



# What are the principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project?



## **Children are active protagonists of their growth and development processes**

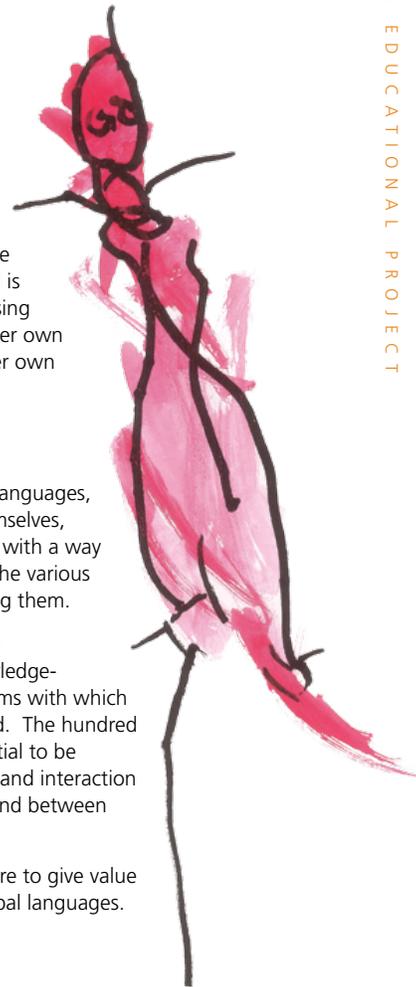
Children possess extraordinary potentials for learning and change, as well as extensive affective, relational, sensory and intellectual resources that manifest in an ongoing exchange with the cultural and social context. Each child is the subject of rights, first and foremost possessing the right to be respected and valued in his or her own identity, uniqueness, difference and in his or her own rhythms of growth and development.

## **The hundred languages**

As human beings, children possess a hundred languages, a hundred ways of thinking, of expressing themselves, of understanding, and of encountering others, with a way of thinking that creates connections between the various dimensions of experience rather than separating them.

The hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed. The hundred languages are understood as having the potential to be transformed and multiplied in the cooperation and interaction between the languages, among the children, and between children and adults.

It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre to give value and equal dignity to all the verbal and non-verbal languages.



## Participation

Participation is the value and the strategy that defines the way in which the children, the educators, and the parents are stakeholders in the educational project; it is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived day by day in the encounter with others and in the interpersonal relationships.

Participation gives value to and makes use of the hundred languages of children and of human beings, viewed as a plurality of points of view and of cultures; it requires and fosters forms of cultural mediation and develops in a multiplicity of occasions and initiatives for constructing dialogue and the sense of belonging to a community.

Participation generates and nurtures the feelings and culture of solidarity, responsibility and inclusion; it produces change and new cultures that contend with the dimension of the contemporary world and globalization.

## Listening

In participated education, an active attitude of listening between adults, children and the environment is the premise and context of every educational relationship.

Listening is an ongoing process that nurtures reflection, welcoming and openness towards oneself and others; it is an indispensable condition for dialogue and change.

The attitude of listening raises the threshold of attention and sensitivity toward the cultural, values-related and political scenarios of the contemporary world.

The infant-toddler centres have the responsibility to foster and make visible these processes by means of the pedagogical documentation.

## Learning as a process of individual and group construction

Each child, like each human being, is an active constructor of knowledge, competencies and autonomies, by means of original learning processes that take shape with methods and times that are unique and subjective in the relationship with peers, adults and the environment. The learning process is fostered by strategies of research, comparison of ideas and co-participation; it makes use of creativity, uncertainty, intuition, curiosity. It is generated in play and in the aesthetic, emotional, relational and spiritual dimensions, which it interweaves and nurtures. It is based on the centrality of motivation and the pleasure of learning.

## Educational research

Research represents one of the essential dimensions of life of children and adults alike, a knowledge-building tension that must be recognized and valued.



Shared research between adults and children is a priority practice of everyday life, an existential and ethical approach necessary for interpreting the complexity of the world, of phenomena, of systems of co-existence, and is a powerful instrument of renewal in education. The research made visible by means of the documentation builds learning, reformulates knowledge, underlies professional quality and is proposed at the national and international levels as an element of pedagogical innovation.

