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Keywords

influence, pedagogy, project, reflections, mirror, reggio, emilia, soul, john, dewey, italian, foundational, educational

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Introduction

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it" (Wharton, 1902).

The Italian Reggio Emilia approach to early years education, highly regarded for its child-focused pedagogy, employs many of John Dewey's ideas about democracy, education and aesthetics. Frequently hailed as the best preschool system in the world (Gardner, 2012; Hewett, 2001) the Reggio Emilia educational project (Rinaldi, 2006; 2013) is considered a notable exemplar of social constructivist pedagogy (Collett, 2010; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Rinaldi, 2013). Additionally, the long-term, community-based pedagogical experiment (Rinaldi, 2006) provides guidance and inspiration for countless educators around the world. However, while scholars reference Reggio Emilia's principles and practice to inform and interpret their research (Merz & Glover, 2006; Tarr, 2001) the educators in Reggio Emilia do not regard their educational approach as a theory, nor as a model to be imitated or

transported into other contexts (Cadwell, 2003; Edwards, 1995; Giamminuti, 2013). In order to respect and to denote the dynamic and evolving nature of pedagogical research undertaken in Reggio Emilia this article will utilise the term ‘educational project’ interchangeably with the more colloquial ‘Reggio Emilia approach’.

Proposal of Deweyan Influence

While Dewey’s broad influence upon this approach to early years education has been recognised by scholars (Collett, 2010; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Fielding & Moss, 2011; Hoyuelos, 2013; Rankin, 2004) few have examined Dewey’s philosophical and historical influence on the foundational values and praxis of the project beyond an alignment of their democratic and child-centered focus. This paper builds upon these general acknowledgements to justify and foreground an alignment of Dewey’s philosophy with Reggio Emilia’s key pedagogical values. It proposes multiple sources of Deweyan influence on both the formation and the sustenance of the Reggio Emilia approach. Socio-political and historic influences on the evolution of the Reggio Emilia project are identified, particularly highlighting John Dewey’s philosophical influence via a network of Italian educators, including Borghi, Codignola, Malaguzzi and Ciari. Encountering Dewey’s progressive democratic ideals within the historical and sociopolitical reception of his work by these Italian reformers offers an enlightening perspective on Dewey’s international and cross-generational influence. Additionally, the revelation of several previously unrecognised sources of direct Deweyan influence on the foundational philosophy and ongoing practice in the preschools and infant-toddler centres of Reggio Emilia offers historical gravitas for pedagogic reflection by researchers, early childhood practitioners and students of the Reggio Emilia approach. It encourages educators to examine the historical formation of educational movements in support of contemporary pedagogical inspiration and reflection.

Pondering a transformational philosopher

John Dewey, born 1859, wrote prolifically in the domains of psychology, philosophy, art, democracy and social issues (Hickman, Neubert, & Reich, 2009). As a notable philosopher and educational reformer (Dworkin, 1959) he is identified as “America’s Philosopher” (Hickman, et al., 2009, p.18). Kleibard (2006) urges serious study of Dewey’s educational philosophy for its enduring capacity to challenge educational reflection and practice, while Hohn (2013) positions Dewey’s value for meaningful educational experience as a counterbalance to the current domination of individualism,

testing and competition. In addition to being far ahead of his time, Dewey's educational philosophy continues to be radical (Schechter, 2011). Dewey centralised education, identifying it as the "supreme human interest in which other problems come to a head" (cited in Hildebrand, 2008, p.124).

Additionally, he believed that the school curriculum should aim to meet the needs of both the individual and the society in which they are citizens (Hall, Horgan, Ridgway, Murphy, Cunneen, & Cunningham, 2010).

Dewey's philosophy developed during the late 1800's, in a period of significant pedagogical debate between traditionalist and romantic educators, whose views about purposes and methods of education, including the rights and interests of children, were positioned at conflicting extremes (Hildebrand, 2008). Power and responsibility for learning were positioned either in the hands of adults or the hands of children, but never both. Dewey rejected such opposing dualisms (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000), instead developing pragmatic philosophies of education, democracy and aesthetics in a career that outlasted the work of any other philosopher for whom there are "substantial and verifiable records" (Dworkin, 1959, p.1).

