciprocity

A child's learning does not happen in isolation but in relationships with families, teachers, peers, the environment of the school and the community. In Reggio philosophy,

the role of a teacher is about forming the circle of relationships, in which the children, teachers and families form a ‘community of learners.’ (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). A child is not seen in isolation but is a part of the social group.

In Reggio philosophy, learning is a shared reciprocal connection between the adults and children. The idea of the environment as a third teacher makes the environment a living system that needs to be open and responsive to the changing needs of children and adults. This idea of reciprocity requires teachers to think critically about every element and aspect of the environment they provide for children. Thus, relationships and reciprocity are the backbone of the system.

Hundred Languages

Exploring the idea of the hundred languages of children is a fundamental contribution of Reggio educators, derived from Malaguzzi’s poem of the same name (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012, p. 3) It is essential for Reggio-inspired educators to explore the idea of hundred languages. This will help them understand how children express their thinking, whether through graphical representation, signs and symbols, their actions, and/or imaginative play as they are making meaning and sense of their world.

Professional Development

In the journey to become Reggio-inspired, teachers need continuous support and resources to understand the principles, values, and their implementation. Opportunities for dialogue, discussion, and brainstorming ideas are essential to becoming a reflective practitioner. The schools adapting the Reggio approach need to acknowledge the

dynamic relationship between the atelierista, pedagoga and the teachers. In the Reggio Emilia preschools the atelierista and pedagoga act as mentors, coaches, and consultants for development of the curriculum. There is a strong support system for teachers to collaborate and have intellectual conversations (Edwards, 2012). This concept of atelierista is unique to the Reggio approach and the role of pedagoga is unique to the city culture of Reggio Emilia. Non-Italian cultures need to be mindful about the importance given to professional development and need to find ways to fill the gap of an atelierista and pedagoga in their schools.

The teacher's attitude towards creativity, critical thinking, the children, the teaching profession, and life is the essence of Reggio philosophy (Edwards, 2012; Hendrick, 2004). Therefore, becoming Reggio inspired in practice it is not mere adaptation of principles, but requires an attitudinal shift towards viewing children and the teaching profession.

The results of this study suggest that the teachers can successfully adapt the Reggio approach when teachers can reflect and question their own thoughts on: the school, image of a child, community, environment as third teacher, teaching as a profession, listening, documentation, and teacher as a researcher.

School

In Reggio Emilia educators believe in creating 'amiable' schools for children, teachers, and families. The basis of the Reggio philosophy emerged through the social constructivist perspective in which the child, the teacher, and the family are central to the philosophy. However, the data from this study showed that the interpretation of Reggio

Emilia's approach for these Pune and MI Reggio-inspired educators emphasized the child, teacher, and the environment. Although the families are encouraged to get involved and viewed as partners with teachers in their child's learning, the idea of the collaboration of child, teachers, and families as central to the whole process, was not emphasized in this sample.

This shows that the non-Italian educators have understood importance about the child, teacher, and the environment; however, there does not seem to be as much initial clarity about the child, the teacher, and the family as the three pillars of the Reggio philosophy.

It was evident that these Pune and MI Reggio-inspired schools followed an emergent curriculum. The Pune Reggio-inspired program had units of inquiry (curriculum) in which they had sub-units that were led by children's interests. The MI classrooms did not follow a preset curriculum but seem heavily influenced in their planning by the assessments tools and standards they use to evaluate the children. In contrast Malaguzzi (1989) believed that having preset curriculum or assessment tools would push the schools towards teaching without learning. Following him, Reggio educators believe it is important to develop an emergent and negotiated curriculum, where they involve all the people who are involved in developing the curriculum – the children, other teachers, and parents. This is also known as a social-constructivist curriculum.

Thus, teachers from non-Italian cultures need to understand that even if they have preset curricula or standards to be met, the child should be at the center, rather than the preset curriculum or assessment standards. Teachers not only have to create opportunities for learning, but should be able to further children's thinking and knowledge. Teachers need to understand the concept of the hundred languages of children and to appreciate the

importance of children's multiple methods of self-expression and representation for meaningful learning to take place.

Image of a child

The literature shows that the Reggio educators believe that children are capable, competent, and resourceful. It was remarkable to see that the Reggio-inspired Pune educators had variation in their image of a child. Their experiences and encounters with children have shaped their image of a child. For the MI educators' image of a child, it seems as though MI educators' beliefs about children being capable, competent, and possessing endless potential grew out from their seriousness about children.

