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**How the Reggio Emilia Approach is inclusive of the Super-Diverse Child.**

Ethnographic Research Investigating how REA Principles and Values are Embodied by Reggio Inspired Teachers in Culturally Responsive, Democratic Early Childhood Education Pedagogies in Aotearoa New Zealand as They Face the Challenges and Opportunities of Super- Diversity

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### Abstract

Due to global transmigration, pandemics, wars, poverty and climate change, new social environments and complex identities have arisen (Vertovec, 2007; Rigney, personal communication, 2022). Super-diversity, or the diversification of diversity, is the summary term to describe this phenomenon (Vertovec, 2005; Vertovec, 2007). It describes individuals and groups who are diverse across a wide range of variables and thus have multiple, fluid, intersectional identifications. Meissner and Vertovec (2015) say that these changes run so deep in our society that this also applies to internal migrants and those individuals who do not move at all.

Super-diversity seeks to understand the complexity of new social formations and the public perceptions that accompany them (Li, et al. 2021).

The classroom is a hub for super-diverse children, all of whom have the right to a quality education. Teachers are challenged by this rapid diversification in society. Despite international evidence on the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP), (Morrison et al., 2019) being proven to create inclusive learning environments, little research exists in New Zealand, Australia and across the Pacific (Rigney, personal communication, 2022). This research, an ethnography, addresses this gap in the literature. It explores how Reggio Inspired teachers in New Zealand can shape learning relationships in an inclusive, democratic and child centred way. This educational environment supports the 'rights of the child' to their own identity and life world, particularly those who may be marginalised due to super-diversity.

The REA inspires a global network of teachers who embody its principles and values to give them concrete experiential form (Indications, 2010). In the REA the image of the child determines the potential of children's relationships, learning and identity (Rinaldi, 2021). Through the 'pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi, 2021) the child is nurtured by the collaborative, reflective professional dialogue, and CRPs of REI teachers who are listeners, ethnographers, cultural learners and guides of children (Durden, 2014).

Phase one of this ethnography involved interviewing and observing 17 Reggio Emilia Inspired (REI) teachers regarding super-diversity, during 2021 and 2022. The analysis applied inductive and deductive logic using REA theory and a super-diverse lens. It included CRP and democratic characteristics. It was through an ethnographic methodology (Geertz, 1973). Findings revealed that the complex concept of super-diversity is one that teachers have experience with. They identified super-diverse learners in their classrooms;

some were using REI principles to support super-diverse learners.

In phase two, teachers, equipped with their new super-diverse lens, explored REI pedagogies to support the super-diverse child through the principles and values of CRPs (Morrison et al., 2019), the REA (Rinaldi, 2006) and democracy in the classroom (Gothson, 2016). Ethnographic analysis provided insight into the qualitative empirical data collected. It revealed many examples of REI practices, based on the principles of ‘the hundred languages of children’, the ‘environment as the third teacher’ and the ‘pedagogy of listening.’

The schools’ understanding of super-diversity has major implications for the shaping of each child's life trajectory. This thesis offers REI insights which could be used by schools to reflect on the challenges as they find their own ways to construct teaching approaches which take super-diversity into account.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Statement of the Problem and Justification

“I am who I am because of you” (Harold Gothson)

I have been a primary school teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand (A/NZ) for twenty two years. In recent years, my own personal reflections as an A/NZ teacher have prompted me to question the ways in which my pedagogical design aligns with democratic rights for all children, and what’s more I have a desire to understand the intricacies of whether they are equitable and socially just or not.

My decision to resign from my job, leave my home, my family and move to Reggio Emilia for three years to take up this PhD is political. I consider myself a promoter of the democratic rights of the child through humanising pedagogies such as Reggio Emilia Inspired Approach (Cagliari, 2016; Rinaldi, 2006).

“Each child is the subject of rights, first and foremost possessing the right to be valued in his or her own rhythms of growth and development” (Indications, Preschools and Infant- Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, p.10).

Throughout my twenty two years of teaching, I have experienced pockets of super-diversity. Most notably, my primary school class in 2019 manifested into a beautiful kaleidoscope of children who encompassed the variables of super-diversity including; autism, dyslexia, different ethnicities, special talents, mental health complexities, varying degrees of social structures, and financial status. Being passionate about the child’s right to be valued in their own rhythms of growth and development is imperative when it comes to teaching a super-diverse population. The challenge as a teacher is how to meet such responsibilities with relevant, engaging and regenerative pedagogies in order to create an inclusive classroom.

For me, a strong source of hope and inspiration lies within the pedagogies of the Reggio Emilia Inspired Approach (REA) which supports democracy in education for children around the globe. It is transposed into countries outside of Reggio Emilia (RE) by teachers who want to uphold the rights of children to a child-centred education through the use of humanistic, emancipatory, listening and relationship based pedagogies (Dewey, as cited in Simpson, 2017).

The Reggio Emilia (RE) philosophy clearly states its position on democracy in early childhood education: the child is continually evolving as a unique human being who is never to be repeated. This is a precious freedom to be celebrated and supported (Cagliari, et al.,

2016, p. 259/ 347; Rinaldi, 2001, p. 39-42; Indications, p.10). The REA teacher respects that each child is a unique, diverse or different human being, who is composed of their own set of variables and rhythms of growth (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 50/173; Rinaldi, 2001, p.39; Vertovec, 2016, online; Indications, p.10). Their individuality is shaped and finds meaning through relationships with others and the environment. Reggio Emilia Inspired (REI) teachers are critically mindful that the way they choose to educate is a huge determinant in the trajectory of children's lives (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p.12 / 347; Dahlberg et al., 2013, p.47; Lipina, lecture to PhD students, February, 2021).

Through this research I have had the amazing opportunity to understand more about how democracy can be achieved through humanising pedagogy, in the contemporary Reggio Emilia Inspired preschool classroom, group and relationship (Freire, 1970, p.5, as cited in Salazar, 2013; Rinaldi, 2006).

The aim of this research is to understand and explore how these pedagogies are embedded successfully, both globally and within the A/NZ Early Childhood context, in order to uphold the rights of all children. I wish to explore whether REI teachers may have cause, in terms of their contextual and values based curriculum, to make pedagogical nuances in line with the ontologies and epistemologies and multiple worldviews of super-diverse children in their classrooms.

**My thoughts are instigated by three issues:**

1. The fact that there remain cohorts of children in New Zealand who have been let down by the education system due to a lack of nuanced pedagogical capacity, which would support all children to thrive, which is a trend in other parts of the world as well (Li, 2021, p. 3). A well-documented example of this in A/NZ is that our Indigenous Māori children who, despite long-term goal setting and monitoring by the Ministry of Education, are yet to experience any transformative and sustainable change in educational success. This is due in part to schools trying to solve the problem via a heavier focus on achievement statistics, than on, “the impact of historical, economical, socio-political and moral decisions and policies that have created accumulated educational debt over several generations” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p.5; as cited in Berryman & Eley, 2017, p. 97).
2. Underlying and adding complexity to the previous issue, is the ever present tension which A/NZ teachers face upholding the democratic rights of children to be respected as individuals, and therefore providing equitable educational pedagogy (Alton-Le, 2003; Biddulph et al., 2003; Mitchell and Cubey, 2003; Timperley et al., 2006, as cited in Berryman & Eley, 2017). Instead the tension enables the dominant, mono focused, neo liberal

educational culture, where measurement and economics remain top priority (Bishop and Berryman; 2006; Hattie, 2003, as cited in Berryman & Eley, 2017; Rigney, personal communication, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023; Creese & Blackledge, 2018, p. xxiii).

The combination of these two issues alone has had the impact of muting a plurality of voices, isolating children and marginalising democratic rights. These lenses including biases-unconscious or not have caused us to walk a fragile path of politics in education, amassing inequity (Rigney, personal communication, 2023; Berryman et al, 2018; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2009). Stephen Ball (2016) sums it up well, “Subjectivity has become a key site of political struggle” (as cited in Moss & Roberts-Holmes, 2022).

3. Compounding the situation is the focus of this thesis: global diversity has sped up and become far more complex, typified by the multiplication of diverse variables, and their dynamic intersections (Vertovec, 2021, p 546; Rigney, lecture to Reggio PhD students, 28.6.2022; Li, 2021, p. 2; Creese & Blackledge, 2018, p.xxiii). This is affecting the evolution of identity and new super-diverse identities and cultures, expressed in a multitude of ways of being, as the norm (Vertovec, 2019, online lecture; Li, 2021, p. 2). “The child may fill multiple categories of diversity at once” (Rigney, lecture to Reggio PhD students, 28.6.2022). Classrooms are now considered super-diverse (Morrison et al., 2019), and the super-diverse child is the new normal in the Aotearoa New Zealand classroom (Li, 2021; Rigney, personal communication, 2020).

My research pathway led me from Reggio Emilia, Italy, back to the Reggio Inspired Early Childhood networks Reggio Emilia Aotearoa New Zealand (REANZ) and Reggio Emilia Provocations (REP) in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki (TW) states that all cultures and identities will be provided for (Reedy & Reedy, 2013, as cited in Te Whāriki, p. 11). I selected three Reggio Inspired Early Childhood Education Centres, which were diverse in nature from each other: Arrowtown Preschool in Central Otago, and two Auckland ECEs: Bear Park, Remuera, and Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten. They became the settings for this ethnography, and the sites of my search for an understanding about how the pedagogical approaches of Reggio Emilia teachers can support all children.

Ethnographic methodology aligns philosophically with approaches and educators whose practice is founded on a deep respect for children and their families, their cultural values and their aspirations. This research is ethnographic, a textual undertaking of thick descriptions which searches out webs of significance (Geertz, 1973, p.5/6). It has allowed me

to develop a rich account of the microcosms of interrelationships and cultures which the Reggio Emilia Inspired Early Childhood Education centres in this study have spun (Ritchie, 2019).

The research is set on the global stage, with the inaugural Reggio Childhood Studies PhD course beginning in Reggio Emilia in November 2019, four months before the first outbreak of the Covid19 Pandemic. Professors Carlina Rinaldi and Alberto Melloni, the architects of the new Reggio Childhood Foundation's PhD project are on the interview panel. Ten PhD students, my colleagues and I, are selected to take up the study. I am the only student from the Southern Hemisphere in the first XXXV Cycle. Although the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and the Reggio Childhood Foundation are the central educational institutions in the PhD programme, each student has professors or supervisors from international universities who are experts in their field(s). My research pathway has been supported by three supervisors:

- Professor Carla Rinaldi, President of Fondazione Reggio Children- Centro Loris Malaguzzi.
- Harold Gothson who was one of a group of colleagues who founded the Reggio Emilia Institutet in Stockholm, in 1992, and who has also been a member of the Board of Directors of the Reggio Childhood Foundation since its inception.
- For a significant part of the journey I was also supervised by one of Australia's most respected Aboriginal educationalists, Professor Lester Irabinna-Rigney, from the University of South Australia. Professor Rigney is also a member of the Scientific Committee of Fondazione Reggio Children.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The aims of this research are as follows:

- To explore and gain further insight into the concept of super diversity, and then to use this to give insight into the super-diverse child in our care.
- To understand how the Reggio Emilia Approach can be transposed from the Italian to the A/ NZ context and complement our A/NZ national early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki, in order to support teachers professional growth in becoming Reggio Emilia Inspired educators, through the principles and values of the REA.
- To understand how NZ REI teachers' work collaboratively to advance democratic pedagogies in order to enable equitable access to CRPs for all super-diverse children through REA's open Progettazione approach, including the reflective teacher lens.

- To gain insight into the use of democratic and culturally responsive REI pedagogies in the super-diverse classroom through a macro analysis.
- By taking the analysis to a deeper, micro level, I will investigate what is going on inside the teaching/ learning relationships of these pedagogies using Vertovec's model, 'the social organisation of difference' (Vertovec, 2021, p.12). This micro analysis will look into how facing differences as an asset affects learning relationships in a positive way.

**The questions guiding the research are as follows**

1. What is super diversity?
2. Who is the super-diverse child?
3. How do teachers embed Reggio Emilia inspired approaches in NZ super-diverse preschools?

**1.3 Overview of the Study**

The constructivist paradigm of this research supported a collaborative knowledge building process between the teachers and researcher during the data gathering stages. This enabled us to build a continually evolving and deepening understanding of the complexities involved in super diversity through our dialogue.

The qualitative research is ethnographic, "a textual undertaking of thick descriptions which search for webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973, 1977, p. 6). Ethnography enabled me to develop a rich account of the microcosms of interrelationships and culture which the REI ECE centres in this study have spun (Ritchie, 2019, p.1).

The research was carried out over a two year period, from December, 2020 until February, 2022. I carried out two periods of onsite data gathering with each ECE, one at the beginning and the other towards the end of the empirical research process. Due to Covid19 in 2019 and 2020, initial empirical research, in the form of semi- structured interviews, were carried out online via Zoom. The ubiquity of the possibilities that online connection provides also enabled connection between the researcher and head teachers outside of the data gathering periods, when required.

There were seventeen research participants in the research. This included fourteen teachers and their three head teachers. They were from three REI ECE centres geographically spread across A/NZ. Each was diverse from the other. Each faced the challenge of the super-diverse phenomenon in their classrooms. They were all open to exploring the pedagogical implications of super-diversity. All of the research participants, teachers and children, have pseudonym names.