Of relevance for reflection

Early childhood educators credit Dewey with concepts such as learning through play-based, hands-on activity and project-based approaches to curriculum provision. However, while educators recognise Dewey's name little is known about his wide ranging and progressive educational influence (Weiss, DeFalco, & Weiss, 2005). Amongst the wide range of subject areas discussed in more than one hundred publications, Dewey outlined a range of ideas very familiar to early childhood educators. He expounded ideas in relation to theory and practice; democratic education; cognitive growth and experience; the active role of the teacher; subject matter and subject knowledge; the importance of community context and the need for pedagogical reflection in the service of professional development (Dewey, 1900, 1910, 1916, 1919, 1934). More specifically, Dewey's constructivist leanings positioned the teacher as a researcher and co-creator of learning in partnership with children, within social and community contexts (Garrison, 1996). His value for children as active agents in their social construction of knowledge (Griebing, 2011) saw him advocate for curricula based on children's interests (Eisner, 2002). He extensively discussed the importance of aesthetic learning environments as a human right (Dewey, 1939; Page, 2006). While such ideas align with current dialogue and practice in

contemporary early childhood contexts, and may consequently enhance pedagogical reflection, the deconstruction of Dewey's extensive body of work may deter practitioners. Instead, O'Brien suggests that an examination of Dewey-inspired education contexts may be enlightening (2002). The Reggio Emilia educational project is one context where Dewey's influence as a "great educational philosopher is still alive and well" (Hawkins, 2012, p.75).

The growth of a revolutionary project

The Italian educational project officially established in 1963 by the municipal council of Reggio Emilia, has operated and expanded for more than fifty years, maintaining the core values upon which it was established (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012). The 'project', however, was initially conceived almost seventy years ago when a post-World War II community demanded educational reforms. It emerged from the political battle between left-wing communists and socialists on one side, and the fascist regime on the other (Hall, et al., 2010). Workers, educators and particularly women's groups advocated for social policy reforms, including improved access to early education and care (Lazzari, 2012). Oppressed community members inspirationally sought to reform society through the provision of early childhood services (Cadwell, 2003; Gandini, 2011). Of note is the leading role taken by educators in the Emilia Romagna region during the 1960's and 1970's, which pre-empted the introduction of new state and national legislation for the provision of early childhood services throughout Italy (Catarsi, cited in Lazzari, 2012).

The key tenets of practice in the Reggio Emilia project focus on social reform through access and equity; the notion of children's democratic rights as citizens; strengthening community partnerships and democratic participation; images of children as capable and competent co-constructors of knowledge; the role of educators as researchers and co-learners; the use of pedagogical documentation in support of assessment, advocacy, reflection and research; the role of the environment-as-teacher (3rd Teacher); a particular focus on visual art and aesthetics, and a holistic, project-based methodology (*progettazione*) which respects multiple learning styles and symbolic languages, also known as the 'hundred languages of children' (Edwards, et al., 2012; Rinaldi, 2006, 2013).

Today early childhood specialists globally explore educational practice in Reggio Emilia to support their own critical thinking and dialogue about theory and pedagogy. International conferences and ongoing academic publications inspire practitioners and scholars alike in their quest to both define

what makes this educational project attractive and enduring, and to apply what is learnt to their own praxis. Indeed, the approach has expanded the conceptual vocabulary and pedagogical sensitivities now routinely referenced in early childhood contexts internationally (New, 2000). Significant insight and leadership were necessary components for the development and maintenance of such a complex and revolutionary educational approach. Indeed, the success or failure of any educational reform requires leadership that is willing to depart from outdated ideas to reconceptualise practice (Stamopoulos, 2012). Illustrating this notion Howard Gardner compares the endurance of the Reggio Emilia project to Dewey's short-lived experimental progressive school and credits Loris Malaguzzi, the founding educator and long-term Director for its enduring pedagogy (Gardner, 2012).

A visionary leader

Educator and psychologist, Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994) is recognised as the “visionary founding director” and pedagogical leader who guided the transformation of parent-run cooperative preschools in Reggio Emilia into an early childhood system now recognised as an international leader in the early childhood field (Edwards, 2002, p.6). More broadly he is recognised as an educator and pedagogue of great influence on the international culture of early childhood education (Fielding & Moss, 2011). Acknowledging that Malaguzzi was inspired by great philosophers and theorists, including Dewey, Gardner praises him as a “guiding genius.... deserving of recognition in the same breath as his heroes Froebel, Montessori, Dewey and Piaget” (Gardner, 2012, p. xiii-xiv). Despite such praise, Edwards suggests that while Malaguzzi did not position the project as a theory or model, its interpretation of a range of theories and philosophies could be situated as a “beginning of a theory” (Edwards, 1995, p.2). The Reggio Emilia educators evidently “read, analyzed, transformed and used” a range of theories and philosophies to provoke thinking and innovative practice to enrich children's learning and play (Cadwell, 2003, p. 93). Malaguzzi's interpretation of theory to enhance practice is noteworthy with Gardner stating that “nowhere else in the world is there such a seamless and symbiotic relationship between a school's progressive philosophy and its practices” (2012, p. xiv). Yet, despite Malaguzzi's charismatic leadership, had the Reggio Emilia educational project been motivated by this man's passion and personality alone, it may have exhausted itself following his untimely death in 1994, instead of evolving and flourishing as it has for well over half a century.