The results suggest that when beginning to adopt the Reggio Emilia approach, educators from both the cultural groups need to learn about changing an image of a child from a child of needs that adults meet to a child with strengths.

Community

The community is the center of Reggio Emilia education. The community members are seen to have a wealth of knowledge to share and from which children are involved in active learning. In return the interaction and collaboration in the teaching creates ongoing discourse for the community, the children and the families. All community members come to see in children the work and potential of the young citizens of their society, which fosters social-constructive learning.

The data reveal that the Pune educators' understanding and scope of the community involved parents, grandparents and close family members. It is evident that the idea of

community as center of education has been aspired to by the Reggio-inspired MI schools, in ways that varied depending upon their program types. In contrast, these Pune educators' idea of community is restricted to families, and the idea of school-community relationship was missing.

Environment as third teacher

The literature reveals that in Reggio Emilia schools the environment is designed with a purpose to strengthen the relationships among the children, the teachers, and the families. It fosters opportunities for interaction and collaboration within these relationships. It gives a sense of belonging and ownership to the children, teachers, and families. The environment reflects the people, the community, and their culture. Nature was incorporated in their indoor spaces.

The data reveal that the Pune and MI Reggio inspired educators have been able to adapt the principle of 'environment as a third teacher' to a large extent. Their environments are set up keeping the image of a child in mind, and to strengthen relationships between children, teachers, and families.

However, the ways in which the elements of culture, community, and history were incorporated in the environment varied between both the cultural groups in this sample. It seems that this variation is the consequence of the local culture and history, and suggests that the principle might not be able to be adapted uniformly across non-Italian schools.

The Teaching Profession

In Reggio Emilia, as elsewhere, teaching is a complex, and multifaceted profession.

Malaguzzi (1998a, p. 83) stated:

Learning and teaching should not stand on the opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning how to learn.

This statement emphasizes the importance of relationships, collaboration, and interconnectedness. Not a linear transmission of knowledge, teaching is a collaborative effort of teachers and children and an ever-evolving journey. The education system is a living organic system in the city of Reggio Emilia (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002).

The wide scope of teaching as exemplified in Reggio Emilia has yet not been attained by the Pune and MI educators in this sample. However, teaching is a journey, and the education system of Reggio has evolved over 50 years, which makes it so complex and beautiful. It is essential to be aware of the way teaching is viewed in every culture, as it will influence the ways in which the teachers embark on the journey of adapting their practices to Reggio philosophy.

Listening

In Reggio listening is an attitude of life and the pedagogy of listening makes the Reggio approach distinct, as it plays an important part in finding the essential objective of

teaching and learning philosophy: a search for meaning. The first aim of educators in Reggio is to find how they can help children find meaning in what they do (Rinaldi, 2012). Children are constantly in search of meaning since the day they are conceived in the mothers' wombs. The act of listening starts before the child comes into the world. Listening has helped Reggio educators understand children and their actions and the ways in which children communicate and interact. It is also a way of reflection for the teacher on the teacher's own voice and feelings.

The data shows that Pune and MI educators practice the act of listening in their teaching practices to observe and assess children. They practice it as a part of their profession, to know the children and evaluate them. Listening is not yet seen as an attitude of life in these educators from these non-Italian cultures. These Pune and MI teachers need to be exposed to more literature and theories related to the pedagogy of listening.

Documentation

Literature shows that in Reggio Emilia documentation is a tool for advocacy, and making children's learning visible as well as for teacher reflection. Part of attraction of the Reggio principles for educators around the world is due to the power of their profound documentation. It is a tool used to change the image of the child in the society. There are multiple ways in which learning can be documented.

In this study, it was evident that educators in this sample had adapted documentation to meet the needs of their program. Some adapted it as a tool for assessment, or to share the learning with parents; others for the connecting teachers', and schools' research

questions to child development. Every school showed a different uses and styles of documented. However, none of the schools view documentation to be a tool of advocacy that can heighten the awareness of community members and policy makers. This study has pointed to the need for more clarity about the possibilities to be explored about documentation in both the participating Pune and MI settings. It is likely that these practices will also be the focus of a good deal of learning for any group of new educators adapting this approach.