The ethnographic methods used to collect the data were semi- structured interviews, observations and the collection of documentation. I used video capacity on an iPhone XS Max and recorded Zoom conversations to capture the data, with handwritten field notes used for preparation and reflection.

Being an ethnography, the key method of analysis was ‘thick description’ (‘Women on the Line’, Glucksmann, 1982; [Geertz, [1973] 2000, as cited in O’Leary, 2021, p.154; Lubeck, 1985). I had limited ability to triangulate data with colleagues. However, I was able to enhance the qualitative methodological rigour and credibility through cross-checking some of the data with the teachers. Also, at staff meetings we had the chance to compare and share understandings. During the writing of the final draft some teachers took up the opportunity to meet again to ensure that we were all comfortable with the shared understandings that I had gleaned from them. I was also able to double check any of my Reggio Emilia conceptual challenges with Harold Gothson, with whom I met on an approximately six weekly basis, throughout the entire research process.

I complemented the ethnographic elements with other qualitative analysis tools from similar epistemological perspectives in order to support the ethnographic description (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, as cited in p.162 Punch & Oancea; Silverman, p. 375/ 379; Madden, 2010). These were deductive analysis, inductive analysis and thematic analysis.

### **Key understandings behind the empirical data**

1. Learning relationships in the Reggio Emilia Approach are based on trust.
2. Individual and group construction is subjective and ever evolving.
3. All children are super diverse, and they each have a right to access to equitable pedagogies.
4. The pedagogy of listening provides the capacity for teachers to listen to the child from the metaphorical position ‘the map is not the territory’ (Celada & Hobba, REANZ workshop, Melbourne, October, 2022).
5. The teachers position of ‘being prepared to be unprepared’ is a descriptor for the responsibility that teachers have in the REA planning process *Progettazione*, to maintain an open researching attitude when approaching the child and their learning needs.
6. Reflexivity and collaboration are crucial and integral components of Reggio Emilia teachers’ professional practice. They enable personal and team growth.

### **I approached my empirical data through the following big picture angles**

1. Access to freedom and democracy is enabled by teachers. Teachers are gatekeepers providing access to learning relationships based on democracy and freedom.

2. Reggio Emilia pedagogy is a bridge. It must be specifically contextualised and adapted in order to be open to support the super diverse child.
3. The image of the child is a political choice enabling rights to equity and democracy in the classroom.

#### **1.4 Limitations and Assumptions**

In terms of the ethnographic design the challenge was the unfolding nature of an ethnographic research process. This is written about, but it is hard to fully understand until one has lived the process. So although the researchers' relationships with the centre leaders and teachers sustained some kind of equilibrium, navigating and balancing the research questions in relation to the context was always in motion, often with a question in mind, *how is this going for everyone?*

How much empirical evidence to share was an issue for me. When I looked at trying to keep the amount of direct conversation succinct and was looking to reduce dialogue I also felt that the context might be lost.

Because this is an ethnography where the researcher has close relationships with the participants, there was a strong sense of trust required. It was fortunate that the teachers had insightful stories to share, but I was aware of the sensitivity they might feel about them being part of my thesis. For this reason I gave those who wished permission to read and to give feedback to me about what they were comfortable with sharing in the thesis document.

A very important assumption was that the REI approach cannot be replicated, i.e. it must be contextualised. So, although the research was searching for 'pedagogies for the super-diverse child' I also had a strong awareness of how important it was that what is shared is not a template for replicating but an inspiration for contextualising.

#### **1.5 Definition of Terms**

##### **The Reggio Emilia Approach**

“That is Reggio Emilia: a kaleidoscope which mirrors and which we can be mirrored (Batesonian self-reflection)” (Rinaldi, 2021, p 133).

The Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) is an early childhood (0-6 years) educational culture centred on democratic principles and values. It has a deep-rooted commitment to the rights of the child to identity, participation, citizenship freedom and democracy through experiential learning, which progresses by way of collaboration (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 192).

##### ***Reggio Inspired Schools***

The REA culture is also a reference point (Reggio Children website) where many teachers outside of Reggio Emilia Municipality, and Italy find meaning and inspiration.

Teachers are able to bridge the REA culture to their own context through a process of contextualisation, transposition and becoming, based on their personal inspiration and interpretation (Rinaldi, personal communication, 2020; Gothson, personal communication, 2020; Landi & Pintus, 2022). This is known as the Reggio Inspired Approach (REI).

Therefore, when one asks the question, ‘What is the Reggio Emilia Approach?’ The answer will be a description of the person's interpretation based on their own context (Gothson, personal communication, 2021, 2022, 2023). Schools are inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach need to be able to express how they developed, and make visible at least four or five REA principles and values that inspire them. The image of the child is key (Rinaldi, personal communication, 2020).

### ***Reggio Children***

Reggio Children s.r.l. Was founded in 1994 to promote and defend children’s rights and to organise the pedagogical and cultural exchanges already taking place between Reggio Emilia’s municipal early childhood centres and teachers, academics and researchers from around the world.

On local, national and international levels, Reggio Children:

- Organise professional development initiatives.
- Promotes research projects
- Realises consulting work in the educational field
- Participates in cooperation initiatives with childhood institutions in several countries
- Produces publications, which have been translated into 24 languages
- Manages several travelling exhibitions
- Manages and coordinates activities and projects at the Loris Malaguzzi international centre in collaboration with other promoting agencies including the City Atelier spaces for exploring and learning

The Reggio Children International Network was established in 2006 and currently includes 33 countries who have collaborated over a long period of time ([www.reggiochildren.org](http://www.reggiochildren.org)) (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 193).

### **Super-Diversity**

“Super is our preferred modifier in order to emphasise the sense of superseding, or addressing what is ‘above and beyond’ what was previously there” (Vertovec, 2015, p. 545).

The global increase in movement over the last thirty years and the resulting dynamic interplay of variables has made super-diversity the new social norm (Vertovec, 2007). Examples of variables might include: class, religiosity, education, sexual orientation, age, human capital, gender, disability, sign language, linguistic diversity, ethnicity, translanguaging, patterns of spatial distribution, epistemology, ontology, axiology (Vertovec, 2016; Rigney, personal communication, 2020). This has caused a new ‘social organisation of difference’ (Vertovec, 2021). When individuals interact with super-diverse others in groups, communities and societies variables proliferate exponentially. These variables mutually condition each other resulting in new and different identities, cultures and complex social environments. The individual’s super diversity is constructed as a result of this organic and kaleidoscopic interplay of variables influencing one’s unique ever-evolving identity. “... Each human being is super-diverse across a wide range of variables... this “applies to internal migrants and to those individuals who do not move at all” (Meissner & Vertovec 2015, p. 546).

Super-diversity is shaping society. This new reality means that the world has shifted and groups, communities and society are now super-diverse. Importantly, this entails recognizing that conditions and processes surrounding super-diversity both produce, and are produced by, a range of differential power relations and modes of inequality” (Vertovec, 2015, p. 551).

And so, super-diverse children are walking in the door of the early childhood centre. This shift in demographic and cultural context intensifies the complex challenges for both the nation and its educators. “How does the super-diverse learner get their needs met by the Reggio Approach?” (Rigney, personal communication, 2020). A research focus on day-to-day practices can reveal how super-diverse children can be better addressed through innovative pedagogies, including how different configurations of super-diversity are dealt with and how super diversity makes us more professionally aware, helping us to experiment and develop activities (Harold Gothson, personal communication, 4, February 2020). “The goal of this dissertation is to show why the pedagogy of listening can be so supportive of super diversity” (Carla Rinaldi, personal communication, July 25th, 2020).

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)**

CRP developed out of critiques of deficit views of ‘disadvantage’ to explain differences in student achievement (Gay, 2002). REA, CRP and Kaupapa Māori research evidence proposes culture as an assets-based approach to curriculum and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rigney, personal communication, 2020; Bishop, 2006). Around the

world CRP has seen potential to increase educational outcomes, because it centres on the child's prior knowledge in the classroom, acknowledging culturally specific practice and ways of knowing linked to curriculum and pedagogy (Morrison, et al., 2020). CRP research in Australia was developed by Professors Irabinna-Rigney and Robert Hattam (2019). It provides indicators which were developed from their search to find inclusive pedagogies suited to all children and cultures, particularly those marginalised, isolated and oppressed who have been let down by the education system (Rigney, et al., 2019). "CRPs actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship" (Morrison et al., 2019, p. v).

### **1.6 Summary**

This research focuses on investigating how the transposition of the REA to A/NZ context can support the rapidly rising super-diverse demographic in the early childhood ECE. Of particular concern are those super-diverse children who are enveloped within the A/NZ context and who are at risk. The A/NZ education system urgently needs help to understand how they can provide CRP support for super-diverse children.

In this chapter I have shared my personal perspective as a A/NZ teacher inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, the contextual situation I encountered as a primary school teacher in 2019 prior to beginning my study with the Reggio Childhood Foundation and how that situation connects to my research questions. Then, I touched on the current challenges inhibiting powerful learning opportunities with successful learning outcomes for children in A/NZ ECE education and I explained that REI ECE teachers in A/NZ may provide hope for meeting these challenges. Next, I provided a first glimpse into the components of my research with the questions, participants, methodology, methods and lenses. Finally, I have provided some definitions of the main concepts which feature in this study: the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) and the Reggio Emilia Inspired Approach (REI) super-diversity and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). The following chapter will provide the theoretical framework for the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

Perhaps most important of all, Reggio is a unique body of theory and practice about working with young children and their families, produced from a very particular historical, cultural and political context which addresses the ethical and political dimensions of education, as a shared experience in a democratic society (Dahlberg & Moss, in Rinaldi, 2006, p. 2).

RE is both a place and an educational approach. Outside of RE one's interpretation of the REA is called 'the Reggio Emilia Inspired Approach' (REI). Swedish educationalist and original member of the Board of RE, Harold Gothson explains, there is no essential truth in Reggio Emilia. Explanations are based on careful consideration of the REA principles and values. They are built through professional dialogue, interpretation and contextualisation. In schools and early childhood institutions this is most often done through teachers collaborating together (Gothson, 2007, p.1; Rinaldi, 2001). The choice of inspiration should be contextualised to the country, or preschool, by those who understand the place, children and school setting. The expression for the practice of a person who is inspired by the REA is often written about as 'becoming', meaning that there is no ultimate way, model or end point.

This research is inspired by the REA in the field of early childhood education (ECE), which means that it is not neutral. The researcher and teachers in this project are from Aotearoa New Zealand (A/NZ). Our RE inspiration complements the A/NZ ECE bicultural curriculum, Te Whāriki (TW) of which the ECE community is proud.

It is significant to my project that the REA is named after the city because this emphasises the importance of context, as opposed to a person, as some educational approaches are. It is well known that RE is not a preprogrammed approach which can be replicated in other contexts. Rather it is about contextualising REA in relation to one's own place. It has been noted that Sergio Spaggiari, a past director of the preschools of RE, sometimes ended his farewell speech to international study tour groups to RE by saying, "Go home and forget us, and use the inspiration you have got to put your strength into the challenges of the childhoods you are part of" (Gothson, 2007, p.2).

Reggio Emilia, the place, is a quaint historical city of approximately 171, 000 (2022 data) ethnically diverse people in Northern Italy (Piccinini, 2004, cited in Rinaldi, 2006, p.1). Based forty minutes by fast train south of Milan, it is a short and picturesque drive from the sunflowers and wine country of Tuscany, and a mere three hours by rambling train through

the hills to the fishing villages and walkways of the Cinque Terre dotted along the Mediterranean Coastline. Italy's longest river, *the Po*, known as the Great Father is a familiar wandering as you pass through the countryside, in the nether regions of Emilia Romagna.

The architectural icon of the Mediopadana high speed train station welcomes visitors to Reggio Emilia from the North. Reggio Emilia was founded by ancient Rome, with the historical centre taking shape during the Middle Ages, "it is the stage on which the heart of town life takes place, and an inspiration for spatial and democratic architecture" (Rinaldi, Vatican speech, 2020). Amongst the modern setting of Reggio Emilia can be found shops of traditional Reggiano pasta makers, bicycles whooshing through the cobbled streets, the seventh century Baroque architecture of the Basilica of San Prospero (*the Lion square*); the very active Romolo Valli opera house and local and international high fashion outlets.

In Reggio Emilia, people matter. Jerome Brunner said of Reggio Emilia, "in Reggio, one is given to meeting a rare form of courtesy, a precious form of reciprocal respect" (Brunner, as cited in Edwards, et al., 2012, p. xviii).

This is a town with strong connections as well as a strong desire to be socially inclusive. This is also a territory that has generated many forms of economic and social cooperation. Today, this social fabric is widely modified... a strongly increasing foreign population, up 68% from 2006 to 2016, is involved in life around the city. A cultural change" (Professor Rinaldi, Speech to the Vatican, 2020).

Civility, or living with each other in solidarity, reciprocity and cooperation, as opposed to vertical relations of authority and dependency is a mark of society in Reggio Emilia (Putnam, 1999, cited in Edwards, et al, 2012, p.9).

The philosophies, values and principles of the REA had their genesis in emancipatory historical events, and the consequent socialist ideas, surrounding the second world war. Both oppression and emancipation had such an impact on the Reggio Emilia's educational founders that history remains a compass orienting the system today.

Reggio is also a women's story, the product of women's active participation in the struggle to improve not only their rights, but the rights of children; and the story of a determination to prevent a re-emergence of fascism and a desire to break the monopoly of the Catholic Church on Education for young children (Rinaldi, 2006, p.9).