The sustaining force which contributed to the ongoing project was located not only in Malaguzzi's passion but in the hearts, minds and desires of a whole community of educators, parents and citizens (Vecchi, 2010). Following Malaguzzi's death his colleagues, while acknowledging the loss of their most important "reference point" and "maestro", determined that the educational philosophy would be sustained (Vecchi, 2010, p. 158). In fact the legacy of the approach has been maintained by key leaders and educators determined to honour all that Malaguzzi had taught them and to demonstrate "that the (educational) experience was strong in itself, a way of not betraying Loris Malaguzzi, the best proof of his way of 'making school'" (Piccinini, in Vecchi, 2010, p. 69). Indeed, Malaguzzi's way of *making school* was deeply grounded in Dewey's philosophic and theoretical ideas and it may be concluded that this been a contributing factor to the endurance of the Reggio Emilia educational project.

Foundations of philosophic inspiration

Dewey's philosophic influence upon praxis in the Italian educational project is widely indicated by scholars (Cooper, 2012; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013; Giamminuti, 2013; Hoyuelos, 2013). Likewise, the educators, artists and *pedagogistas* (educational leaders) as central protagonists of the project for more than fifty years acknowledge Dewey's general influence (Malaguzzi, cited in Rinaldi, 2006). The reluctance of Reggio Emilia's pedagogical leaders to directly align specific theoretical inspirations with their practice may lie in the desire to "distance themselves from being pigeon-holed into a single particular perspective" (Hall, et al., 2010, p. 1). However Gandini confirms that while the founding educators in Reggio Emilia avidly read the works of many scholars and theorists, (including Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget and others), Dewey was the most influential (Gandini, 2011).

A kaleidoscope of influence

Although there are significant points of alignment between their transformative philosophies and practice, there is little evidence to suggest that Loris Malaguzzi and John Dewey ever met. While Dewey was aware of and concerned about the fascist uprising and repression in Italy (Dykhuisen, 1973), his death in 1952 preceded Malaguzzi's appointment as pedagogical leader and director of the early childhood services in Reggio Emilia by six years. However, examination of the literature written by and about these influential educational advocates supports the proposition that Malaguzzi studied and was inspired by John Dewey's assembly of philosophical and theoretical ideas. Dewey's enduring

influence upon Italian pedagogy, Malaguzzi, and specifically the Reggio Emilia experience, can be identified in multiple sources of influence. These intersecting reflections of Dewey's influence are located in the context of the socio-political climate in Italy during and post-World War II. This is demonstrated in the search by progressive Italian educators for new educational ideas and methods; the Italian translations of Dewey's work (including the work and influence of translators and scholars Borghi and Codignola); and the social reform movement located in Bologna, under the influential leadership of Bruno Ciari.

A desire for democracy

Dewey's democratic ideals attained significant reception in post-war Italy, particularly in areas of northern Italy known for a strong history of anti-fascist resistance (Burza, 2009; Lazzari, 2012). Communities, parents and educators in post-fascist Italy embraced socialist principles to position the role that democratic early childhood education could play in bringing about social change and better opportunities for children (Edwards, et al., 2012). They were determined to raise children to be critical thinkers and the guardians of democracy. These aspirations aligned with Dewey's ideas about maximising democratic and community growth by teaching children about the ideals of citizenship (Dýrfjörð, 2006). In fact the push toward liberal and democratic principles was not only driven by concerned Italian parents and educators but by a form of democratic evangelism emanating from the United States of America.

Following the liberation of Italy, American politicians and progressive educators sought to "introduce a school system based on liberal, democratic principles" with the goal of social reform (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 54). As partners in the "Italian reeducation experiment" allied forces from the US saw Dewey's version of progressive education as the "royal path" to the democratisation of Italy through the modernisation of the Italian primary school system (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 54,57). Burza's selective analysis of official documents of the Italian school system between 1945 and 1985 confirm that Dewey's ideals in relation to social transformation through democratic participation and collaborative pedagogy were evident in official Italian syllabus documents across decades (Burza, 2009).