## Educational documentation

Documentation is an integral and structuring part of the educational theories and teaching practices, as it gives value to and makes explicit, visible and assessable the nature of the individual and group learning processes of both the children and the adults, processes which are identified by means of observation and which become the common wealth. The educational experience that unfolds in the infant-toddler centres assumes its fullest meaning when the documentation produced in progress is revisited, reconstructed, re-signified, and assessed; that is, interpreted, in the exchange and with the contribution of different points of view. Viewed as a “public place”, documentation substantiates the idea of the preschool and infant-toddler centre as a forum in which a culture of childhood and of education is elaborated by means of a democratic process.



## Progettazione

The educational action takes shape by means of progettazione, which is the process of planning and designing the teaching and learning activities, the environment, the opportunities for participation and the professional development of the personnel, and not by means of applying predefined curricula.

Progettazione is a strategy of thought and action that is respectful and supportive of the learning processes of the children and the adults; it accepts doubt, uncertainty and error as resources, and is capable of being modified in relation to the evolution of the contexts.

It is carried out by means of the processes of observation, documentation and interpretation in a recursive relationship, and through a close synergy between the organization of the work and the educational research.

## Organization

The organization of the work, the spaces and the time of the children and the adults is a structural part of the values and choices of the educational project. The organization constructs a network of choices and the assumption of shared responsibility at the administrative, political and pedagogical levels; choices that contribute to guaranteeing identity, stability, and security to the children and to the educational service, connoting it in its potentialities, quality, and praxis. The administrative, political, and pedagogical levels also bear shared responsibility for a constant and systematic assessment of the consistency between the principles of the educational project and the organizational choices made. Particular importance is given to the working conditions and the contractual forms that foster stability, continuity and a sense of belonging.

**Documentation Video:** <http://youtu.be/hUVi-fLc0zA>

## Environment, spaces and relations

The interior and exterior spaces of the infant-toddler centres are designed and organized in interconnected forms that foster interaction, autonomy, explorations, curiosity and communication, and are offered as places for the children and for the adults to research and to live together. The environment interacts with, is modified by and takes shape in relation to the projects and learning experiences of the children and of the adults in a constant dialogue between architecture and pedagogy.

Care of the furniture, the objects and the activity spaces by the children and the adults is an educational act that generates psychological well-being, a sense of familiarity and belonging, aesthetics and the pleasure of inhabiting a space, which are also primary premises and conditions for the safety of the environments.

Safety is therefore a quality that is generated by the dialogue and the shared elaboration between the different professionals who are engaged and concerned with this aspect, and who must likewise assess both risk prevention and the richness and quality of the opportunities offered.

## Professional development

Professional development is characterized as a process aimed at building understanding and awareness of the meanings and methods of education, the central qualifying points of the educational project and the specific competencies of the various professional roles. Ongoing professional development is both the right and duty of each individual and of the group, and is included and taken into consideration in the work schedule and organized collectively in terms of its contents, forms and the methods of participation of each individual. Professional development is given priority within the daily activity of the centres and schools through the reflective practices of observation and documentation, with the weekly staff meeting being the primary occasion for in-depth study and sharing.

## Assessment

Assessment, being an action aimed at the continuous attribution of meaning and of value, is a structuring process of the educational and administrative experience.

The assessment process is part of the totality of the aspects of scholastic life, including the children's learning, the professionalism of the personnel, the organization and quality of the service. It is understood and proposed as an opportunity to recognize and to negotiate the meanings and intentionalities of the educational project and is configured as a public action of dialogue and interpretation.

To this end, the infant-toddler centres make use of specific instruments (for example: the Community-Early Childhood Councils, the pedagogical coordinating team, the work group and the co-presence and co-responsibility of teachers) and practices (for example: documentation, the participation of the families and of the surrounding community, participation in the integrated public system).<sup>1</sup>

1. *From: Indications: Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia Reggio Children, Italy*