Here, there is a continual reminder of the preciousness of freedom and democracy, the power human beings can have over another; the strength gained from a shared humanity and also the message that fundamentally history can always be re-started (Rinaldi, 2006, p.9/ 20).

The concept of restarting or regeneration, which Reggio offers, means the possibility of seeing things with a new lens, and the ability to learn from mistakes. This is an influence which allows for reflection, change and growth. It includes an openness to learn from the Other.

## **2.1 Reggio Emilia Theoretical Framework**

### **Philosophical Beginnings**

The webs of our inspiration connect up with constructivist and socio-constructivist theories; theories that generate creative conceptions of development and knowledge. To be more precise, our references from Piaget's genetic epistemology (but not the pedagogical interpretations that have been made to derive from it, to experimental theories of complexity: from Morin to Varela, Bateson to Von Foerster and Prigogine, from Mungy to Doise and Moscovici. And never ever forgetting Dewey, Wertheimer, Wallom, Claparede, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Hawkins, Arnheim. Dobrich, Papert, H. Gardner; and for the area of the neurosciences Edelman, Rosenfield, Levi, Montalcini, Dulbecco and others' (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 377).

When looking back and reflecting on the development of RE in his later years, Malauzzi, a teacher and psychologist commented, "it was important that the schools of RE found their identity quickly." Perhaps this explains the intensity he put into the development of educating in a new way. Being curious he read voraciously (in French and English), travelled to capture ideas and suggestions, organised seminars, attempted experiments and started exchanges. He created opportunities for dialogue within and beyond the RE community (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 37). All the while he was searching for educational and philosophical ideas which represented the ideas and dreams of the founding community. It has been said that Malaguzzi was a lover of many theories and this is very evident when one reads the lists of names he drew from (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 377; Edwards et al., 2012, p. 60; Gothson, personal communication, 2021).

However, he didn't blindly accept all theories and ideas, but rather passed a critical eye over them. Malaguzzi adapted the theories of other scholars in line with the desire of the community who wanted a school that educated differently. Their desires involved a declaration against the betrayal of children's potential with a warning that children had to be taken seriously and believed in. To which Malaguzzi said, "and they (these ideas) suited us just fine" (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 36). He compared RE's emerging theoretical ideas with others, and was known to make comments such as, "Maria Montessori is our mother but we

are not Montessorian” (Gothson, 2007). Theories from some great thinkers fitted well with the socially constructivist principles that the schools of RE believed in. The main influential thinkers in the early stages were John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Brunner (Gandini, 1993, as cited on Dodd-Nuffrio, 2011, 235; Hewett, 2001; Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 56-61; Cagliari, et al., 2006, p. 384). Professor Rinaldi worked closely with Malaguzzi as a pedagoga from 1970. She is now the Director of the preschools and infant-toddler centres of Reggio Emilia and she continues to play a major role in the development of the REA today (Murphy, et al, 2015).

Some of the threads of theories, gleaned by Malaguzzi which contributed to the original development of the REA were as follows:

### **Piaget**

An example of the way Malaguzzi applied his critical eye on philosophy was with that of Piaget’s theory. Although Malaguzzi credits Piaget with huge respect (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 56) and in the RE community Piaget is celebrated as being the first researcher to give the child an identity (Malaguzzi, as cited in Edwards, et al, 2012, p. 56) Malaguzzi emphasised that development is unique to each individual over time, and therefore will not necessarily happen in a standardised way. He and Piaget both agreed that children need rich problem-solving conditions for quality learning to happen (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 57), “without experience thinking is not nourished” (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 126).

This relates to my project because like the REA I believe that education must listen to the child in the context of their life and time. The child is affected by their context, and pedagogies need to be adapted accordingly. This is what the teachers and I explore in this research, in relation to the super-diverse phenomenon. We are trying to understand what we can do differently to support super-diverse children, particularly those who have been isolated because pedagogy wasn’t adapted to meet their needs in the past (Ladson- Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012; Charter on Quality Education, Fondazione Reggio Children, 2021).

### **Dewey**

John Dewey was the most influential scholar on the development of the REA. It is believed that Malaguzzi came to embrace Dewey’s philosophy through progressive Italian scholar, Bruno Cairi, a student of Lamberto Borghi who was regarded as the “most famous follower of John Dewey’s methodology in the Italian context, due to his focus on democratic pedagogy” (Gandini, 2011, as cited in Lindsay, 2015, p. 4).

Dewey’s educational philosophy was about children being active participants and citizens in a democratic society. Learning is understood as a process of active construction

which takes place amidst social interaction, where new meanings can be created, shared, confronted, questioned and negotiated” (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, as cited in Lindsay, 2015, p. 7). “A democratic education doesn’t lecture and talk about democracy; it puts these values into practice through everyday living” (Gothson, 2018, p.32).

This research is aligned with Dewey’s and Malaguzzi’s democratic philosophy because the empirical data has been collected and presented in inquiry based projects, which provided authentic, meaningful learning contexts for children’s learning.

### **Vygotsky**

Malaguzzi described Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) philosophy, the zone of proximal development, “the distance between the levels of capacities expressed by children and their levels of potential development” as a precious insight for education (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 58). But he also explained that RE’s perspective was more one of “circulatory, we seek a situation in which the child is about to see what the adult already sees [...] and we need to be prepared to see it, for we tend to notice only those things which we expect” (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 58).

Teacher preparation is a strong theme in this research. The key tangents being, firstly the preparation required to provide quality learning for all children. The second key tangent is the unique perspective of the REA teacher, one who is ‘prepared to be unprepared’ - meaning that they are open to learning as well.

### **Jerome Brunner**

“All logic is already present in the experience of young children [...] we can teach young children anything if we adjust their cognitive and affective mechanisms” (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 126).

Malaguzzi and Jerome Brunner agreed that factual knowledge without understanding, or simple information as a summary of facts, was poor quality education. The child needs a variety of experiences with a concept, such as the meaning of numbers in maths, in order to consolidate mathematical concepts and for rich deep learning to occur, to experience transference of concepts into other situations (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 264).

Brunner and Malaguzzi’s philosophy is also a strong thread in this research because there is a strong push in the modern context of education where teachers are required to accelerate children’s academic progress through curriculum progressions *as quickly as they can* [emphasis added]. In my experience this has reduced the opportunity for rich contextual learning at the expense of more holistic educational opportunities.

### **The Principles and Values of the Reggio Emilia Approach**

The principles and values of the REA eventually developed from Malaguzzi's theoretical exploration. A big part of their development was with the teachers as Malaguzzi was a strong proponent of the theory-practice nexus.

“Reggio challenges the ‘arrogant idea of the continuing separation between theory and practice’ [...] arguing that they are inseparable- one without the other is inconceivable. By doing so, Reggio also revalues the practitioner” (Rinaldi, 2006, p.17).

The language of metaphor is used to describe the REs system of principles and values which are the foundation of the learning process. Carla Rinaldi speaks of Reggio Emilia as, “a metaphorical and symbolic place where those who share the same values come into dialogue with one another, with a shared hope for humanity” (Rinaldi, 2021, p.149/ 197). The metaphorical framing of RE's principles and values provides educators with the freedom of interpretation, it is both generated by experience and generates experience (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 75).

“It (RE) is a place of possibilities, where knowledge and identity are co-constructed and learning processes are investigated, always in relationship with others- a forum, a place of encounter, a construction site, a workshop and a permanent laboratory are just some of the metaphors used by Carlina” (Dahlberg & Moss, as cited in Rinaldi, 2006 p. 12).

In the Reggio Emilia Approach structure is organised differently to traditional pedagogical approaches (Rinaldi, 2006, Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 378/379). It is deliberate that there is ‘not a model’ to follow (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 20). Instead pedagogical approaches are crafted by teachers from across REA's system of values and principles, in response to the children the teacher(s) are working with. Always bearing in mind that the child is the creator of their own meaning (Rinaldi, 2006, p.112).

The Reggio Approach is an ulterior, humanistic, relationship-based educational paradigm, which at its core views children (people) as capable of co-constructing their own knowledge, understandings and meaning through experiences of interaction, negotiation and navigation of their surroundings - but most significantly, through relationships and the environment. Learning is an active process and not a transmission of pre-packaged knowledge (Rinaldi, 2006, p.6).

### **The key REA principles and values are as follows**

***The Rights of the Child:*** Constructivism in the REA holds the ontological belief that humans have the capacity to process and produce their own meaning (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1923; Bruner, 1934; Malaguzzi, 1993, p.10; Rinaldi, 2021; Edwards et al., 2012). This concept manifests in the ‘image of the competent child’ who holds the right to formulate their own unique connections and meanings with the guidance of the listening teacher (Indications, p.10; Rinaldi, C., 2022, p. 261-274; Cagliari et. al, 2016, p. 262; Rinaldi, 2013, p.15; Dahlberg & Moss, 2013, p.155; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, lecture to PhD students, 2023).

In education, the choice of teaching and learning approach, including how one views the child is political because it ultimately comes back to allocation of power. The REA political perspective is that the child has the right to construct their own meaning and identity, and their ability to do so begins with the teacher's image (Indications, p.10). In the REA the teacher's choice of image of the child is of one who is intelligent and capable, or strong and competent. The reason for this goes back to the long established commitment to freedom from oppression. The original plan of the RE community was to create an educational culture where one would never rule over another (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 20; Cagliari et al., 2016, p.416; Edwards et al., 2012, p. 28; Edwards et al., 2012, p. 309). Therefore, the system developed by Malaguzzi and the teachers deliberately involves non-dictatorial practices (Cagliari et al., 2016). Representations of these ideas can be seen in today’s classrooms. The teacher who uses top down pre-packaged experiences is effectively using non democratic approaches when the child is bereft of involvement in the construction of their own knowledge and meaning making. On the other hand, teachers who share power through pedagogies which involve children and teachers as active co constructors of meaning through curiosity, interaction, language and dialogue, activate an energising culture around learning. In such learning situations the dissipation and sharing of power is democratised (Gothson, 2016).

### ***Democracy***

In the REA democratic educational principles are foundational. A REA inspired democratic education provides the conditions for the rights and image of the child to come to fruition. This is achieved through horizontal pedagogies where “the child becomes the sun about which appliances of education revolve; he (sic) is the centre about which they are organised” (Dewey, 1937, p.34). The democratic pedagogies of the REA are student centred and dialogic, they frame the intelligences which the child brings to the class and are those

which support the rights of the child to identity (Indications, 2010, p.10; Giudici et al., 2001, p. 179; Gardner, 2006; Rigney, 2022). REI classrooms are micro political democracies based on the epistemological understanding that learning experiences which applaud diversity are a valuable tool for learning and understanding. The role of the atelierista in the learning context is to introduce different ideas, options and perspectives, supporting children and teachers to broaden their theories. This is achieved through the participation of children in groups, the principle of the hundred languages of children in project based pedagogies. Examples in the classroom would include dialogue that supports many views and interpretations and the negotiation of difference.

***Progettazione:*** The teachers' planning process involves collaborative reflection, where they share ideas and respectfully hold critical conversations. They have to relate their decisions to the kind of citizenship they support (Gothson, 2016, p. 24).

***The negotiation of difference:*** Professor Rinaldi describes RE's principle of the negotiation of difference (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2003) where the dialogue is shared in an act of reciprocal listening. It invites contrasts and differences of perspective, with an openness to negotiate. She says it is transformative for those participating (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 185).

***The Pedagogy of Listening and documentation:*** “The Reggio Emilia pedagogy of listening is key” (Rinaldi, personal communication, May 2020). The teacher listens to children with openness, responsiveness and reflection. They have a holistic view of the child, aware that quality pedagogy is related to the environment and to the child's prior knowledge and experience (Rinaldi, 2006; Indications, p. 10). The pedagogy of listening and documentation are essential teaching tools with which guide the learning process (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 112; Giudici, 2001, p. 83; Vecchi, 2010, p.148; Indications, 2010, p.12; Edwards et al., p. 281; Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 352 ). Documentation involves teachers sharing their observations of children's theory and meaning making processes. In RE this is a deliberate opening of space for democracy due to the practices of listening to children through their work. This also includes the shared practice of teachers discussing and negotiating their interpretations of the work and using it to plan next learning steps.

***The Reggio Emilia Approach is an Open Researching Culture:*** Malaguzzi set the scene for all who were to be inspired by the REA as he established a researching culture from an interdisciplinary perspective “Reggio Emilia is like a university” (Gothson, 2023). It is a researching culture of listening whose constructivist principles, orientate around collective values and principles. Theory making is a right of all in the RE community, “I think even babies make theories,” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 17). In the present day RE culture continues to be

developed and advanced around the world evolving in relation to those who come into dialogue with RE (Gothson, 2023; Rigney, 2023). In fact, you might say that it is a multi-perspective, collective theory making culture in constant motion, driven by interdependent dialogic relations and brought to life through constructivist patterns that connect (Bateson, 1979, p.13) as one affects the other (Vertovec, 2015). RE remains connected to some of the world's best humanistic educational theorists, Carla Rinaldi, Gunilla Dahlberg, Peter Moss, Howard Gardner, Harold Gothson and Lester-Irabinna Rigney. Those cited all draw upon theories in education that link practice, knowledge of culturally sensitive learning and advancement of relational pedagogy to improve quality.