Those seeking social change were guided by Dewey's argument that "if social changes are to be brought about in a peaceful, intelligent way, people must be trained in the art of free and enlightened

discussion as exemplified in schools where academic freedom prevails” (Dewey, cited in Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 275). Rather than positioning governments as the primary source of democracy, Dewey championed the capacity of every citizen in a community to participate intelligently in their own growth and determination. This was evident when Dewey expressed his social liberal ideals in “My Pedagogic Creed” stating, “Through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself into definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move” (Dewey, cited in Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 104).

In analysing historical and scholarly sources concerning the establishment of the Reggio Emilia project, it is apparent that Malaguzzi and colleagues collaborated to discuss ideas that could inspire and inform their own developing philosophy. Reflecting aspirations for democratic change, Malaguzzi affirmed that the educational reformation undertaken in Reggio Emilia “was a powerful experience emerging out of a thick web of emotions and from a complex matrix of knowledge and values” (cited in Gandini, 2012, p. 35). This *complex matrix* of developing *knowledge and values* included a network of like-minded and progressive Italian educators.

A collaborative network of influence

Italian educators frustrated with social inequity in the school system were motivated to search for new ideas about education, echoing Dewey’s discontent with traditionalist approaches to education (Dýrfjörð, 2006). In post-fascist Italy two thirds of the population, largely the disadvantaged working classes, had not completed their time at school (Jäggi, Müller, & Schmid, 1977). Therefore, educators committed to social change and particularly sought out information about approaches to pedagogy that valued democracy, community participation and social equity (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Illustrating these concerns, a working paper written at the time advocated for educational reforms, stating:

School in our society is not democratic and critical. It is a school in which you listen and obey: the school of uncritical consent. It is not a school made by everyone for everyone – administered, run and controlled by the community. (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 114-115)

Half a century prior to this, Dewey had used very similar terminology to condemn traditional education for “passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method”, and advised that “when the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationships to this common

world, his studies are naturally unified" (Dewey, 1900, p. 34, 91). Lazzari & Balduzzi (2013) suggests that the social and political aspiration for peace and social renewal through democratic transformation motivated Malaguzzi's determination to promote young children's right to education in the post war years. Malaguzzi explained that "it was a necessary change in a society that was renewing itself, changing deeply, and in which citizens and families were increasingly asking for social services and schools for their children" (Malaguzzi, 1998 cited in Merz & Glover, 2006, p. 31).

In this endeavor to replace fascist ideals with democratic ideals, Dewey's theory of the school as a laboratory of democracy with its focus on civic participation and activist pedagogy, was extremely influential (Burza, 2009). Malaguzzi also confirmed the debate about educational reform strategies that proliferated in the 1960's was enhanced by renewed access to Dewey's theories (Gandini, 2012). Following decades of repression and censorship educators were able to access Italian translations and information about alternate educational systems which supported their reform ideals.

Indeed, throughout Europe new ideas and experiments from Freinet, Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as from Dewey's translated works, attracted the attention of educators (Gandini, 2012). Explaining the information gathering process used to support the transformation of the education system, Malaguzzi stated:

Preparing ourselves was difficult. We looked for readings; we traveled to capture ideas and suggestions from the few but precious innovative experiences of other cities; we organized seminars with friends and the most vigorous and innovative figures on the national education scene. (Malaguzzi, , p. 58-59)

Malaguzzi and the educators in Reggio Emilia were actively seeking theories and ideas from both established and contemporary sources. The Italian translations of Dewey's writings, including the work and influence of Lamberto Borghi and Ernesto Codignola are important to support this argument.

Poetic translations

During the fascist era in Italy, American theories and experiences including Dewey's books and ideas had been banned (Gandini, 2012). Despite Dewey's work having been translated and debated in educational circles in Italy prior to the fascist era (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000; Boydston, 1969), it was only after the war that Dewey's newly translated works re-entered the Italian educational sphere for

democratic and progressive inspiration (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000; Burza, 2009). The prolific translation of Dewey's work in postwar Italy was influenced by the particular social, cultural and political context (Boydston, 1969; Burza, 2009). Absorbed by Italian educators and philosophers, Dewey's works and philosophy "left a decisive imprint on a culture which had to be modernized, redefined and rebuilt after the fall of Fascism" (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 53). Gandini confirms that following the liberation educators' goals to develop a new way of teaching that embraced democratic ideals and was more relevant for children "found inspiration and encouragement in the works of John Dewey" (cited in Hendrick, 1997, p. 4).

