

# Report on the Reggio Emilia Summit

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Venue : Rato Bangala School, Kathmandu  
Participants : 142  
Date : July 20/21, 2019

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## Introduction

The Reggio Emilia approach developed after World War II focuses on educational philosophy described as student-centered and constructivist that uses self directed learning. The program is based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery through a self-guided curriculum. At the core of the pedagogy is the assumption that children form their own personality during early years of development through which they can express their ideas. It was developed by Loris Malaguzzi and parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia, Italy, and derives its name from the city.

The Reggio Emilia approach puts the natural development of the children and the relationship they share with nature at the center of its philosophy. There is also a belief that children express themselves in a 100 different languages and that children have rights and should be able to express themselves to their best potential. They are encouraged to share their ideas and knowledge with their peer and with their classmates rather than being a bearer of instructions. Children are also viewed as social beings and a focus is made on the child in relation to other children, the family, the teachers, and the community rather than on each child in isolation. They are also taught to respect the environment and those around them.



Much of the instruction at Reggio Emilia schools takes place in the form of projects where they have opportunities to explore, observe, hypothesize, question, and discuss to clarify their understanding.

### **The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following sets of Principles:**

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning;
- Children must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing;
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that they must be allowed to explore;
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.

Three members of the Rato Bangala faculty had already visited Italy in 2017, before the start of the Rato Bangala preschool to observe and learn from the Reggio Emilia inspired schools. They were very impressed by what they saw in Italy and decided to invite the experts to Nepal, to share about the Reggio Emilia Approach to participants here in Nepal. The two day summit was organized as a prelude to the Second International Conference on



Quality Education, ICQE 2019. The primary intent was also to widen participant knowledge on ways to creatively teach and enable children to learn and enjoy learning in a safe environment. The main intent was to not copy the approach but take useful aspects of Reggio Emilia and apply it to the teachers own classroom.

### **The Two Day Reggio Emilia Course Outline (July 20/21)**

The two day workshop model consisted of two Italian facilitators sitting on stage presented slides and videos to participants seated in the RBS auditorium. Their presentations and sessions covered the below mentioned components as part of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Education.

### **Community support and parental involvement**

The Approach focuses on the infant enrolled at the school and the program which is also a vital part of the community. The Reggio community also exerts considerable influence on the local Government for financing and other matters.

Parents are equally important to the program and are viewed as partners, collaborators, and advocates for their children. Teachers respect parents as the child's first teacher and involve parents in every aspect of the school. It is common to see parents volunteering in classrooms throughout the school. Parental participation does not end when the child leaves the classroom. Some parents who choose to send their children to a Reggio Emilia program incorporate many of the philosophies in their home life. The parents' role goes hand in hand with that of the community's, at both the school and the classroom level. Parents are expected to take part in discussions about school policies, their child's development along with curriculum planning and evaluation.

### **The role of the teacher**

The teacher is considered a co-learner and collaborator with the child and not just an instructor. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate the child's learning by planning activities and lessons based on the child's interests, asking questions to further understanding, and actively engaging in the activities alongside the child, instead of passively dictating and observing the child learning.

Teachers' long-term commitment to enhancing their understanding of children is at the crux of the Reggio Emilia approach. The role and importance of the teacher is evident in the absence of teacher manuals, curriculum guides, or achievement tests. The teachers eventually become skilled observers of children in order to inform their curriculum planning and implementation.

While working with the child, the teacher can also expand the child's learning by collecting data that can be reviewed and shared with others at a later time. The teacher needs to maintain an active, mutual participation in the activity to help ensure that the child clearly understands what is being "taught". Teachers partner with colleagues, students, and parents in the learning process. They discuss their observations with them, as part of an ongoing dialogue and continuing evolution of their ideas and practices. This allows them to be flexible in their plans, preparations, and teaching approaches.

Often, teachers listen to and observe children in the classroom and record their observations to help plan the curriculum and prepare the environment and teaching tools to support the student's interests.

### **Documentation**

Using a variety of tools and resources, often the media, teachers pay careful attention to the child and document a child's behavior. An example of documentation might be a book or panel with the student's words, drawings, and photographs. By making learning visible, the student's thinking and feeling can be studied while the documentation serves

to help with evaluation of the educators' work. It provides parent's information regarding their child's growth and development and creates an archive for the class and the school.

### **The role of the environment**

The environment is believed to be the third teacher and an integral part of the integrating classroom space with the environment. As was evident from the videos shown during the two day Summit, the importance of the environment lies in the belief that children can best create meaning and make sense of their world through environments which support "complex, varied, sustained, and changing relationships between people, the world of experience, ideas and the many ways of expressing ideas."

The presentations depicted pre schools built in such a way they incorporated natural light and indoor plants. Classrooms open to a center piazza, kitchens are placed in open areas, and access to the outside and surrounding community is provided through courtyards, large windows, and exterior doors in each classroom.