However, in line with its commitment to freedom from domination, there is a strong caution that Reggio Emilia is not meant to be labelled or packaged. We must remember that true to its constructivist and democratic origins, it remains the right of those who come into dialogue with RE to have the freedom to choose their own inspiration based on the principles and values (Rinaldi, 2020, personal communication; Gothson, 2023, personal communication).

The nature of research in the Reggio Emilia Approach has been described by the term border crossing which is deeply embedded into its theory~practice philosophy and approach. Malaguzzi and the teachers took an alternative approach to the more traditional theory informs practice situations, integrating research into pedagogical work, effectively braiding theory~practice with knowledge-building practices (Moss, as cited in Cagliari et al., 2016). This is like the journey down a braided river, where, as sediment becomes abundant and causes the river course to morph and change through connection/encounter and movement, in a constant evolutionary process. The braided river is a metaphor to support what Dahlberg and Moss summarise in Rinaldi, 2016,

Learning involves participating in relationships and meeting at the border of each other's territory. It is about discovering and challenging each other's boundaries through an environment of trusting dialogic relationships through authentic learning experiences. The teacher and child move along the path together listening to and exploring each other's ideas. This supports both to grow through a constant re-territorialisation of boundaries of knowledge, skills, meaning and understanding.

Learning is the key factor of which a new way of teaching should be based, becoming a complimentary resource to the child and offering multiple options, suggestive ideas, and sources of support. Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and

just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water (Malaguzzi, p. 58, Edwards et al., 2012).

***The Hundred Languages of Children:*** As expressed by Malaguzzi's poem, 'No way. The hundred is there' (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 259), the principle of the hundred languages in RE expresses the uniqueness of all children. "The teacher has an enormous responsibility in interpreting the alternative ways that the child communicates" (Edwards, 2012, p. 203). The RE principle of the hundred languages of children promotes learning by searching for ways to nurture their hundreds of languages to flourish (Edwards, et al., 2012).

The REI classroom involves learning to share life as a citizen in a democracy where relationships in the socio-constructivist context involve a shaping of each other and therefore an opening up of new languages, and personal transformation, reflecting the statement, "I am who I am because of you" (Gothson, personal communication, 2020).

Dialogue enables people to enter a learning process, a process of co-constructing their own knowledge, values and identity: a process that is in relationship with Reggio, but in which it is possible for the protagonists, those in dialogue with Reggio, to hold on to their beautiful 'Otherness' without Reggio seeking to grasp them and make them into the same (Rinaldi, 2006, p.21/197).

***The Environment as the Third Teacher:*** Reflecting the principle of the environment as the third teacher Carla Rinaldi says "...this project whose central theme is not mankind, but his relations with the world, his being in the world, his feelings of interdependence with what is other than himself" (Rinaldi, 2006, p.10).

A big part of this environmental perspective is RE's democratic classroom. In the REA, "Democracy is a very special epistemological culture that invites challenging established ideas rather than confirming those that are already known" (Gothson, 2016, p. 22/23).

The REA is a learning culture which celebrates uniqueness and participatory collaboration as a conduit in the learning group (Indications, p.10; Gothson, 2016, p. 21; Rinaldi, 2006, 155/156; Gardner, 1983). In this research my hypothesis is that REI democratic principles in the classroom can serve as positive tools in learning relationships. I intend to explore REA's principle of bringing contrasting ideas and theories together for negotiation through a culture of reflection, empathy, humility and fun (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001, p.43). This idea is intended to be a pedagogical conduit which supports teachers and learners in the super-diverse ECE classroom, particularly when addressing issues such as social justice, inclusion and equity. In the A/NZ ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki (TW) the strand

Environment links to is Exploration/ Mana aotūroa (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017, p.46).

## 2.2 Reggio Emilia in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific

Internationally and in A/NZ and the Pacific teachers transpose RE pedagogy to make visible and support children's right to identity, starting with the pedagogy of listening.

RE pedagogy is able to be transposed and adapted to new contexts (Landi & Pintus, 2022). Adding quality to the learning relationships is the strength REI offers in support of curricula from other countries. Its principles and values can help adapt pedagogy in order to raise democratic and inclusive approaches (Gardner & Rinaldi, 2001; Sisson et al., 2018; Landi & Pintus, 2022; Moss, 2014; Gothson, 2007).

Global RE literature describes how the RE theoretical framework listens to the hundred languages of children in relation to their cultural competencies within a democratic classroom where all children are citizens whose voices are heard (Edwards et al., 2012; Rinaldi, 2021; *Children, Art, Artists*, Reggio Children, 2014; Rigney & Kelly, 2023; Durden et al., 2014; Manera, 2022; Gardner, 2006; Rigney, 2020; Manera et al, 2021).

*Across A/NZ and the Pacific* many practitioners have also been inspired by the transposition of RE principles and values (Rigney et al., 2020; Lees & Ng, 2020; Bayes, 2006; Chalmers, 2014; Mawson, 2010; Terreni, et al., 2020; Giamminuti & Merewether, 2020; Giamminuti, S., 2013; Sisson et al., 2018; Probine et al., 2023; Denee, 2022; McIlroy, 2017).

In A/NZ our population demographic is complex because we are a bi-cultural or Treaty/ *Tiriti* based settler society of which two parties are signatory (Chan & Ritchie, 2020, p. 3). One party, being those of first nations status, A/NZs indigenous Māori population or *tangata whenua* ('people of the land'), and the other partners *tangata tiriti* (people of the treaty), are all those who do not have Māori ancestry (Durie, cited in King, 2003:191, cited in Chan & Ritchie, 2019, p. 3). We are one of a small number of countries to have a legitimised treaty between indigenous and coloniser populations (Ritchie, 2016, p. 80; Chan & Ritchie, 2019). Our treaty is named *Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi* (thereafter: the Treaty). The signing of the Treaty in 1840 acknowledged Māori self-determination alongside governance by the British Crown. This commitment has been largely ignored for over a century (Chan & Ritchie, 2019) and due to failed commitments by the colonisers the Māori people have been subject to oppression and marginalisation. This has continued to perpetuate and tragically it has propelled intergenerational trauma to the present day (Li, 2019).

Consequently, as with many indigenous cultures across the world, there are included within ECE classrooms, learners whose right to identity remains shrouded in isolation and poverty (Morrison et al., 2019; Rigney, personal communication, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023; Bishop, 1999; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Li et al., 2021; Creese & Blackledge, 2018; May, 2004; May & Carr, 2015; Chan and Ritchie, 2019; Chan and Ritchie, 2020; Richie, 2016; Berryman et al., 2018; Durie, 1985; Macfarlane, 2009; Penetito, 2002; Morrison et al., 2019; Phillips, 2011).

Under our founding constitution the Treaty of Waitangi, and the NZ Early childhood curriculum, teachers have responsibilities to both Māori and non-Māori children. All children have a right to quality education!

In a world first, A/NZ began developing a bicultural ECE curriculum in 1991. Named Te Whāriki (TW) it is committed to quality education for all children. The project development was led by Margaret Carr and Wendy Lee and done in collaboration with the Māori educational experts and cultural leaders, Tamati Reedy and Tilly Reedy who represented the Te Kohanga Reo National Trust (the overall umbrella organisation for Māori immersion in early childhood centres). The draft ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki was published in 1996, and it has been employed in ECE and updated over time, the most recent being in 2017. “Te Whāriki translates as a ‘woven Māori mat for all to stand on. It is a uniquely New Zealand curriculum embracing the aspirations, pedagogy and beliefs of its bicultural heritage enshrined in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi” (May & Carr, 2015).

Currently “The New Zealand Education Review Office has described both Indigenous Māori children and ‘children of migrants and refugees’ in A/NZ ECEs as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘priority learners’ ”sadly indicating that these children have continued to fall behind in their learning. It is of major importance that ECEs pay serious attention to their rights as an urgent priority (Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p.1; Rigney, 2020).

A/NZ researchers agree that teaching practices should be responsive to the cultural identities of their students, but there a search for genuinely connecting pedagogies has been less clear (Savage, et al., 2011; May, 2004).

One very positive lead is the CRP research by A/NZ’s Russell Bishop (1999). It involved the voices of Māori students and their families, Principals and some of their teachers. It developed an effective teaching profile for Māori students supporting the understanding about improved classroom relationships and interactions, which resulted in high school students engaging and achieving more at school. His research is highly respected

and implemented successfully in some A/NZ high schools (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop, 1999).

But the search remains for much more insight into how CRPs might improve education. This research project is concerned with this for learners in ECEs. We will be using the CRP indicators developed by Professors Lester-Irabinna Rigney and Robert Hattam in Australia as an extra layer in dialogue with the REI pedagogies that the teachers are already using (Morrison et al., 2019).

Although this research seeks to support the advancement of pedagogical approaches which respect, value and support *all* children in the super-diverse ECE classroom, in the A/NZ context it does specifically underscore the urgent need to understand how this can be done specifically for the cohorts of Māori children whose culture has been failed by the education system. Doing this will support the Ministry of Education's commitment to these children,

To learn and develop to their potential, children must be respected and valued. Their rights to personal dignity, to equitable opportunities for participation, to protection from physical, mental or emotional abuse and injury, and to opportunities for rest and leisure must be safeguarded (Te Whāriki, Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 21).

In this A/NZ based research the REA is named the Reggio Emilia Inspired approach (REI) because REA is transposed to A/NZ, a context outside of RE where it complements the A/NZ Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki. I used CRP professional development with the aim of providing practical knowledge for teachers as they explore pedagogical solutions for the super-diverse child and the super-diverse Māori children in REI ECE classrooms.

Teachers collaborate in a reflective manner to make this transposition happen. They reflect on how their REI pedagogies are CR in their A/NZ context. They also reflect on how their professional and personal frame of reference shapes the lenses and biases they bring to the learning relationship.

### ***Culturally Responsive Pedagogies***

Culturally responsive pedagogy refers to those pedagogies that actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning *relationship* (Morrison et al., 2019, p. v).

Internationally REI literature provides examples of CRPs providing quality education which has helped to nurture and strengthen children's voices, including pedagogies for diverse children (D'warte & Woodrow, Sisson et al., 2018; Aberg, as cited in Moss, 2014, p. 139). In line with RE's search for pedagogies in education which support the child's right to

identity, this research uses CRP professional development with REI teachers in A/NZ. The researcher and teachers held progressive, reflective and ongoing conversations over time which involved professional dialogue around the topic of the REI approach being culturally responsive, particularly in relation to our influence around inclusivity within our pedagogies.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies were originally developed by Gloria Ladson Billings (1995b) and Geneva Gay (2010). They have shown promising outcomes for learners internationally as an approach to teaching and learning that use the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively and improving their academic achievement (Gay, 2002, p.106). Their literature adds to the knowledge base of CRP education and research. Researchers can learn from Gloria Ladson Billings and her African American teachers who found positive patterns in CRPs supporting students to achieve academic success by maintaining cultural competence and developing a critical consciousness (1995b). Canadian researcher Geneva Gay, worked with an interdisciplinary research team and underachieving African, Asian, Latino and Native American students. They found five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching: to develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity, to demonstrate caring learning communities, to include culturally diverse content in the curriculum, to use cross cultural communications in class, and to tailor classroom instruction to suit the diversity of the students (Gay, 2001).

Australian scholar Professor Lester- Irabinna Rigney and his colleagues (Morrison, et al., 2019; Rigney et al., 2020; Rigney & Kelly, 2021) synthesised CRP literature and identified the key characteristics and challenges of CRPs in order to provide a hopeful approach with potential to enhance the educational experience of all students, particularly in Australia and the Global South (Morrison, et al, 2019, p. 3).

These CRP characteristics were shared with the REI teachers in my research as additional support to the REI pedagogical approach. They were used by the REI teachers in this research to support super-diverse children who are now much more prevalent in the REI classroom and including the super-diverse Māori learner. I used them to make a CRP guide as a summary of the CRP literature for the teachers to refer to. I also used this myself as a coding tool, with which to explore the empirical data.

### ***Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Morrison et al., 2019)***

#### ***1. High intellectual challenge***

Anti-deficit discourse through pedagogies that view all learners as competent and intelligent involves teachers creating learning environments where the multi-modal languages that super-diverse children encompass, are valued as assets for learning.

- The REI teacher would support the plurality of languages in a super-diverse classroom by providing learning through interdisciplinarity, multi-modal opportunities such as the principle of the hundred languages (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 132) and Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2006).

High Intellectual challenge involves teachers expecting the best of their students, i.e.

*Teaching to the North-East* (Bishop, 2019).

- This means scaffolding children for success and believing that children are capable of responding to high expectations by providing an environment where all learners can flourish through knowing what it is about their learners that best scaffolds their learning. This is about investing in and taking responsibility for children's success.

#### **2. Pedagogies which connect to the life worlds of the children**

- How teachers listen to the linguistic and cultural repertoires that children bring to the classroom affects their response to how they build on them (Rigney & Hattam, 2020).

- The view of the learner and ourselves as teachers needs to shift from pedagogies of transmission to horizontal pedagogies of connection and belonging (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019).

This is about encouraging relationships between each other, school and communities because we learn about ourselves through others, and diversity improves everybody's learning (Rigney & Hattam, 2020).

- For us as teachers it is important to understand what shapes children's socio-political identities and constructs and also to examine our own because together these meet in the learning environment. Their cause and effect relationship affects learning potential.

- Durden et al. (2014) suggest that, "Teachers become cultural learners of children."

#### **4. Critical thinking- activist orientation**

Children are "involved in meaningful *real life* projects that solve problems and challenges that matter in their lives" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p.146; as cited in Morrison et al, 2019).