Teacher as researcher

The idea of teacher as a researcher is fundamental to the Reggio philosophy. It is this concept of teacher research is one element that makes the Reggio philosophy unique and relevant to date. The word research comes with many meanings. In schools, research can mean collection of information that is already known on a specific topic. However, researching is an attitude and approach towards everyday living of life (Rinaldi, 2003). Such words as creativity, innovation, change, error, doubt, and uncertainty are embedded in normal life. Researching is a way of searching, investigating, and making meaning of children's curiosity, interests, and ideas (Rinaldi, 2003).

The data shows that these Pune educators understand the word 'research' generally, as collection of information. On the other hand, the MI Educators in this study have accepted this idea on a larger scale as compared to the Pune educators. The responses of both these groups point to the kinds of learning and need for change that can result when trying to understand, learn, and enact teacher research as a foundational part of teaching.

Implications and Recommendations

In alignment with literature in the field, the results of this study show that when deciding to encourage teachers outside of Italy to move towards working with the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, it would be essential to keep in mind the cultural beliefs and values of the locality, the local image of the children, image of a teacher, and the image of the school in the society (Gandini, 2004). To bring a change in the attitude and mindset of teachers it is essential to consider that teachers have experiences, knowledge, skills, and pre-conceived notions about teaching and learning. One needs to be mindful of teachers' different needs and their different learning styles while introducing the Reggio philosophy (Carter & Curtis, 1994). As Reggio philosophy is open-ended it becomes difficult to understand what to base the work on. In order to begin, one needs to know teachers' needs and requirements. Educators need to ask the question, 'Where are we now?' (Katz, 2004).

To support individuals or groups of teachers in their journey to be Reggio-inspired we need to work with teachers as we work with children. The Reggio Emilia approach is a social-constructivist approach in which children are seen as protagonists. The teachers likewise need to be seen as protagonists. It is a strength-based approach and teachers' strengths and interests need to be taken in consideration. It's a journey to become a reflective practitioner and a critical thinker, and this journey begins from wherever the teacher is when it commences and is navigated forward from there.

According to the National Education Policy of India, a fully qualified primary teacher is required to have 12 years of education followed by 2 years of primary teacher training. Most private schools require an additional college degree along with teacher

education (Gupta, 2013). However, it was interesting to see in this sample of Pune Reggio-inspired schools teachers who wish ‘to find how they can help children find meaning in what they do,’ the educational qualifications varied drastically. For example: a head teacher of a K-2 classroom with educational qualification of 12 grade and no formal teacher training; a pre-primary teacher with a degree in English literature; an atelierista with previous experience in jewelry designing, and working with children in summer camps, but no formal teacher training, educational degree, or experience of working with children in an educational setting. The directors have years of experience working in the educational field, however, only one director had a Bachelor of Arts in Education.

The variability in preparation and background of educators in this city raises a concern about the teachers having a possible lack of knowledge and understanding about child psychology and child development. There is a huge gap between the theory and practice. This situation would make it difficult to facilitate the development of reflective practitioners. Teachers are not consistently prepared to be reflective practitioners who can constructively integrate and implement pedagogy and research. In addition, in this community, early childhood education is less emphasized as compared to elementary and higher education. This creates a necessity for these teachers to have continued professional development and exposure to current research in the field of early childhood education. It would be essential for Reggio-inspired teachers to be part of a learning community within their work environment.

Form a Community of Learners

Learning does not happen in isolation. The Reggio philosophy is about forming relationship and collaboration. Therefore, the first and foremost thing needed on the journey of becoming a Reggio-inspired teacher is to form a community of learners. To understand the essence of co-construction of knowledge teachers need to have partners to work with. Having a community of learners will lay a foundation where ideas can be bounced back and forth and thrive.

Shared Image of a Child

Through the data, it was evident that the image of a child varied within these Pune educators. It was more influenced by their personal backgrounds, individual encounters with children and the learning they see in children. Per the literature (Gupta, 2003), a child is raised in a protective environment and to 'baby' a child is cherished in Indian culture. The image of a child also varies within different religious and cultural groups of India. This study has shown that globalization and exposure to the western educational pedagogies in teacher education and the Reggio philosophy in particular, bring different opinions and perspectives to the images of a child than those the teachers have been previously exposed to. All the above makes an image of a child more complex in this Pune culture. Therefore, it would seem necessary for teachers in this region to begin their Reggio journey by developing a collective image and understanding of a child and childhood in an educational setting.