Drawing on Boydston's checklist of international translations of Dewey's books (1969), an examination of the timelines of Italian translations and reprints of Dewey's work between 1945 and 1970 parallels the significant formative years for the Reggio Emilia project and its foundational protagonists. The Italian appetite for Dewey's work at this time is evidenced by the publication and reprint schedule of Dewey's "The School and Society" originally published in 1900. This book was translated into Italian twice in 1915 and again in 1949, with further excerpts being included in the 1954 publication "*Il Mio credo Pedagogico*" (an anthology of Dewey's educational writings) (Boydston, 1969). It is important to note that these translated editions were reprinted almost thirty times between 1950 and 1970. Several of Dewey's other publications, including 'My Pedagogic Creed' (1897), 'The Child and the Curriculum' (1902), 'Democracy and Education' (1916), 'Art as Experience' (1934), and 'Education and Experience' (1938), underwent similar rates of translation with a demand for more than 45 reprints, during the same period (Boydston, 1969).

Significantly Italian educators, including Malaguzzi and his colleagues, accessed the translations and reprints of Dewey's work, also engaging with ideas and values shared by Italian scholars of Dewey's work. In translating Dewey's books Italian scholars grappled with the nuance and turn of phrase that would best resonate with Italian readers, seeking to faithfully align Dewey's pragmatic thought and democratic ideals within the Italian context. Through this process of interpretative transformation Dewey's texts have become one of the cultural models of reference determining the innovation of Italian pedagogy (Burza, 2009). Indeed, the educators in Reggio Emilia recognise that reading Dewey's ideas is an interpretative process and therefore refer to Dewey colloquially as "our Dewey" (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, Italian pedagogues were supported to interpret their approach to a new progressive pedagogy through a Deweyan lens.

Unlike the allied reformers who had neglected to access the knowledge of previously exiled scholars, the educators seeking progressive reform welcomed their leadership. Upon their return to Italy the exiled anti-fascist scholars, many of whom spent their exile in American universities, had a significant impact upon change in the Italian education system (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000). One such exiled scholar, Lamberto Borghi, was particularly influential in Italian progressive reforms and consequently on the evolution and development of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project.

Inspired translators and scholars

Lamberto Borghi (1907-2000) was an eminent Italian scholar, prolific author and translator of multiple books, magazines and editorials, which were inspired by and about John Dewey. He is regarded as the “most famous follower of John Dewey’s methodology” in the Italian context due to his focus on democratic pedagogy (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007, p. 85) Borghi’s post-war publications sought to address problems within the Italian education system, particularly focussing on issues of social equity for disadvantaged communities as well as education in the arts and sciences (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Like Dewey, Borghi positioned students as active and democratic participants in civic and cultural transformation (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000). Borghi’s focus in this regard illustrates his transatlantic dissemination of the ideas expressed by Dewey in ‘Democracy and Education’ published in 1916. His prolific writing, translations and teaching contributed to the reception and awareness of Dewey’s transformative pedagogical ideas in the Italian context. An examination of Borghi’s own professional journey strengthens the claim for Dewey’s influence on progressive Italian educators, including those located in Reggio Emilia.

A philosopher and historian, Borghi taught in high schools until 1938, when as a Jewish and anti-fascist academic, he was forced into exile (Schiavo, 1991; Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Continuing his studies in the USA, he met John Dewey whose work influenced him for the rest of his career (Martinuzzi, 2007; Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Like Dewey, Borghi shifted his academic focus from philosophy to educational science and pedagogy (Dykhuisen, 1973). This direct Deweyan influence on Borghi’s professional focus was facilitated by Dewey’s position as Professor Emeritus of Philosophy in Residence at Columbia University while Borghi was in exile (Dykhuisen, 1973). Additionally, during his decade in America, Borghi worked as a “researcher, lecturer and political writer” while co-authoring “important cultural ideas with other anti-Fascists from various

countries”(Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 60). It is noteworthy that at this time Borghi was invited by the Teacher’s College of Columbia University to develop the draft document strategy for the introduction of a reconstructed education system in Italy (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000).