- Children are producing knowledge (not having it transmitted to them).

- Teachers understand community issues and projects which matter to the children and their families.

-This is about giving children voice and choice in projects.

### 5. Performing multimodal literacies

Teachers explore, knowing, understanding and providing relevant, playful multimodal scaffolds, opportunities and pathways for children.

- Examples: paper-based, live, or digital literacies; dance, oral storytelling; film, podcasts etc (Morrison et al, 2019).

- Digital tools are used and leveraged, including social media.

**6. Recognition of cultural difference as an asset.** This indicator was added later after the first phase in the research process because it is the one which all three of my hopeful approaches have in common.

- Children need opportunities to learn about who they are in relation to the other. This is observed as having generosity, humility and charity around diverse views and building tools for how we collaborate and negotiate our different theories and perspectives. It includes the REA values such of playfulness, fun and humour; and paying others the respect of really listening to them (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001).

-CRP involves a teacher's deep understanding of how teaching is a socio-political act and how the classroom can serve as a place for equity, justice and opportunity' (Durden, Escalante & Blich 2015, p. 224; cited by Morrison et al., 2019, p. 27).

- CRPs developed in the Pacific support belonging and agency in the ECE classroom. They emphasise the importance of relationships, through pedagogies where teachers come to know learners and their families (Morrison, et al., 2019; Bishop, 1999; D'warte and Woodrow, 2023; Penetito, 2001; Lees & Ng, 2020).

In the CRP literature we find hopeful, practical pedagogical approaches which align with the REI in A/NZ. They support the quest of this research to find hopeful pedagogies for the super-diverse child. Key CRP information was summarised on the coding tool to complement professional development readings.

The pedagogical core is not only the basic structure within which learning happens (or not), but also a basic unit of power relationships, where dominant forms of hierarchical separation and control can be either reproduced or subverted (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019).

Teaching, then, is inherently political (Bissonnette 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017) and culturally responsive teaching is a 'political endeavour directed toward equity and justice'(Sleeter 2011, p.19).

The REI constructivist theoretical lens involves teachers in a collaborative culture of reflection with the objective of improving learning opportunities and outcomes for children.

It opens up space for new ways of thinking about how pedagogy might become more inclusive for all learners (D'warte & Woodrow, 2023; Morton et al., 2019). In the culture of Progettazione the REI teachers in this research reflected on REI as being a CRP, particularly in the light of the super-diverse child, through professional development (Cagliari et al., 2016; Rinaldi, 2021).

### **2.3 The Gap: The Super Diverse Theoretical Lens**

Identity is an evolutionary concept unique to each person or child. All children are born into the world a genetic and social construct of their parents and in relation to the distinct time and environment when they arrive (Cagliari, et al., 2016, 331; Rinaldi, 2001, p. 39). Their evolution will always be influenced by their life worlds (Rigney & Hattam, 2020; Ladson Billings, 2017, p.146, as cited in Morrison et al. 2019), and during their lifespan the amount of choice and progress regarding children's educational growth and development will depend on the politics of their set of circumstances, within which the teacher is an active conduit and powerful determinant (Cagliari, et al., 2016, 414/415; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 125; Rinaldi, 2001, p. 39).

Until recent times the highest profile diversity related variables in terms of public perception (including teacher perception) and research, have tended to be country of origin, ethnicity and multiculturalism (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025; Vertovec, 2016).

Over the last several decades, global diversity has sped up and become more complex. This complexity is even more evident as an increasing amount of other significant variables have also contributed to the array of conditions affecting "where, how and with whom people live, or are in schools where, how and with whom people teach and learn" (Gogolin, 2011, p. 241).

Large cities such as Auckland, A/NZ are now super-diverse. A/NZ statistics show that there has been a rapid rise of the super-diverse demographic, including categories of migrants in A/NZ society (Ritchie, 2016; Li, et al., 2021; Chan & Ritchie, 2020). The population is more complex. For example, the NZ Census of 2018, showed that 27.4% of New Zealanders were born overseas, an increase from 25.2% from 2013 (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2018). In Auckland, A/NZs largest city, 2013 data reported that nearly 40% of the metropolitan population were born overseas (Vertovec et al., 2018). In 2018, this statistic had risen to 50.7% (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, [URL](#)). Auckland is home to people from more than 180 ethnicities, including the world's largest Polynesian population (Auckland Council, [URL](#)).

Examples of the variables which have increased in prominence are nationality, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, legal status, skills and human capital, class, religiosity, sexual orientation, gender, disability/ability, sign language, linguistic diversity, translanguaging epistemology, ontology and/or axiology (Vertovec, 2007; Rigney, personal communication, 2020). Thus, a super-diverse society produces super-diverse people who may have multiple identifications (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015, p. 546; Vertovec, 2016, April, 4-5 2016). The current world climate contributes even further significant variables: global transmigration, the Covid19 pandemic, wars, poverty and climate change, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the increase of white nationalism (Vertovec, 2021, p.1) adding to the *diversification of diversity* (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025) and complex social environments (Vertovec, 2016). “The world is much more diverse [...] typified by the salience of differences and their dynamic intersections” (Vertovec, 2021, p 546). Consequently, classrooms are considered super-diverse and the super-diverse learner is the new normal in A/NZ ECEs (Rigney, personal communication, 2020; Li, 2021; Creese & Blackledge, 2018).

Te Whāriki (2017) acknowledges this increasing diversity, “besides English, te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), some 200 different languages are in used in New Zealand, with Samoan, Hindi, Northern Chinese, French and Yue (Cantonese) being the most common.” It goes on to clarify that as an ‘inclusive curriculum’ the notion of ‘diversity’ also encompasses gender and ethnicity, diversity of ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socio-economic status and religion (p. 13).

“Super diversity is proposed as a summary term, whatever we choose to call it, there is much to be gained by a multi-dimensional perspective on diversity” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1026). Accordingly, the fundamental expectation of Te Whāriki is that each ECE centre will offer a curriculum that recognises the rights and enables active participation of all children (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 12). It states that an inclusive curriculum involves adapting environments and teaching approaches by removing any barriers to participation and learning. “Teaching inclusively means that kaiako/ teachers will work together with families, whānau and community to dismantle such barriers.”

But, has super diversity always been everywhere? (Vertovec, 2015, p. 546). The plethora of variables which contribute to an individual's super diversity are not new, nor are many of their correlations (Rigney, personal communication, 6.9.2020; Vertovec, 2007, p. 1026). It is the emergence of their scale, historical and policy-produced multiple configurations and mutual conditioning that now calls for conceptual distinction (Vertovec, 2015, p. 546).

Where previously diversity tended to be covered by the term ‘multiculturalism’ which described group identities more generally such as immigrants and ethnic minorities, a move to post-multiculturalism unpacks diversity by differentiating the experiences of transnational people reflecting a changing and more nuanced picture of migratory experiences in more realistic and complex detail (Vertovec, 2007; Vertovec, 2010). The description ‘transnational’ encompasses people who sustain social networks or multiple worlds beyond nation states from an array of positions, for example people who might identify anywhere in the realm from ‘transient global elites’ to ‘involuntary immigrants’ (Li, et al., 2021; Vertovec, 2010; Pollock, et al., 2010). However, it should also be noted that a conceivably similar process of multi-dimensional diversification is a global phenomenon which applies to internal migrants and to those individuals who do not move at all (Vertovec, 2015, p. 546; Li et al., 2015, p. 2). In other words, ‘super diversity’ more broadly encompasses social identity, because people themselves are diverse (Vertovec, 2016).

So, “The world has shifted, and a new super-diverse child is walking in the door of the early childhood centre in New Zealand, and they’re Muslim, rich, poor, middle class, autistic, dyslexic, gifted and/ or twice exceptional, they may have a disability. Then there are those with super-diverse ethnicity: the Māori child, the Aboriginal child, the Muslim child, the Tongan child, the Pākehā child, the refugee” (Professor Rigney, personal communication, 2020). The coalescence of variables is affecting the evolution of identity and new super-diverse identities and cultures are the norm (Vertovec, 2017).

Therefore, the classroom demographic and commitment has evolved. This vast array of variables leads to ‘high contingency’, meaning that we can’t predict how things will play out. “This is significant for planning and policy, which presume to know what will happen, but can’t, therefore impacting interventions to be made”(Vertovec, 2016). Of course, super-diversity has major implications for school curriculums in many countries who base whole systems on this fact. However, there are certain predictable ways these new patterns organise themselves and we need to understand these better in order to bring complexity thinking into our organisations. Thomas Erikson’s quote is fitting here, “complexity should be our starting point” (Vertovec & Messiner, 2015 p. 373). A lens which sees the complexities would enable understanding and policies that are fit to purpose” (Vertovec, 2016). The Reggio Emilia Approach shares the view of starting with listening to the child’s complexity, and their principle, the pedagogy of listening is testament to this. “Constructivism born from Dewey which Reggio is built on and argues for the child’s right to

subjectivity (identity). This is the same for the super-diverse learner. As the classroom is increasing and intensifying in complex social dynamics the challenge increases.

Super-diversity is a description which goes beyond diverse because it talks about a much more complex child, than say, just ethnicity: it is the child of today, living in any country (Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney, personal communication, June, 2020 ). The big questions for teachers are: who is the super-diverse child? And, how are we meeting their needs?

### ***Teachers and Challenges.***

Teachers are challenged pedagogically by the phenomenon of super-diversity, where identity is unfixed and individuals and groups are super-diverse across a wide range of variables and thus have multiple, fluid, intersectional identifications (Rigney, personal communication, 2020; Meissner & Vertovec, 2005, p.546). Colonised children are different from immigrant children...different to white children...traditional systems are stretched by the cultural complexities which evolve when multiple historical streams come together, and individuals are required to coalesce and relate to each other from different vantage points (Vertovec, 2007, p.1025/1026; Professor Rigney, lecture to Reggio PhD, June, 2022). The challenge with difference in all its forms is that greater complexity in society brings greater difference and therefore greater inequality (Vertovec, 2021 36:42). In a recent video presentation, Steven Vertovec claimed that, in anthropological terms, “difference is always a part of a stratification mechanism” which influences social organisation and is “based on some kind of ‘presumed’ norm” (Vertovec, 2020, [URL](#)). It is not uncommon to see the challenges of super diversity manifesting as intolerance even in societies traditionally seen as peaceful such as A/NZ. With the new societal and classroom reality of complex identities and the need to reduce inequity, domination and oppression which are exacerbated in complex social environments, there is an even greater need to increase acceptance and tolerance and learn to live and work together peacefully.

Working in education, in a super-diverse world, now urgently demands that teachers understand the super-diverse reality, and the teaching and learning approaches which best work for all super-diverse children. This urgency is to be emphasised because it has implications for the myriad of new cultures and identities which the demographics of globalisation bring into the classroom (Gardner & Rinaldi, 2001, p. 40-42). It is critically important that solutions are found to this dilemma in support of the rights of children. Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in education must develop new ways of pursuing

dialogue and negotiation to build new structures to prevent further human and community devastation (Morrison et al, 2019, p. 50/73).

Super-diversity is the opportunity for the teacher to *see* the learner with open eyes in order to listen to, and deliberately increase and adapt pedagogies which support them to flourish. Humanistic educators believe that it is the right of all children to be listened to by their teachers, and to have their many languages and life worlds recognised in meaningful, quality pedagogies in order that they reach their learning potential (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001; Rigney & Hattam, 2020; Li, 2021; Chan and Ritchie, 2019; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2022; Lipina, online lecture to PhD, February, 2022; Freire, 1993; Gothson, personal communication, 2022). The super-diverse child raises challenges for teachers about how to support the child's right to identity, equity, freedom and democracy.

#### **2.4 Post Colonialism, Māori and New Zealand Early Childhood Education**

In this A/NZ specific early childhood research the research team explores the adaptation of pedagogies as CR in order to specifically meet the vital responsibility we have towards all of our super-diverse children, but listening particularly carefully to the super-diverse Māori child in relation to their needs. We are hopeful that the CRP lens will complement REI's democratic pedagogies and provide teachers with the opportunity to share critical knowledge, understanding and skills which provide children with their right to quality learning which is accessible, equitable and inclusive. In exploring this we will be carrying out an across centre dialogue in order to support each other to co-construct an understanding, starting with the pedagogy of listening.

Included within this is another significant challenge, which is that teachers reflect on how their own personal social, historical, political and cultural constructs in the classroom contribute to the learning relationship. This is because the judgments and decisions they make every day reflect their own image of the child and the value of the experiences and life-worlds children bring to learning which directly influences learning relationships and the quality of children's education and learning outcomes. Emancipatory pedagogies value the world view of the other and do not use deficit lenses (Denzin et al., 2008, p.220; Moll, et al., 2005, 2005; Freire; 2017; May, 2004). The super-diverse lens prompts REI teachers to unpack what this means for them in their setting. "For children to 'be more' we, the adults, need to 'do more'" (Meade, 1995, as cited in May, 2004, p. 181). Building caring and non-deficit relationships allows teachers to use the tools which aid learning (Bishop, 2022, lecture). Te Whāriki opens up space to include dispositional practices. It is focused on the

development of dispositions or habits of mind that continue beyond a lesson or learning outcome” (Morton, et al, 2019). Our notions of quality have been caught up in neoliberal discourses (Ritchie, 2016, p.85) and it may be that through the process of *Progettazione*, teachers and schools, rather than perpetuating this situation, teachers can uncover ways that value quality by alternative conceptions.