Thus, we need to start from the heart of Reggio philosophy where the children are viewed as competent, capable and protagonists of their own learning, and it would seem

essential for the teachers to develop a collective understanding of this image of a child. To do this, teachers need to have multiple conversations on this topic, to brainstorm ideas about their image of a child, the image of a child their culture holds, and the image of a child the families hold of their children. They need to question the image their teachers and society holds of children. Is the image uplifting the children and childhood? Is there a need for change? The changes they develop would have to be meaningful to them and relevant to their society. Teachers will need to come up with a collective image of a child, that is based on their culture and personal experience. Every culture has its own image of the child and the way they celebrate childhood; it is essential for teachers to relate to their own culture and community as they develop a shared image.

For example, in this sample, the idea ‘Freedom for children’ was generated multiple times by the Pune educators while discussing their image of a child. This need for freedom may have arisen because this regional Indian society is over-protective of children and expects child’s interdependence on adults, as was evident in the literature (Gupta, 2013). This results in the restriction of child’s capabilities and independence and contradicts the image of a child in Reggio-Emilia and this sample’s group of MI educators..

Reciprocal Image of a Teacher

The other most important image that the Reggio philosophy holds is that of the teacher. To begin with let’s see the definition of teacher by Reggio educator Carla Rinaldi, 2006 (as quoted in Edwards, 2012, p. 150):

‘The definition of a teacher’s professional identity is thus not viewed in abstract terms, but in contexts, in relation to her colleagues, to the parents, and above all, to the children; but also in relation to her own identity and her personal and educational background and experience.’

The image of a teacher is not isolated, but it is an image that is complementary to the image of a child, and associates with oneself, its community, and people.

Results of the current study show, that the Pune teachers in this sample view the teacher as a guide where teachers *listen, lead, guide, and share ideas* with children to take their curiosity and learning forward. There is a need to move beyond the image of a guide. Teachers need to adapt the attitude of creativity, critical thinking, and self-discovery. This requires a shift in the ways the teacher’s role is viewed, which is the crux of the Reggio approach. The significant difference in Reggio Emilia teachers’ role, that sets them apart from other educators around the world, is very well articulated by authors Fraser and Gestwicki (2002, p. 51) below:

- The role of a teacher as a curriculum planner changes to the role of the teacher *as a co-constructor of knowledge.*
- The role of the teacher as program planner emphasizes the role *of a creator of the environment as a third teacher*
- The role of teacher in facilitating play changes to the role of the *teachers as an exchange of understandings.*
- The role of providing guidance changes to the role of *the teacher as a supporter of the competent child.*

- The role of a teacher as an observer is extended to *documenter and researcher*.
- The role of the teacher as parent educator changes to the role of *teacher as a partner with parents*.
- The role of a communicator with outside audience's changes to the role of the *teacher a listener, provocateur, and negotiator of meaning*

Educators need to change their thinking about their roles, their profession, and the way they view children. What is required is a shift in teachers' mindset and the way teacher education and the early childhood culture are perceived and developed.

Overview of Reggio Principles

The idea and understanding of the image of a child and the reciprocal image of a teacher need to be absorbed by the teachers for them to move forward. This would be a good time to introduce teachers to some of the Reggio principles that are reflected in the environment of a Reggio school.

The list of principles below has been adapted from the book, *'Authentic Childhood – Exploring the Reggio Emilia in the Classroom'* (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002).

- Image of a child: the cornerstone of Reggio Emilia experiences conceptualizes an image of the child as competent, strong, inventive, and full of ideas, with rights rather than needs.
- Environment as a third teacher: preparing an environment that acts as a third teacher, carefully designed to facilitate the social construction of understanding, and to document the life within the space.

- Relationships: emphasizes the importance of relationships, physically in the way objects are displayed in the classroom; socially and emotionally in the interactions of the people in the environment; and intellectually in the approach to learning that is always seen in context and depends on co-construction of knowledge.
- Collaboration: working together at every level through collaboration among teachers, children and teachers, children and children, children and parents, teachers and parents, and the larger community.
- Documentation: providing a verbal and visual trace of children's experiences and work, and opportunity to revisit, reflect, and interpret.
- Progettazione: this difficult to translate Italian word means making flexible plans for the further investigation of ideas, and devising the means for carrying them out in collaboration with the children, parents, and at times, the larger community.
- Provocation: listening closely to children and devising a means for provoking further thought and action.
- One hundred languages of children: encouraging children to make symbolic representations of their ideas and providing them with many different kinds of media for representing those ideas.
- Transparency: creating transparency concretely, through the light that infuses every space and in mirrors, light table, and glass jar that catch and reflect the light around the classroom; and metaphorically, in the openness to ideas and theories from other parts of the world, and in the availability of information for parents and visitors.