Entries capture the attention of both children and adults through the use of mirrors (on the walls, floors, and ceilings), photographs, and children's work accompanied by transcriptions of their discussions. These same features characterize classroom interiors, where displays of project work adorn the walls. In each case, the environment informs and engages the viewer.

Other supportive elements of the environment include ample space for supplies, In each classroom there are studio spaces in the form of a large, centrally located atelier and a smaller mini-atelier, and clearly designated spaces for large- and small-group activities. Throughout the school, there is an effort to create opportunities for children to interact. The single dress-up area is in the center piazza; classrooms are connected with telephones, passageways or windows; and lunchrooms and bathrooms are big and those that can be easily accessed.

Cohorts or groups of students stay with one teacher for a three-year period, creating consistency in environment and relationships. This helps to solidify the relationship between the teacher and the student where the student completely trusts the teacher and the teacher knows each and every student well.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is characterized and supported by contemporary research on young children, including real-life problem-solving among peers, creative thinking and exploration. Teachers often work on projects with small groups of children, while the rest of the class engages in a wide variety of self-selected activities typical of preschool classrooms.

The projects that teachers and children engage could consist of investigation derived directly from teacher observations of children's spontaneous play and exploration. Project topics are also selected on the basis of an academic curiosity or social concern on the part of teachers or parents, or other topics that may hold that the student and teachers attention.

Reggio teachers place a high value on their ability to improvise and respond to children's predisposition to enjoy the unexpected. Regardless of their origins, successful projects are those that generate a sufficient amount of interest and uncertainty to provoke children's creative thinking and problem-solving and are open to different avenues of exploration. Because curriculum decisions are based on developmental and socio cultural concerns, small groups of children of varying abilities and interests, including those with special needs, work together on projects.

Projects begin with teachers observing and questioning children about the topic of interest. Based on children's responses, teachers introduce materials, questions, and opportunities that provoke children to further explore the topic. While some of these teacher provocations are anticipated, projects often move in unanticipated directions as a result of problems children identify. Thus, curriculum planning and implementation revolve around open-ended and often long-term projects that are based on the reciprocal nature of teacher-directed and child-initiated activity. All of the topics of interest are given by the children. Within the project approach, children are given opportunities to make connections between prior and new knowledge while engaging in authentic tasks.

## **The hundred languages of children**

The term "hundred languages of children" refers to the many ways that children have of expressing themselves. Reggio teachers provide children different avenues for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing and symbolically expressing their thoughts and feelings. The goal is for adults and children to better understand and interact with each other.

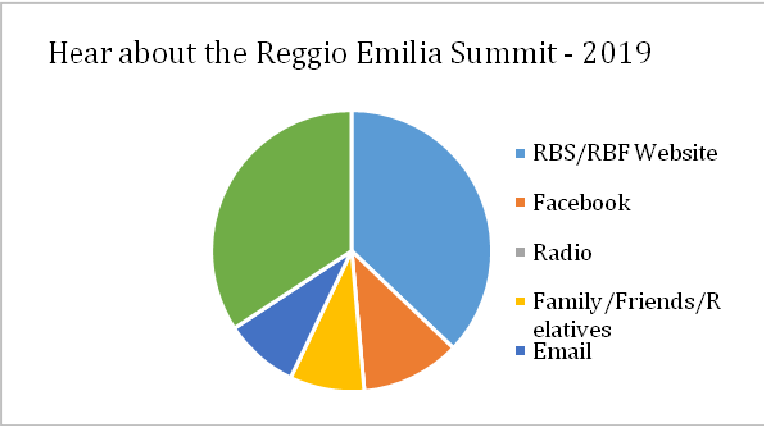
As children proceed with their daily work, they are encouraged to jot down their understanding through drawings, sculpture, dramatic play, and writing. Revision of drawings (and ideas) is encouraged, and teachers allow children to repeat activities and

modify each other's work in the with the collective aim of better understanding the topic. Teachers repeatedly encourage children to get involved in their class work and do it as they deem fit. There is no criticism whatsoever and children are free to explore their potential to the maximum.