Malaguzzi, in his wisdom shares with us:

Either pedagogy- like all the human sciences is remade, reconstructed and updated based on the new conditions of the times, or it loses its nature, its function, its proper capacity to correspond to the times it lives in, and above all to foresee, anticipate and prepare the days of tomorrow (Loris Malaguzzi 1969, as cited in Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 100).

The super- diverse REI classroom urgently requires teachers to understand how to be culturally responsive and adapt pedagogy in order to raise all learners up. This ethnographic research was based in three A/NZ ECE classrooms where teachers explored the CRP in order to adapt REI pedagogy to improve quality in support of their super-diverse children.

Our research has the benefit of many educational scholars in the Pacific region who have been fighting for emancipatory rights of children of indigenous cultures, including equity and inclusion in pedagogy for years (Curry et al., 2019; Chan & Ritchie, 2020; Penetito, 2002; Bishop, 1999; Durie, as cited in May, 2004, p. 178). Relationship based pedagogy is on the rise in the Pacific (Berryman & Eley, 2017; Berryman et al., 2018; Bishop, 1999; Bishop, 2006; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017; Ministry of Education, Tapasa, 2018; Morton, 2023; Rigney, 2020; Rigney et al., 2022; Savage et al., 2011; Sisson et al., 2020; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Resonant of Malaguzzi's metaphor of Alice in Wonderland (Cagliari, 2016) which describes adults reaching across borders (Cagliari et al., 2016) or *territories* described by Rigney & Kelly (2023) and Murriss (2017). REIs principles and values are hopeful ways of adding strength to CRPs because they support teachers to extend the same openness, validation and nurturing through embracing a much broader multi worldview perspective of culture and cultures.

***Contextualised, Meaningful Learning.*** In consideration of the super-diverse children in the Aotearoa/ New Zealand (A/NZ) Early Childhood Education Centres (ECE), my hypothesis is that Reggio Emilia Inspired (REI) democratic pedagogies in the classroom, which is a miniature society (Dewey in Simpson, 2010, p.16) provide the perfect framework with which to develop the foundation for teachers to build the children's capacity to explore and

understand their own uniqueness, through learning with others (Gothson, 2016; Rinaldi, 2021; Cagliari et al., 2016; Dewey, 1938).

Inspired by Dewey, who believed that the school should be designed for students to participate as productive citizens and contributors in a democratic society, Malaguzzi and the REA teachers spark children's learning through projects which were situated in authentic, real life experiences (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 379; Edwards, et al., p. 65; Fullan, et al., 2017; Murdoch, 1998; Murdoch, 2015). Through using the world as a classroom they exposed learners to the stimulation of moving out and about in the community where they could discover the richness of interdisciplinarity and the reciprocity of learning from one another in collaboration and friendship, including the involvement of people and environments from their life worlds such as family, community and experts. "To come to know the world is coming to know oneself, and to face the world with greater confidence and trust" (Cagliari et al, 2016, p. 82, 83, 240, 241, 354). Carla Rinaldi espouses the value and richness of group learning for the opportunity to negotiate ideas and co-construct knowledge with others. This includes the value of different ideas to help children think critically about our theories during their investigations and research (2006, p. 132). REA constructivism supports the super-diverse child through the politics of an inclusive, participatory democracy and a CR classroom. Here, learning and knowledge-building are set in authentic environments which provide opportunities for all children to search for "the being, the essence, the meaning". Pedagogically this is enhanced through the RE principle of the hundred languages (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 69). The REI learning relationship celebrates the epistemological understanding that being human is represented by multiple truths. This means that teachers are required to be cultural learners of children (Durden, 2014); *we are cultural learners of each other*. It provides the opportunity to leverage off the brilliance of each child's uniqueness with an attitude of cultural humility and reciprocity when in dialogue (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2022).

Within the group dynamics there are opportunities for developing democratic relationships of respect, understanding and regeneration. However this involves the teacher developing great sensitivity as they support the bridging of the multiple truths within the ever evolving dynamic of the identities encompassed within class demographic (Vertovec, 2007).

Ethnography enabled me to develop a close relationship with my participants. This allowed me to extrapolate threads of meaning which supported my aim to understand how REA's authentic, project based, Progettazione, pedagogical approaches have been adapted to

be culturally responsive to the many truths and life-worlds of super-diverse children, in a post-colonial way forward for super-diverse children in A/NZ ECE's.

All of these pedagogues believe in the renewal of education in relation to the context, Malaguzzi's words ring true to this day, "we use the same discourse for children, and things are not the same" (Cagliari et al., p. 162).

REA constructivism was applied and through ethnographic methods, we investigated *how* teachers adapt the REI pedagogical system of principles and values in support of the super-diverse learner. It enabled access to a deep understanding of how teachers deal with the more challenging contemporary social and political issues which are accentuated by the super-diverse identity, including colonialism, marginalisation, isolation, multiple truths and the right to equity (Creese & Blackledge, 2018, p. xxiii). The ethnographic approach also made it possible for the researcher to spend extended periods of time with REI teachers in interviews and classroom observations, uncovering *how* they adapt pedagogy to be CR in a super-diverse environment.

The big challenge for teachers within the space where Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Whāriki and super-diversity meet, is to continually recalibrate the delicate political balance regarding how the teacher takes responsibility for disseminating power. Child-centred pedagogies seek to find the balance of authentic, project based interdisciplinary learning which encompasses multi modal world views and theories to develop/improve knowledge and skill building, "and nothing without joy!" (Malaguzzi, cited in Cagliari, et al, 2016). We want to enrich our children's lives and learn more deeply, taking them beyond shallow neoliberal, sit up straight and pass the test outcomes (Chan & Ritchie; Rigney, 2019; Moss & Roberts-Holmes, 2022). But, how to do this in super-diverse settings? (Mitchell and Bateman, 2018). Do we value, welcome and search for possibilities of richness in pedagogy which involve more than the mono white dominant Pākehā lens in our super-diverse society? In an act supporting the rights of the child to identity, it is time to challenge our image of the child and open to the possibilities of encompassing the indigenous Māori worldview while extending beyond and enveloping all cultures, including new super-diverse cultures and identities (Ritchie, 2012; Li, 2021).

The researching attitude of the REI teacher encourages looking at the world through concepts, theories and ideas in different ways. The richness of this is that with and through others we can look at things with new eyes. In the ECE classroom, we have the opportunity to support children to do this too (Murriss, 2017, p. 14). Pedagogically we can challenge ourselves and our learners to widen perceptions, just as the REA offers a broadening of

possibilities through the hundred languages. With children we might reterritorialise dominant conceptualisations of concepts such as ‘pet’, ‘human’ or ‘animal’ by exploring them from different disciplinary areas. For example, dogs from biological and anthropological perspectives, regarding the docking of tails; from a political perspective, such as what goes into dog food and puppy farms (cite). Or it might be from a literary perspective such as dogs as characters in literature. We might also consider how we frame project based inquiry questions (Ann Aberg, as cited in Moss, 2014, p. 139). In this way teachers might include the epistemic traditions and cultural practices within mainstream educational discourse (Rigney & Kelly, 2023) thereby enabling the moments of thinking and knowledge-building into spaces of alternative conceptions, and creating spaces for other discourses. Tatham- Fashanu calls this, a ‘third space pedagogy’ (Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). Reflecting teachers, aware of the rhizomic, evolutionary social constructs which influence and shape our thinking, could pool together CRPs and the REA in the democratic classroom, and celebrate children’s right to uniqueness, regeneration- metamorphosis even, due to the moments of influence they share with their learners because they are aware of their power to shape narratives and lives, within each moment of subjectivity (Rigney, & Kelly, 2021).

Considering that our pedagogical goals in ECE for all super-diverse cultures are for inclusion, belonging, understanding and negotiation of difference and world peace (D’warte & Woodrow, 2023; Lees & Ng, 2020; Ritchie, 2016) we need to better understand how we can conceptualise and use inquiry-based project learning to move through the process of an inquiry starting with fulfilling our commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensuring culture, language, values and beliefs of indigenous Māori are integrated into curriculum development and implementation (Probine, et al., 2023), while also ensuring the rights of new super-diverse identities and cultures are also represented through pedagogy (Chan & Ritchie, 2020, p. 6).

D’warte & Woodrow, (2023) found that pedagogies where teachers can become learners of children and their families’ through the children’s life worlds’ and funds of identity offer inclusive, equitable, meaningful teaching/ learning relationships. Attending a sense of place and ecological identity can help with this (Wattchow & Brown, 2021; Lees and Ng, 2020; Warden, 2010; Maley-Shaw, 2012; Pelo, 2018). “as colonial states come to terms with their commitments to indigenous peoples (Chan & Ritchie, 2019; Penetito, 2001;) and new migrants acquaint themselves not only with the dominant languages and culture of the host society but also be prepared to connect with indigenous knowledges, cultures and lands” (Li, et al., 2021). Penetito (2021) cites Kirkness, (1992, p.34) grounding us in hopeful reality

as we look forward to the post-colonial era, “Unless children learn about the forces that shape them: the history of their people, their values and customs, their language, they will never really know themselves or their potential as human beings.”

In an attempt to emphasise that the politics of the REI teacher directly impacts learning for the children I have used the RE constructivist and the super-diverse conceptual lenses, to put micro pedagogical actions under the microscope. In support of this ethnography’s quest to understand what it is that improves the quality of pedagogy in the super-diverse classroom, specifically the pedagogies which encompasses the principles of a CR REA democracy, and including their shared indicator, using difference as an asset in learning. The reason for this approach to the research questions is because as it progressed and the ethnography became more funnelled (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 197) a hypothesis was formulated that within the micro details of constructivist actions, answers to the problem of what effects what, or more pointedly, what actions improve pedagogies for the super-diverse child, might be revealed. The final (Chapter 7) micro investigation was carried out using Stephen Vertovec’s Social Organisation of Difference Model (2021) which was specifically designed to explore ‘what affects what’. By doing it on a microscopic level it was possible to illuminate how REI pedagogies which are CR can improve access to learning for the super-diverse child.

This literature set the scene for me to face the next chapter, Chapter 4 and the first set of research questions. We begin with the co-constructed search for insight into super-diversity and the super-diverse child.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Methodological Theory

“Every experience is a moving force” (Dewy, 1938, p. 38).

Chapter three describes the methodological design of this research. It includes a justification of why this collection is suited to the task (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.16; Madden, 2010, p. 24; O’Learly, 2021, p. 125; Silverman, p. 119; Madison, 2020, p. 27). The theory can be understood as tiers, where each informs the next.



Figure 1: Methodological Theory (Crotty, 1998, p.4).

#### Summary of Figure 1

Qualitative research makes the search for holistic understanding of the situation possible through methodologies such as those used in this research: ethnographic observations and semi structured interviews, where the researcher is present in the participants' natural environment and which is reliant on building relationships of trust. The qualitative researcher can use deductive and inductive logic. Qualitative research accepts subjectivities and multiple perspectives. It recognises the power of research over both participants and researchers and does not shy away from political agendas (O’Leary, 2021, p. 150).

Constructivism is a scientific and meta theory and constructivists are researchers observing reality being formed in daily life or science (cf. Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002, as cited in Ultanir, 2012). Constructivism is the micro level generative action which supports the theoretical lenses of this thesis, which are The Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) and super-diversity. These were described in Chapter 2, the literature review.

A key epistemological idea of constructivist processing and the shared theoretical perspective in this research, is the notion that one affects the other and is therefore shaped by the other, including the environment (Rinaldi, in Vecchi, 2010, p. 98; Malaguzzi, 1990, in Cagliari, et al, p. 377; Vertovec, 2007). There are many cause-effect relationships, or “ripples that expand” (Rinaldi, 2020, The Reggio Emilia Context. Unpublished Manuscript) playing out in this research, supporting the big picture macro idea that quality education can be a conduit for nurturing the super-diverse child within relationships, families, groups, classrooms, schools, the whole community and wider society (Rinaldi, C., 2022 p, 264; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, lecture to RE PhD, 30 May, 2023).

During this research my two constructivist theoretical lenses, super diversity and RE constructivism shaped an ongoing collaborative knowledge building process within and across centres as the teachers and I researched the meaning of the social construct, super-diverse child (Vertovec, 2007; Rigney, 2020; Li, 2021).

Additionally, and simultaneously, the constructivist paradigm was behind shared knowledge-building as the researcher and participating teachers tried to understand how teachers might support the learning of the super-diverse child through quality, culturally responsive REI pedagogies in the A/NZ early childhood environment.

The findings and analysis were made visible and shaped by an ethnographic methodology. Geertz’s ethnographic ‘thick description’ (1973) was used to pull together the webs of knowledge as it developed within and across centres.

Using a qualitative, constructivist methodological framework and an ethnographic methodology, the research uncovered webs (patterns or themes) of significance (Geertz, 1973; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Madden, 2010, p. 25; Bateson, 1979; O’Leary, 2021; Clair, 2003, p. 19).

### **3.2 Qualitative Research**

The Qualitative methodological approach is relationship oriented. It was chosen for this research because the qualitative approach enabled data collection through personal relationships with the teachers, centres and pedagogy of this research. Qualitative Inquiry is

constructivist in nature and believes that reality is not a given, but that meaning and culture are constructed in the moments of daily interactions and experiences, such as those in children's life worlds including the ECE centre. Qualitative research recognises the diversity of ontological perspectives (Noblit et al, 2004, 157).