Upon his return from America in 1948, Borghi continued to lecture in education and pedagogy at various universities before taking up the position of full Professor and Director of the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Florence from 1954-1982 (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Borghi’s Deweyan scholarship, translation skills and experience with the progressive education movement in America positioned him as a significant reference point for progressive pedagogy in post-war Italy. Illustrating his leadership in this regard Borghi filled the coveted positions of Vice President of the ‘Comparative Education Society in Europe’, and President of the Italian Federation of ‘Centers for Exercise Methods of Active Education’ (Schiavo, 1991). At a regional level, Borghi collaborated with Ernesto Codignola, his predecessor at the University of Florence, and fellow Deweyan scholar and translator, to establish an educational movement known as the Laicists. The Laicist movement sought to promote Dewey’s ideals of progressive secular education by applying “educational theory” in “experimental schools” (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 61). As scholars at the University of Florence, Borghi and Codignola supervised the training of new teachers. It is likely that they supported the experimental work undertaken in Bologna, which was led by their mentee and past student Bruno Ciari.

It is this writer’s belief that the activities of this established network of progressive educators, and the work of Bruno Ciari in particular, converged to predestine Loris Malaguzzi and therefore the Reggio Emilia project to embrace and apply Dewey’s philosophy.

Influential friends

While some western scholars singularly credit Malaguzzi for instigating post-war debate and collaborative reform of early childhood education in Italy it is necessary to recognise the particular influence of his friend and colleague Bruno Ciari. Malaguzzi credited Bruno Ciari, along with another Deweyan inspired friend and colleague Gianni Rodari as influential friends (Martinuzzi, 2007) and notes that they delivered conferences and wrote papers together (Cadwell, 2003; Edwards, et al., 2012). Members of the Reggio Emilia community likewise agreed that their work followed “in the footsteps of Bruno Ciari” (Ghirardi, 2002, p. 27). Both Ciari’s books and his work in Bologna influenced

Malaguzzi significantly, impacting on the development of the educational project in Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 2011).

Bruno Ciari (1923-1970) is recognised as an important Italian pedagogue (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013) and described as one of Italy's "best-known left-wing educationalists" (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). His books, which became classics in Italy, focused on teaching techniques and advocated for social equity through access to high quality early childhood services (Ciari, 1961, 1973). Ciari credited both Dewey and Freinet, known as the 'French Dewey' (Lee, 1984) as foundational influences upon his philosophical and pedagogical beliefs (Ciari, 1961, 1973). Ciari influenced the wider educational system in Italy through his work in Bologna "which advanced educational continuity by promoting experimentalism in the field of Early Childhood Education" (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 149). Like Malaguzzi, Ciari began his career as a primary school teacher before committing himself to early childhood education in the service of democracy and social equity (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). He became a leader in educational and social reform movements in the Bologna region, invited by the left-wing Bolognese administration to establish the preschool education system for the city and appointed as director of the Education Department in Bologna (Cadwell, 2003; Gandini, 2011; Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013).

Running parallel to educational reforms in Reggio Emilia, Ciari's educational movement located in Bologna contributed significantly to Malaguzzi's pedagogical philosophy (Edwards, et al., 2012; Leach & Moon, 2008). Identified as the "pacemakers in left-wing educational policy for the whole of Italy" Bolognese citizens and educators progressed educational reform in their community (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p.115). The Movement for Cooperative Education (MCE)/ '*Movimento di Cooperazione educative*' was established in 1951 under Ciari's leadership (Cadwell, 2003). This movement "attracted scholars and intellectuals who after having experienced the Resistance and the fall of the Fascist regime, wanted to participate actively in the building of a new society" (Salvadori & Mathys, 2002, p. 176). This was also the case for Ciari whose time as a partisan resistance fighter inspired his passion for educational reform (Lazzari, 2011). The MCE drew inspiration from the progressive ideals of John Dewey and is still active in Italy today (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Deweyan aspirations sought to reform society, beginning with young children and their families. Ciari stated:

The future of society will depend on the schools that we will be able to build, aiming at the promotion of human flourishing against the conditions that are currently threatening it. This is a high pedagogical ideal to stand for: to build a world which is more equal and fair. (cited by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 169-170)

An annual debate about educational issues called '*Febbraio Pedagogico Bolognese*' (Bolognese Education February) was established by the Bolognese reformers, inviting participation from "parents, teachers, students, politicians and unionists from the city and the rest of Italy, as well as from other countries" (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). They sought to share contemporary knowledge about education with a wider community, and focused on the theme of 'The Child, The Family and the School' (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Importantly, the events' title significantly reflects both the titles and contents of Dewey's publications 'The School and Society' (1900) and 'The Child and the Curriculum' (1902). Also noteworthy is that the inaugural 'educational Februaries' were held in 1963 and 1964, coinciding with the first two years of operation for the Reggio Emilia Municipal preschools.