The idea about sharing some of the principles is to give teachers an overview of the ways in which the Reggio Emilia approach is multilayered and every principle relates to every other. The process of studying these principles should be viewed as a spiral rather than a linear approach. Each principle is woven into the others, yet can be studied independently.

Defining the Terms

It is essential for teachers in their learning community to define the meaning of terms that are being adapted from a different culture. As we have seen in the literature summarized above, the meaning of words and terms change as they are transferred from one culture to another. This was evident in this sample as the idea and scope of the terms ‘community,’ ‘research,’ ‘listening,’ and ‘respect,’ were interpreted differently by the educators, within and across the Italian, the MI, and the Pune cultures. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind at all times that English is a second language in India.

Visit to a Reggio-Inspired Center/Program

At some point to time in this process it would be important for teachers to have an opportunity to witness first-hand an environment that is already Reggio-inspired. Before visiting teachers would have a brief idea about the things that they may experience while touring a center. Touring a center would provide concrete, in-action evidence that demonstrates the ways in which the Reggio principles are intertwined in space and function.

The tour would end with a reflection session in which teachers will be encouraged to note and discuss:

- What inspired them?
- What stood out to them?
- What was something they would like to know more about?
- What was something that drew their attention?
- What would they like to implement in their classrooms?

Revisit the experiences from the tour within the group. Reflect the ideas and encounters that inspired the teachers. And then discuss:

- What are emerging ideas of children in your own classroom?
- What are the areas of the classroom a teacher wants to work on or learn about?
- What aspects or principles of the Reggio Emilia approach would they want to bring into the classroom or begin with?

Once the above questions are answered teachers may have more clarity about their interests and inclinations. This will set a beginning place from which to learn, explore, and adapt a Reggio principle into their classrooms depending upon the children's as well as their own interests.

In order to begin to develop that identified interest one needs to have clarity about the meaning and scope of the interest. The teachers will need to reflect and brainstorm a mind map about the scope of their activities regarding the implementation of their chosen

principle. For example, a teacher may have been inspired by the documentation at the Reggio-inspired tour. The teacher should seek clarity about the meaning of documentation:

- What in the documentation did she find appealing?
- What impact does documentation have on children, families, teachers, community and school?
- What is the reason and need for adapting this principle?

After thinking critically and collectively about that interest, a teacher is in a better position to plan for guiding and planning for the children's learning. The whole group could revisit and discuss these individual meanings, and the teachers with shared interests could work together and support one another.

Finding Resources

Depending on the availability and preferences of resources teachers can gather materials to understand the principle or aspect. For example, here is the list of resources that were shared by a participant in this study:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Books
- Videos
- Blogs
- Photographs
- Visiting a Reggio-Inspired center

- Attending the ‘Hundred Languages’ Exhibits

Teacher as a researcher

One of the essential components that makes the Reggio Emilia approach continuously relevant is engagement in ongoing teacher-research. Research and searching for meaning are a daily practice in Reggio Emilia preschools. Research is not about collecting already written information on a certain topic. Rather Reggio educators use this term to refer to teachers’ intentional practices developing their curiosity, using trial and error, and looking at the same things from a new lens. In this study, the research content for these Pune educators focused more on gathering published information for classroom activities and concerns. It was interesting to see that there was a separate team assigned for research. The teachers’ participation was mere feedback to the research team. I would recommend that the idea of ‘teacher as a researcher’ be introduced in the later stages of the journey of adapting Reggio principles. Teachers will need to be reintroduced to the idea of research as an integral part of their environment, in the exchange of ideas with children and not as related to the work of a separate department of adults.

Advocacy for Children’s Rights

It was interesting to observe in the study that these Pune educators did not mention idea of advocacy for children’s rights. Advocacy for children’s right is core to the Reggio educators. This indicates that any attempt to bring this kind of change into

their practice will require work with Pune in this region for them to accept advocacy as part of their aims and work to increase respect for the early childhood profession.