Qualitative data is intimate, contextual and holistic. It takes opportunities for gathering meaning within the natural settings of participants' experiences in real time. Qualitative researchers believe that it is impossible to separate any phenomenon from their context without losing meaning (Noblit et al., 2004, p. 158). Therefore it is useful and appropriate in the ECE setting where the child can be seen as growing and changing within a contextualised world view.

Qualitative data is soft and has to be mined from within relationships, collecting words, images and observations that are not quantified (O'Leary, 2021, p. 150). It is not the numerical and statistical data of standardisation and the quantitative tradition, but develops its depth of understanding starting from the complexity of human life. It is more about listening to, rather than extracting from the participants.

Qualitative researchers glean meaning 'from the inside' through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding and of suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the topics under discussion (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 147). They become insiders.

They deliberately seek ways to build knowledge which reflect the everyday lives of individuals, groups, societies and organisations. They do this by working in collaboration with the participants (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.147). In this research it involved co-constructing meaning through using the tools of reflection, review and co-constructed outcomes (O'Leary, p. 150). It was well suited to a study like this where the knowledge is built between research participants.

A qualitative methodological design is "arguably more diverse than quantitative research" (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.146). The patterns that connect are surrounded with interpretive meaning, making it both rich and complex. The qualitative researcher responds to the research questions by trying to select the best methods of analysis in order to collect a true picture and a holistic overview of the content under study, its arrangements, its implicit and explicit rules (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 147).

When working with data qualitative researchers are more likely to use inductive logic, or, building understanding through observation and analysis. But, if it suits their inquiry researchers might also employ deductive logic where they would have ideas or theories in

mind and search the data for potential confirmation of these to inform the process of conceptual knowledge building (O’Leary, 2021, p. 350). In this research I used both.

As qualitative methodologies have developed, a host of commentators have acknowledged that research is a human construction which frames the social world for particular political purposes. They say that the researcher always comes from a certain perspective and that “there is no such thing as a ‘position free’ project, therefore the researcher's positionality should be transparent” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.58). However, commentators also agree that it is important to use these politics with the aim of investigating, understanding and addressing the practices of individuals, social groups and organisations such as schools (Gitlin, 1994, as cited in Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.146; O’Leary, p. 150; Noblit, et al., p. 158).

In this research I used ethnography’s search for webs of significance (Geertz, 1973). I pulled these threads together into themes when patterns become clear. Thick descriptive writing as my main analysis tool. Punch & Oancea, (2014), describe options for how this might be undertaken, “Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, sub-clustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organised to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse and bestow patterns upon them.”

Research which is based on observing, listening to and interpreting what people say and do requires trusting relationships. Participants and the institutions represented need to be able to trust that the researcher, when dealing with data which is subjective by nature, will produce knowledge which is a true representation of what they have co-constructed together, and this is no easy feat (O’Leary, 2021, p. 61). In this research I checked that the data that I had collected from the participants was a true and accurate representation by sharing relevant sections back to them once it had been transcribed. I shared data summaries with my professors.

Overall a qualitative methodology was the best choice for this research for several reasons: It is relationship based, the data is collected in natural contexts, the research design can be tailored to suit the situation where the researcher collaborates with the participants. It links ontologically to the theoretical perspectives of the research: REA, super-diversity and constructivism.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm, Constructivism**

The paradigm behind this research is constructivism. In this portion I will briefly touch on some theoretical ideas which are the first principles of constructivism, particularly as they relate to the relationship between the REA and the super-diverse child.

The term research paradigm may also be expressed by alternative names, methodological theory, theoretical lens, metatheory or metaphysics. Paradigms vary, but they are all based on beliefs about specific ways of looking at the world, including a view of how science should be done (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 107-109, as cited in Punch, p. 17).

Constructivism is a paradigmatic world view which aligns with qualitative research. Both are relationship oriented, believing that reality is not a given, but that meaning and culture are subjective and idiographic (discoverable) and that they are constructed in the moments of people's daily interactions and experiences. Constructivism understands that truth is contextual and influenced by axiology, ontology and epistemology- these evolve from peoples socially, historically culturally situated life worlds. Therefore, constructivism is based on a flexible rather than a fixed ontology (Noblit et al, 2004, 157).

#### **Constructivism, the Reggio Emilia Approach and Super-Diversity**

Constructivism was chosen as the specific way of understanding the REI pedagogical encounters in super-diverse classrooms in this research. It determined that the empirical data gathered could be viewed as it would be in the REA, from the perspective that every experience, relation or motion is a contextually situated interpretation which is set in a particular evolutionary moment in time. Also that the knowledge, understandings and meanings gleaned within each situation are subjective constructs, created by those involved in their interpretation. This is important because in RE the experience for the individual human being at the moment of encounter is key.

The RE image of the child is of one who is competent, meaning that teachers relate to children from a strengths based perspective, and this provides the impetus for quality, democratic and culturally responsive learning experiences. In this research the focus is on teaching-learning encounters, which are particularly significant for the super- diverse child in the RE classroom because they affect the shaping and trajectory of learning, enabling the possibility of equitable access to learning for all.

#### ***Constructivism in learning/education***

Constructivism subscribes to a theory of knowledge whereby realities are local, specific and constructed by the knower. They are also socially and experientially based and

dependent upon the individuals or groups holding them (Gubba and Lincoln, 1994:109-11; as cited in Punch, 2014, p. 18). Humans are perceivers and interpreters who construct their own reality through engaging in mental activities, “Cogito, ergo sum”, I think, therefore I am, (Descartes, 1637). Specifically relating to RE education, constructivism means that the learner actively engages in their own meaning making and that of others (Vygotsky, 1978; Ultanir, 2012, p. 196).

Constructivism as it applies to education has its historical roots in the work of John Dewey, “You have to think to be able to create belief to make it possible to act. But when you act, it always creates doubt that makes it necessary to think again” (Dewey, 1933). In the field of education Dewey provided the initial impetus for the developments which followed, such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky and Brunner (Ultanir, 2012, p.198; Bada & Olusegun, 2015, p. 66; Edwards, et. al. 2012). Although these theorists each had their own constructivist theories about human development, they shared a common belief with Dewey that the purpose of education is to facilitate the naturally developing tendencies and potential of each unique child (Matthews, W. J. 2003, as cited in Ultanir, 2012, p. 199).

A constructivist paradigm is the backbone of this research because Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the REA developed it based on the philosophies of constructivist thinking. Since his time more scholars and thinkers associated with the REA have continued the fight for education which supports the child's right to identity (Rigney, personal communication, 2022).

It is here that we encounter a direct connection to the child of this thesis, the super-diverse child. A child whose social construct is recently identified due to variables being shaped by motion and interaction (Vertovec, 2007). Super-diverse children in the classroom are creating opportunities for teachers who are committed to humanistic and relationship based pedagogies because they are finding that their pedagogies require nuancing in order to meet the needs and be inclusive of all children in their classrooms.

In this research the REA is seen as a hopeful inspirational addition to the existing A/NZ Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki. I am hoping to find that it can provide insight into quality education for the super-diverse child. This is because when teachers are inspired to use RE's principle and value based approach, it is possible to enhance opportunities for CRPs. RE teachers are aware that their pedagogies affect the learning trajectories of the children. They work in an assets based way. Consequently I am particularly hopeful of finding CRPs for the super-diverse child in REI, ECEs in A/NZ (Rinaldi, 2022, personal communication; Rigney, 2022, personal communication; Gothson, 2023 personal

communication; Ladson- Billings, 1995; Durden, 2014; Bishop, 1999; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; May, 2004; May & Carr, 2015; Haynes-Mendez & Engelsmeier, 2020; Rincon-Gallardo, 2019; Moll et al., 2005).

Methodologically a constructivist paradigm aligns with qualitative research. Together they enable relationship based methods which can provide close proximal access to people's everyday experiences. Therefore they enable opportunities to come close to understanding what is important for teaching super-diverse children (Punch, 2014, p. 18; Silverman, 2021, p. 3; Charmaz, 2014 as cited in Silverman, 2021, p. 378). A researching culture with relationship driven philosophies similar to qualitative constructivist research is the REA (Gothson, personal communication, 2020/ 21/22/23). In the RE classroom teachers are open to multiple worldviews and the hundred languages of children (Rinaldi, 2021; Cagliari et al., p. 372; Punch and Oancea, 2014, p. 18).

Constructivism is an active, responsive, adaptable and evolving paradigm. It provides a suitable theoretical lens for the ontological and epistemological orientation of my research which involves concepts based on change and motion, including: subjectivity, relationships, contextualisation, adaptation, re-territorialisation, transposition, regeneration and reflection. It is a natural fit as the paradigm behind this research. Insight into my research questions come to fruition as a result of its methods and methodologies, lenses and understandings (Adom et al, 2016; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012; Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Ultanir, 2012; Jonassen, 1991; Rinaldi, C., 2022, p. 267).

### **3.4 Ethnographic Methodology**

We must be more aware that the idea of a describer who is external to situations or the external observer is in a period of decline and in a highly controversial phase; so that today it seems inevitable that once we accept the constant circularity between ourselves and the world it is clear that none of us is an external observer. We are an inside observer, an internal observer. So all the issues of the capacity, possibility and competency of observation as a source of information have now fallen into crisis; it is a situation we have walked with too much confidence and bravado. As if we were capable of detaching, and producing a distance not only from children but from our own selves; and much of us is inside children ... so the issue is even more critical (Malaguzzi, in Cagliari et al., p.336).

Ethnography is the life of a humanistic teacher. To empathise and understand the other is to walk in their shoes; it is about entering another's world, and trying to see it from their perspective.

Ethnography is a qualitative research methodology particularly suited to research projects that aim to gain in-depth understandings of the lived experience of children and teachers in early childhood care and education settings (Ritchie, 2019).

All children are rich (Malaguzzi as cited in Cagliari et al., p.369). It is their environment that either supports them, advantages them, or disadvantages them, causing them life experience wrapped in degrees from meaning to impoverishment (Malaguzzi as cited in Cagliari et al., p. 336; Rinaldi, p. 91; 182; Rigney, 2020; Moll et al., 2005; Bishop, 2019; Professor Sebastian Lipina, PhD Seminar 16.2. 2022, 2021).

Super-diverse children, including indigenous Māori children are my key research focus. Ethnography was chosen as the research methodology which could bring insight into how REI ECEs in A/NZ develop their pedagogies to be inclusive of all super-diverse children in the ECE classroom.

The point of ethnography is to highlight the contextual factors affecting the lives of those in a particular setting, using a humanistic, relationship based methodology (Noblit et al., 2004, p.157). Ethnography is the qualitative technique of actively listening to, and hearing the voices of those in their natural setting in order to understand their genuine existential conditions, in real time, including problems and the efforts aimed at their resolution (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 160; Jackson, 1998, p. 136). Within this it is accepting that what we see depends on where and how we look (O'Leary, 2021, p.152). "However, what most notably distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is the more active role assigned to the cognitive modes of observing, watching, seeing, looking and scrutinising" (Silverman, 2021, p. 109). The aim is to build a rich picture of a situation from multifaceted angles (O'Leary, 2021, p, 152). Ethnography is active, evolving and responsive because it is carried out in relation with people in their natural setting, on the topic of focus through dialogue, interviews and observations. Prolonged engagement gives the researcher sufficient time to learn the culture, understand the context and build trust and rapport (O'Leary, 2021, p. 152).

Ethnography is political, it is a research approach involving reflexivity, transparency, collaboration, democracy and humility. The way ethnography is practised by the researcher is a statement about hierarchy, power sharing, equity, social justice "including power over who gets to claim truth and what counts as valuable knowledge" (Urrieta and Hatt, 2019, p.12).

Importantly, the ethnographer's positionality and how their efforts may enable or hinder others must never be underestimated in the process (Davis, 1999, as cited in Madison, 2005. P.7; Murillo, Jr, 2004 in p.7 Madison).

### **Relationships**

Quality relationships are arguably the most important ingredient in ethnography. They depend on one's ability to build a safe psychological space and rapport within the community of the research setting. This includes learning their code in order to come as close as possible to shared understandings (Silverman, p. 110 & 148; Mead, 1930/1968, p. 213, as cited in James, 2011, p.5, as cited in Ritchie, 2019, p. 2/17). Considering this is established, productive conversations, interviews and observations about issues related to super diversity may proceed (Ritchie, 2019, 8/17; Silverman, 2021, p.110 & 148).

### **Positionality**

Transitioning from outsider to insider as an ethnographer (Ritchie, 2019, p.8; Eder & Corsaro, 2015; Glucksman, M. 2009; Lubeck, 1985; Urrieta & Hatt, 2019, p. 9; Noblit et al., 2004, p.157) was made easier for me as I was not only inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, but being a New Zealand teacher I was entering a world of familiar values, interests and perspectives. Teachers are ethnographers too, and in the words of Durden et al, 2014 "they are cultural learners of children." Interestingly my research did find me in slightly unfamiliar territory, being a primary school teacher and not an early childhood one. However, I highly value learning to walk in others' shoes in order to understand and empathise with them, and this was of benefit when the teachers and I engaged as there was a welcoming openness as we built relationships of equality and learning together. This position meant that I was genuinely able to take on the ethnographic mindset of naïve enquirer which was easy to do because being a primary school teacher not an early childhood one I was both an insider and an outsider, so although we were in the same book, there was a lot I could learn from the pages of early childhood about REI teaching and learning, and this made my naïve enquirer ethnographic position useful when observing or with the intention to really listen and understand the teachers perspectives.