The innovative educational reforms in the preschools of the Emilia Romagna region which prioritised community involvement and parental participation are credited to the "pedagogical work and political vision" within the social management proposal devised by Loris Malaguzzi and Bruno Ciari (Catarsi, 2011; Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). "Since the 1960's the pedagogic proposal of these two authoritative pedagogists" was grounded in "a deep social scheme and the will to contextualize and historicize the educational process, by involving both teachers and families, and the whole social community in management" (Catarsi, 2011, p. 17). Inspired by Dewey's ideas about "active pedagogy" these reforms developed new understanding about learning and were "understood as a process of active construction that necessarily takes place in social interaction, where new meanings can be created, shared, confronted, questioned and negotiated" (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 153).

Ciari's Deweyan Influence

Indeed, many of the pedagogical ideas developed and shared by Ciari align with proposals articulated by Dewey half a century earlier. Recalling the exposition of the relevance of Dewey's educational ideas to early education contexts earlier in this paper, one can see that Dewey's ideas consequently found expression in the key tenets of practice in Reggio Emilia. It is important to both recognise and

acknowledge that these key pedagogical values find their source in Malaguzzi's post-war partnership in a network of progressive educators, including Ciari, who were informed and inspired by Dewey's ideas.

Ciari's application of Dewey's ideas can be aligned within several values central to praxis in Reggio Emilia including: social and democratic reform; an image of children as competent co-constructors of knowledge; community partnerships and participation; the role of educators as researchers and co-learners; the importance of the educational environment and the holistic methodology centred around project work and the visual arts.

Social and democratic reform.

Ciari's educational vision aligned with Dewey's progressive rejection of traditional approaches to education that provided neither hope nor respect for children located in "largely peasant populations" or for "students living in a newly industrial age" (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Ciari held that early childhood education and care performs a political and democratic function when it "brings together children from social classes" promoting a "constant exchange of experiences and cultural contributions" (cited by Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). Ciari, like Malaguzzi, advocated for children's democratic rights as citizens (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013) and delivered secular services to all social classes while rejecting the discriminatory welfare model of church-run services (Jäggi, et al., 1977). He believed "as long as schools select and discriminate, there will be no democracy" and when opportunities "open only to a minority, there will be privilege, injustice and inequality" (Ciari, cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 133). Ciari advocated that municipal preschools could achieve social change and that a civic society becomes possible when its youngest citizens are valued (Lazzari, 2012).

An image of children as competent co-constructors of knowledge.

Ciari viewed children as "strong and rich personalities with a natural curiosity" and believed they construct learning through processes of discussion and interpretation (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, Malaguzzi eloquently decreed that "our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and, most of all, connected to adults and other children" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10). Ciari believed that the "fundamental political task" of the service is "to create a common cultural ground for all children, regardless of their social conditions...that ensures a real promotion of each

individual as a full person — active and creative — and as a critically thinking citizen” (cited by Lazzari, 2012, p. 558), mirroring Dewey’s position that the purpose of education is to support all students to participate fully in a democratic community life.

Community partnerships and participation.

Aligning with Dewey’s constructivist ideals, Ciari’s educational philosophy positioned the learning process as a social construction, where the relationship between the school and society was paramount (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). The services in Bologna were democratically operated and managed in collaboration with the local community (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Ciari positioned the school as a centre for meetings, debates and “collective creative work” (Ciari, cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). Indeed, Ciari’s democratic ideals resonate with the community-engagement focus for which the Reggio Emilia project is famous (Moss, 2014). Likewise, Dewey’s values were reflected in Malaguzzi’s view that the process of education, undertaken through community cooperation, must overcome “the rigidity of roles, the separation of institutions and the classification of individual destinies that has caused so much damage to school and education” (cited and translated by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 156).

The role of educators as researchers and co-learners.

Significantly reflective of Dewey’s earlier work, Ciari’s discussions about the role of the teacher align directly with initiatives adopted in Reggio Emilia. Dewey’s laboratory school experimented with ideas about team-teaching and collaboration with ancillary staff (Tanner, 1991). Similarly, Ciari introduced the idea of teachers working collaboratively in pairs in his experimental schools, (cited by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 154) outlining the concept of collaboration within pedagogic teams under the leadership of a pedagista (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Ciari positioned the research and observation undertaken by teachers as the key to pedagogical success (Leach & Moon, 2008) again aligning with the current values of Reggio Emilia.