Teaching Team

The backbone of the Reggio Emilia preschool is their staffing arrangement, which promotes co-teaching, collaboration, collegiality, opportunities for self-study, and professional development. The relationship between teachers, atelierista, and the pedagogista forms a dynamic team for brainstorming ideas, mentoring, and providing opportunities for reflective practice and critical thinking. The roles of the atelierista and pedagogista are fairly new in Pune early childhood education in this region. It was interesting to see although that these Pune schools have adopted the role of an atelierista, they have ignored the qualifications one needs to have to be an atelierista as it is in the Reggio Emilia preschools.

Limitations

The distance was a constraint in connecting to more Reggio-inspired schools in Pune, as the researcher was located in US. The Skype and telephone interviews were a challenge to use and interpret as there were errors in the recordings and transcriptions that were unavoidable. Having a limited number of participants from both the Pune, Indian and MI Reggio-inspired programs constraints the degree to which the conclusions can be generalized. In addition, as an interview study, the data is limited to participant self-report and is not triangulated with in-action evidence from their settings. Conclusions from this study can only point out or suggest central issues, but cannot predict the results

of adaptation in other settings. Since there is a vast literature available on the Reggio philosophy, time constraints were another challenge. In addition, there was limited peer – reviewed literature available on early childhood education systems, and no validated or published research was available about Reggio-inspired practices in India.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning involved for teachers when adapting the Reggio Emilia approach in their non-Italian cultures and study the kinds of changes needed in teachers' thinking while on their journey to become Reggio-inspired educators.

The results of this study suggest that in the journey of adapting the Reggio Emilia approach along with the Reggio principles, a teacher needs to understand the concepts of relationships and reciprocity, collaboration, reflection, the hundred languages, and respect for children that make the Reggio philosophy a dynamic and progressive educational approach. This approach works towards bringing a cultural change in the view of early childhood education and the image of the child. The journey of becoming Reggio-Inspired is to become a reflective practitioner and critical thinker; one must take 'one step towards Reggio approach and two steps back in your own culture' (Malaguzzi, as quoted in Cadwell, 1997, p. 60).

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Appendix A

Definitions of terms used

Here are definitions of some words that are used to describe the Reggio Emilia practice and philosophy that comes from the Italian language. To gain better understanding about the principles and practices. These definitions are taken from the book ‘Authentic Childhood – Exploring Reggio Emilia in the Classrooms’ by Susan Fraser and Carol Gestwicki (2002) -

Collaboration: A principle of the Reggio philosophy that places a high value on the working together of children with children, children with teachers and atelieristi, teachers with parents, with co-teachers, and with pedagogisti and atelieristi. More than mere cooperation, when this term is used in the Reggio philosophy, it implies the necessary interdependence of all parties.

Emergent curriculum: The learning explorations that develop because of the interaction of the particular people in a particular place at a particular time. The curriculum emerges from the interests and dialog of the individuals in a learning environment, and is, therefore, not predetermined. In emergent curriculum, activities and projects develop through teachers’ careful observations of children’s’ work and communication, and subsequent decision-making about appropriate directions and time frames.

Hundred languages: The Reggio phrase that describes the many media available to children to explore and to represent their learning. Examples of the hundred languages

used in Reggio are paint, charcoal, colored pencils, pen-and-ink drawings, clay work, wirework, collage, paper sculpture, shadow play, drama, music, work with words and numbers, computers, and many others.

Negotiated curriculum: The term used by some educators to describe the process of creating curriculum between teachers and children as teachers work to frame and direct the ideas originating from children's interest. Negotiated curriculum describe the process of social constructivism where teachers work to uncover what children know and believe about a topic in order to design meaningful learning experiences.

Project: The term used to describe the long-term explorations that are central to the curriculum and learning style of the schools in Reggio. Sometimes undertaken by small groups of children and other times involving the whole school, the projects develop as children and adults together consider possible methods of exploring a particular topic of interest and work to represent their learning over time.

Progettazione: An Italian word that conveys a complex network of hypotheses, observations, predictions, interpretations, planning and explorations. This describes the process of adult reflection, thought, and communication that precedes the development of a project as teachers try to anticipate all the possible ways that the activity could develop, and identify likely ideas and choices of the children. It also describes the process of following the activity in extended investigations, making room for changes and for unexpected directions, and is, in fact, part of the activity.

Provocateur: One of the roles of teachers in the Reggio philosophy. It conveys the sense of the teachers as deliberately creating "knots" or problems worthy of children's efforts and attention.