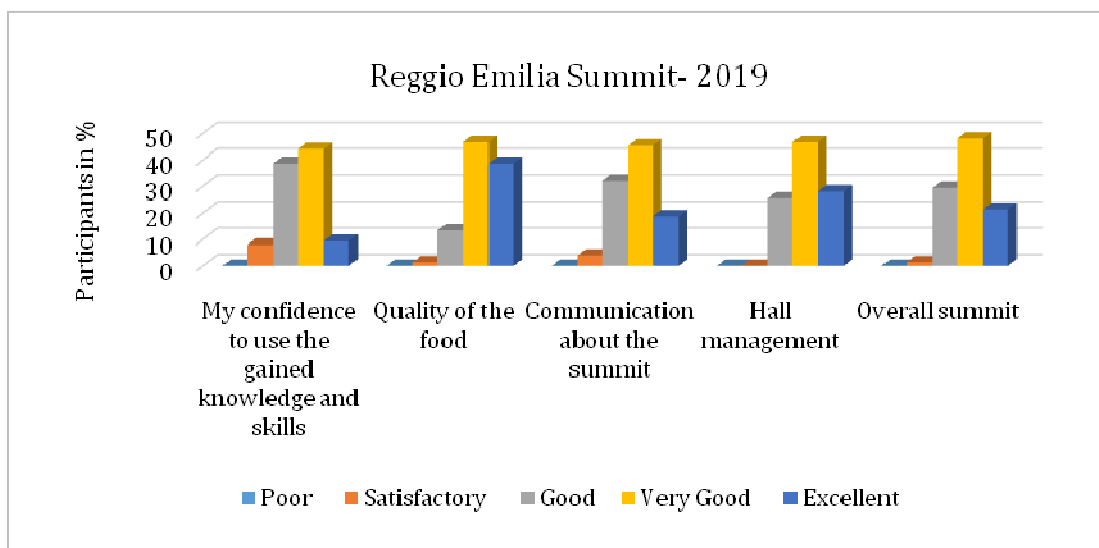
**Feedback from participants**

After every session, participants were given time to ask questions and clarify their doubts.

Overall, the participants had a very enriching experience at the Reggio Emilia Summit and took away many key ideas for their classrooms. For many, it was their first time learning of this child-centered philosophy, and many appreciated the emphasis on the capability of young children to learn. There was frequent mention among participants of focusing not just on what children learn, but how they learn. However, while the summit sparked many ideas in participants, many attendees were concerned about the ability to apply this model to the Nepali education system. One participant suggested a Nepal-centered conference that focused on how this model can be specifically applied in Nepal, given the country's focus on a teacher-centered educational approach. Ultimately, the conference was well received and offered important information to those in attendance. Many enjoyed Day 2 more than Day 1.



The meaningful idea that most participants will take back to their classroom is the idea of the environment as an educator. Additionally, the Atelier and, to a lesser extent, the Piazza method are components that participants hope to use. Promoting child independence, developing social skills, and upholding the importance of learning to learn were also common themes among participants. There was also frequent mention of incorporating open-ended materials into instruction, using documentation to record learning processes, and remembering that children learn in 100 different languages. Finally, participants felt that the use of rope, the game of Ringa-Ringa Roses, and bicycling were easy components to incorporate into their classrooms, even with the traditional system of teaching in Nepal.



The suggestions granted by participants can be broken down into three categories: structure, content, and logistics. In terms of conference structure, many participants suggested that the conference be more interactive and allow for more activities, discussion, and hands-on learning, such as in a workshop format. In terms of content, participants suggested that more specific examples of the Reggio Emilia method be given in the context of Nepal. Furthermore, requests for government training or discussion with policymakers on how to bring these methods into the national curriculum were given. Additionally, there have been suggestions to provide videos on how teachers instruct these methods. Finally, logistical suggestions included communicating via email instead of only face book, offering translation devices, management of Q&A (question and answer) periods, and providing more than one minute during questions. Many participants asked for another conference or more opportunities to learn about these methods and would like to engage in meaningful discussions with fellow participants.



**Reggio Emilia Summit**  
**20-21 July, 2019**  
**(Part I of: 2nd International Conference on Quality Education)**

	<b>20 July</b>	<b>21 July</b>
8:00 – 9:00 am	Arrival and Registration	Arrival and Registration
9:00 – 9:30 am	Welcoming remarks <b>Rato Bangala School</b> <b>DG CEHRD Mr. Baburam Poudel</b> <b>Mayor Mr. Chiribabu Maharjan</b>	The curriculum: a dialogue between the adults' predictions and the children's investigations <b>Paola Cagliari</b>
9:30 – 10:30 am	The rights of children. Reggio Emilia: a town and its educational services <b>Alessia Forghieri, Paola Cagliari</b>	
10:30 – 11:00 am	Tea break	Tea break
11:00 am – 13:00 pm	The daily life in preschool as a texture and deep structure of the educational project <b>Paola Cagliari</b>	In-depth session on the role of progettazione in the learning processes of children through the presentation of a project: The yellow daisies <b>Alessia Forghieri, Paola Cagliari</b>
13:00 – 14:00 pm	Lunch	Lunch
14:00 – 15:45 pm	Children, spaces, relations. The environment as the "third" educator <b>Alessia Forghieri</b>	In-depth session on the role of documentation in the learning processes of children through the presentation of a project: Aeroplastics: building unstable constructions. <b>Alessia Forghieri</b>
15:45 – 16:00 pm	Tea break <b>(tea- samosa)</b>	Tea break <b>(tea- samosa)</b>
16:00 – 17:00 p.m.	Discussion and sharing	Discussion and Sharing Closing Ceremony