Scholars currently acknowledge Reggio Emilia for its value for cooks and cleaners as members of the educational team (Moss, 2007). However in Ciari’s schools, ancillary employees such as cleaners were concurrently positioned as equal and valued resources for children’s education and received training in teaching techniques (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Reflecting Dewey’s value for the contribution of non-trained staff (Tanner, 1991) Ciari stated:

The work in the group of adults should be based upon parity of roles, respect, reciprocal support and collegial decision-making; the same values that children should interiorize. We also think that these values should characterise the professional development of teachers all along. (cited by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 154)

The importance of the educational environment.

In the post-war years the Bolognese early childhood services rejected the “social disadvantage” amplified by “badly equipped and short staffed” church-run nursery schools, to ensure they provided rich learning environments for all social classes (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 117). The physical environment was afforded pedagogical significance, with well-equipped environments “rich in stimuli and possibilities” and attracting children from all social classes (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 117). The services in Bologna, seeking to facilitate communication and cooperation throughout the educational service reflected Dewey’s (1900) ideas about age grouping to provide three classrooms for three, four and five year olds, clustered around a freely accessible common room (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Notably, this aesthetic focus and the floor plan design adopted by Ciari is identical to that found in the arrangement of classrooms and central piazza within many of Reggio Emilia’s preschools. Vecchi (2010) explains the approach in Reggio Emilia, highlighting their choice to provide environments that are “lovely” and “cared for” as an expression of the perception that all children have a right to be provided with conditions that support well being (p. 82).

A holistic methodology centred on project work and visual arts.

Reflecting Deweyan ideas, Ciari promoted holistic development across all learning domains (Cadwell, 2003). Like Dewey before him and perhaps inspiring his colleagues in Reggio Emilia, Ciari stated that learning must be based on investigations that “proceed from a problem, from a state of doubt, or from an unfulfilled need” (1973, cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 122). Running parallel to Malaguzzi’s radical decision making in Reggio Emilia to centralise artistic methods, Ciari valued creative and artistic activities equally with other subject areas and positioned art as a language for making and expressing meaning, stating, “Just as one speaks everyday...the child must express itself daily through colours, lines and plastic forms” (Ciari, 1973, cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 122).

Propelled to leadership.

The collaborative partnership enjoyed by Ciari and Malaguzzi, which clearly influenced the evolution of ideas within the Reggio Emilia project, was cut short by Ciari's death in 1970 projecting Loris Malaguzzi into a leadership role within the Italian progressive educational movement (Gandini, 2011). This result elevated the regional educational project in Reggio Emilia to prominence. Alignment of Ciari's Deweyan inspired pedagogical philosophy with the values and praxis of the Reggio Emilia educational project demonstrates his significant influence on Malaguzzi, the Reggio Emilia project and the renewal of Italian education in post-war Italy.

Conclusion

This paper has positioned the Reggio Emilia educational project as a mirror, reflecting and illuminating Dewey's constructivist ideas. The historical and socio-political reception of John Dewey's philosophies of aesthetics, education, and democracy in post war Italy was a prelude to the formation of key values and principles within the Reggio Emilia approach to early education. Indeed, the pedagogical depth, influence and endurance of the Reggio Emilia project, can be located in the Deweyan philosophy that inspired their approach to education. Acknowledging that neither the Reggio Emilia project nor Dewey's philosophy claim to be theories by which practice can be examined, the illumination of their shared ideas reflects a constructivist theoretical approach to guide both examination of research data and pedagogy. Accepting that theory development requires ideas be examined and tested in practice, one may consider that Dewey's philosophy was tested and rendered theoretical within his laboratory school, while in Reggio Emilia these pedagogical ideas have been refined and tested during more than fifty years of action research.

Dewey's progressive democratic ideals located within the reflective interpretation of his work by Italian reformers Borghi, Codignola, Ciari, Malaguzzi, and educators in the Reggio Emilia educational project, offers inspiration to contemporary educators in early childhood contexts. Like their historic counterparts, modern children still have the right to access quality early childhood education and care where progressive activism is fostered. The identification of Dewey's ongoing legacy in a current exemplar of high quality educational practice challenges educators to consider their own pedagogical ideas and values while providing a focus for reflection about their current and future pedagogy.

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