Provocation: The term used to suggest an activity, experience, or material that may be planned as a starting point in a project of investigation; designed to elicit interest, ideas, questions, and direction for further exploration.

Social construction: Another term derived from consideration of Vygotsky's theory. The understanding is that individuals are assisted in constructing new knowledge through their interactions with other people.

Appendix B**Flow of the interview question**

- Beginning question
- School community
- Families they work with
- Image of a child
- Learning environment
- The teaching profession
- Teaching practices- Listening; Observation and; Language (use of words and vocabulary)
- Documentation
- Teacher as researcher
- School/ center

Beginning:

What do you understand by the Reggio Emilia Approach?

Has your center always been a Reggio inspired school? If not, What made you shift to the Reggio Approach?

School community

1. In Reggio philosophy community plays a crucial role. In what ways have you reached out to the community, or invited the community to be a part of your classroom or school?

Image of a child

1. What is your image of the child?
2. How does this influence the ways you work with children? Can you give me an example?

Families

1. What are the similarities and differences in the image of the children in Reggio and in your community?
2. How do you involve the families in your program?

Learning Environment

1. What physical design choices you have made as provocation for children in your class

(I am thinking of elements such as – Physical space, Lighting, furniture, material/equipment etc.)

2. What are the elements in your learning environment that reflect your community, your history, and your people?
3. “Early childhood programs are understood as preparations for primary schools” – what are your views on this statement.
4. “Creating an esthetically pleasing environment is expensive”. Share your views on this statement.

The teaching profession

1. What have you needed to unlearn and relearn during the transition to the Reggio-inspired practices?
2. How would you describe teaching as a profession?

How do you describe what you do as a teacher? Or Describe your role as a teacher?

Teaching practices- Listening; Observation and; Language (use of words and vocabulary)

1. ‘Listening’ is one of the essential practices of Reggio Educators. What does the pedagogy of listening mean to you in your own teaching and learning?
2. Share a project that developed successfully in your class/center.

Documentation

1. How does documentation work in your center?

(The process of documentation; different mediums of documentation; benefits; how often you re-visit the documents.)

Teacher as researcher

1. “Teacher as a researcher.” What does this phrase mean to you?

Appendix C

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

“Learning of a Reggio-inspired educator” (HUM00114371)

Researcher Ms. Nilu Rajput, Masters in Early Childhood Education student, under the direction of Dr. Aviva Dorfman of the University of Michigan-Flint, invites you to be a part of a research study to investigate the learnings that Reggio-inspired educators have to bring

The purpose of the study is to identify the repeated themes and patterns of challenges, adaptations, trial and errors, and the opportunities developed for professional development by the early childhood teachers and directors/principals in the process of

transformation to adapt Reggio Emilia Approach. We are asking you to participate because I will be able to gather information on the adaptations that Reggio-inspired teachers had to undergo while adapting the philosophy in the US and India.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face

interview at the location of your choice. The interview should take about one hour. We would like to audiotape the interview to make sure that our conversation is recorded accurately. You may still participate in the research even if you decide not to be taped.

While you may not receive a direct benefit from participating in this research, some people find

sharing their stories to be a valuable experience. We hope that this study will contribute to

understanding and developing when developing a Reggio-inspired school for children in this urban context in India.

Answering questions or talking with others about your challenges and experiences can be difficult. You may choose not to answer any interview question and you can stop your participation in the research at any time.

We plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would

identify you or your institution. To keep your information safe, the audiotape of your interview will be placed in a secure until a written word-for-word copy of the

discussion has been created.

The researchers will enter study data on a computer that is password-protected and uses special coding of the data to protect the information. To protect confidentiality, your real name and your institution name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion.

There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information

you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the

research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan-Flint, government research offices.

If you have questions about this research, including questions about the scheduling of the Interview, you can contact Researcher Ms. Nilu Rajput, University of Michigan-Flint, Department of Graduate Programs, Education Department 430 French Hall, Flint, MI 48502-1950, (810) phone number 762-3260, or nrajput@umflint.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UM Flint Institutional Review Board, 303 E Kearsley St., 4204 William S White Bldg., Flint, MI 48502-1950, (810) 762-3384, irb-flint@umflint.edu.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be part of the study. Participating in this research is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your

mind and stop at any time. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one

copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.

Signature Date

I agree to be audiotaped as part of the study.

Signature Date