### **Relational Framework**

Some suggest taking an idea of a 'relational framework' into ethnographic field work in order to create a research culture based around reciprocal listening- thus setting the scene for deeper meanings of exchange (Goodall Jnr, p. 105; Malaguzzi as cited in Cagliari et al, p. 336; Urrieta and Hatt, 2019, p. 9/21; Wolcott, 2008, as cited in Punch & Oancea, 2014, p.

162). Below I will set out the ethnographic framework employed in this research. The key ethnographic framework I used for the collaborative knowledge building between the teachers and myself was ‘horizontal’, as opposed to ‘vertical’. My intention was to establish equitable, collegial relationships (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019, p. 11; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 76). Ethnography offers an alternative to traditional positivist research that has historically hierarchically positioned the participant as the less powerful ‘other’ to the researcher” (Mac Naughton, Smith & Davis, 2007, p.167; cited in Ritchie, 2019, 9/17). “Interviewees share the work of the interviewer, they are treated as partners, rather than objects of research” (Madison, 2005, P.25). I attempted to approach all conversations, including the uncomfortable ones by using the transformative dialogical approach used in the Reggio Emilia Approach (Rinaldi, 2006, p.76/ 184-85), and also, the principle of charity. Both have the deliberate intention of welcoming, truly listening and trying to understand the Other from their own position and experience, not treating the Other as the same. They share the understanding that multiple realities exist (Silverman, p.378; Urrieta and Hatt, 2019 p.9; Rinaldi, 2006 p. 15). These dialogues were navigated in Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) where I attempted to tailor discussions to suit where teachers were at.

Human growth, for Dewey, is more than physical. It is also moral and intellectual. It is a form of development, an opening up or unfolding of potentialities. It entails an increase in the organism’s power to perceive differences and to engage effectively with its environment. It results in an expansion of meaning and value (Jackson, 1998, p. 47).

I intentionally set out to imbue our ethnographic framework with joy, fun, humour and trust aiming to make it a safe space for discussion (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001, p. 43). Malaguzzi’s hundred languages of children poem, which I have included in chapter 6, represents the visual metaphor for the possibility of many ways of seeing and learning (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 259).

As an ethnographer I entered the world of RE inspired teachers with these ethnographic ideas front of mind. I also looked for teachers as ethnographers in their practice.

### **3.5 Research Methods**

The above introduction explained the philosophical structure which formed the methodological framework of this research. In the coming section, more concrete methods for implementing ethnography are shared. I initially outline the study design, incorporating a brief description of the research sites and participants, and then I will describe the ethnographic methods used for data collection and analysis.

### 3.6 Study Design

#### Preschool and Teacher Selection

The study takes place in three Reggio Emilia Inspired ECEs across A/NZ. Arrowtown Preschool is in the lower South Island. Bear Park Early Learning Centre and Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten are in our biggest city, Auckland, which is in the North Island. They are diverse in geographic location and demographics. Although they are all RE inspired, they are from different pockets in A/NZ. This was deliberate as I wanted to be inclusive of a wide representation of A/NZ REI ECEs as possible. Each of the three ECEs represents a different REI network in A/NZ. Each is a different ECE structure, demographic and geographical area in the country. They are super-diverse. Due to their different dynamics, the classrooms in the study encompassed a varying mix of age groups, but each of them contained children of the age I wanted to use to find out more about super-diverse, three to five year olds.

The process of selection began in October, 2020 and involved finding RE inspired ECEs from around A/NZ. I began this process by discovering key A/NZ RE inspired leaders, who made suggestions about pathways for gathering together a research team. Once I had found some who were interested, I met with them to share a formal presentation about the topic of my research, which was to find and understand pedagogy for the super-diverse child. My selection process was guided by Carla Rinaldi, who explained that to be defined as a Reggio Inspired ECE the centre needs to be able identify at least five RE principles and values they are inspired by. “The image of the child is key” (Rinaldi, personal communication, June, 2020).

The initial recruitment phase was during the Covid19 lockdown period, so all of the selection meetings were carried out by Zoom, or on the phone. These meetings gave me a general sense of each centre's RE inspiration, but to support my decision making I discussed my selections with some of my professors. Eventually the three ECEs accepted my invitation to come on board. A more detailed ethnographic description of my introduction to the head teachers and their REI centres is shared at the start of Chapter 4.

The head teachers introduced me to their teaching teams in our first Zoom meetings and I was able to connect with all of these teachers when I arrived on site. All of the teams had their super-diverse projects underway by the time I arrived, and I was able to observe them in class. Over the duration of the research, I ended up following one or two specific super-diverse projects with certain teachers, because they were the ones which provided

hopeful leads. So I ended up spending more time with the teachers who were involved in those projects.

### **Pseudonyms**

Due to the ethics guidelines set by the University of Modena and Unimore, all participants' names in this thesis have been changed to pseudonyms.

### **Pre Data Gathering, December, 2020**

After the ECEs in my study had been confirmed, I met with each head teacher individually to share more about the focus of the research. At that meeting I shared with them a copy of the presentation which I had shared with them at our initial selection meetings. I also gave them a collection of five pieces of literature significant to the research, for their professional development. We talked about the best way to disseminate the literature, and each head teacher felt it was best if they shared and discussed it within their teams, as opposed to me leading staff meetings by Zoom. This gave them autonomy and they could come back to me at any time with questions or issues. The plan was for me to join them and begin my onsite empirical research with them, in early 2021. Until then the teaching teams, equipped with the literature package, would explore the concept of super-diversity, the super-diverse child and how their REI pedagogies might support the children with a focus on the principles and values of the REA (Rinaldi, 2006), CRPs (Morrison, et al., 2019) and democracy in their classrooms (Gothson, 2016).

During this time I collated some of the key ideas from the literature provided about each hopeful approach onto three documents which I called 'coding tools'. The culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) and democracy (DEM) coding tools contained quite a lot of detail because I felt this might be helpful for the teachers. But the RE coding tool had less principles and values on it. I deliberately chose to leave it more open so that the teachers' RE inspiration would be what determined the REI line of inquiry we followed. The coding summaries were qualitative research tools.

As discussed with the head teachers, the deductive coding tools gave the teams a general sense of the direction of where I felt we would find hope, in terms of the REA, CRPs and democracy in the classroom (DEM).

Due to Covid19 lockdowns we had to carry out the first set of semi-structured interviews by Zoom, and the onsite ethnographic observations were put on hold. The questions were shared with each team about two weeks before we met.

**Phase one of the ethnographic data gathering process began in March 2021, by Zoom**

This involved me carrying out the semi-structured interviews (Punch, 2014, p.186/197; O’Leary, p. 153-156/ 251). Each centre’s meeting was held at separate times. In total this involved 17 REI teachers across the three ECEs and each interview was in a group format (Punch, 2014, p.184). The interviews were initiated by two question stems as follows:

1. What is super diversity and who is the super-diverse child?
2. How is REI pedagogy supportive of the super-diverse child in A/NZ ECEs?

All of these meetings were recorded. The teachers were aware that we were co-constructing understanding of the super-diverse child in an across centre dialogue. There was a sense of working in the spirit of Reggio Emilia’s pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi, 2006) contributing to our developing awareness, knowledge building and understanding of super diversity and the super-diverse child in ECE classrooms. These findings are presented in Chapter 4, Part 1 and 2.

After these meetings I transcribed the Zoom recordings on Otter.ai. Then based on our shared coding tools I made selections from the stories shared by the teachers which strongly represented indicators deduced from the three hopeful approaches on the coding tools. The strongest narratives or stories I reproduced in their complete form and presented them as learning stories for the teachers to check for accuracy of transcription. After this I shared the stories that I had selected from each centre with the head teachers, and they checked to see that I had made accurate transcriptions and interpretations before returning them to me. Once we were all happy I collated an across centre document containing several of these examples and understandings from each centre, which I also shared with my professors. The collection of examples became a focus discussion document used for reflection and re-focusing during the professional development meeting held with each team at the staff meetings held in November 2021. At this meeting we shared co-constructed understandings and set the focus for the next phase.

**Phase two: Field trip one- onsite ethnographic data gathering, April, 2021**

The aim of this stage was to carry out observations and semi-structured interviews with the teachers on site. Also to collect any relevant documentation. I recorded the interviews and observations on video. I visited Arrowtown Preschool, 21st April, 2021. Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten, 10th & 11th May, 2021 and my final visit was to Bear Park Early Learning Centre, 12th and 13th of May, 2021.

**The main focus was:**

1. To understand how the Reggio Inspired teacher uses the POL to tap into the needs, interests and aspirations of the super-diverse learner.
2. To find stories where the teachers have connected to the children's world views including adapted REI pedagogies to be inclusive for their super-diverse children.

\*I carried out the same data transcription process as I had in stage one.

**Phase three: Professional Development- preparing teachers for round two**

In November, 2021 I met with each team for a staff meeting. I met Arrowtown Preschool staff on site and I met Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten and Bear Park Early Learning Centre on Zoom. The plan was to reflect on the emerging ethnographic webs (patterns or themes) and to share some of the promising empirical data from each team, with each team. I had collated this information into a booklet called, '*Bear Park Staff Meeting*' (or the correct corresponding centre name). My intention was for each team to be informed about the process in terms of other people's conceptualisations around the topic and to instigate a shared dialogue to help them give and receive inspiration from each other. In other words, to support each other and to build knowledge together across the teams.

During the meetings we looked at some of the pedagogical examples collated in the Bear Park document which had been collected from each centre during the course of phase one. We discussed emerging themes arising in the data from across all three hopeful approaches REI, CRP and DEM. The aim was to continue to reinforce and support the teachers to understand that I felt a move towards finding pedagogical treasure for the super-diverse child needed to include principles and values, characteristics or indicators represented by the three hopeful approaches.

Based on my own teaching experience and Vertove's literature I felt that the link which all three coding tools shared which was *using the negotiation of difference* [emphasis added] *as an asset in learning* was a very important lead to follow (see Appendix A, p. 10). The teachers agreed to follow this lead into the next round.

A significant introduction to the conversation at this point was the teacher's lens. The idea here was for teachers to actually (if they hadn't before), start to consider how their own social construct shapes their professional teaching/ learning relationships. In effect, prompting thinking about awareness of what social constructs, including the RE principles of the 'image of the child' and the 'rights of the child' that they bring to the classroom.

The outcome of the first phase of research was that the RE principles, the hundred languages of children, the pedagogy of listening and the environment as the third teacher were the REI pedagogies which contained the strongest elements and/or combinations of the hopeful coding tools.

The other outcome was that these stronger principles emerged within the bigger projects, or inquiries that the centres were undertaking. This meant that I was now able to locate them within contextual stories, and look at the pedagogical approaches from a more holistic perspective.

Therefore the reader will find that the findings chapters are set out accordingly. Chapter 5 is based on the RE principle, the environment as the third teacher. Chapter 6 is based on the hundred languages of children, and Chapter 7, the pedagogy of listening. These findings led me deeper into the REI pedagogies where I was able to locate webs related to connections between indicators.

At the staff meetings I also emphasised topics such as continuing to be aware of the CRP characteristics which could offer possibilities for equity and support for those at greater risk of isolation, an issue discussed by Vertovec (2007) and Li (2019) in the super-diversity literature. Additionally I reinforced the importance of play, fun and joy in learning.

My contribution to the professional development at this time was supported by broader social justice based literature, in the quest for understanding the needs of the super-diverse child:

- Rincón-Gallardo, S. (2019). *Liberating learning: Educational change as social movement*. Routledge.
- Jackson, P. W. (1998). *John Dewey and the lessons of art*. Yale University Press.

Once again, the plan was to leave these shared meetings loaded with a sharper lens of what is going on in classroom relationships, learning and groups, with the goal of getting closer to pedagogies for the super-diverse child.

#### **Phase 4. Final empirical field trip**

The professional development above contributed towards the teachers work in their pedagogical projects that each ECE was continuing to work on until our final round of empirical field trips, which occurred between December 2021 and February, 2022. It fed into the focus for the final onsite visit where I was able to undertake further semi-structured interviews and observations. The following is a general outline of the points for discussion during this phase of empirical data collection. The main focuses were:

1. In what ways do teachers deliberately see and work with their super-diverse learners from an assets based perspective?
2. What pedagogies- catalysed by a super diversity lens, specifically support the bridging of difference- in order to provide a quality learning experience?
3. How does a Reggio Inspired teacher teach in a way that supports the super-diverse by bringing CRP, REA and DEM values to life?
4. How do teachers enrich super-diverse identities by nurturing the super diversity (uniqueness) of each child?
5. Can we capture the essence of what it is that builds quality pedagogies for navigating the super-diverse phenomenon in the ECE classroom?
6. How do we as teachers reflect on our work and our own lenses?
7. How do you support the super-diverse child's involvement in the group?
8. JOY in learning includes play, fun, humour, emotions, charity/generosity and empathy. How do teachers use these qualities and attitudes to emphasise the value of positive, not deficit mindsets when dealing with differences, including the challenges that subjectivity brings?

The data from the final visits went through the same transcription process as I had initially used. But this time I spent more time studying promising pedagogies in more micro detail and comparing them with the literature. The stories and narratives collected were collected in a booklet called '*Sharing the Learning.*' In this document ethnographic webs (patterns or themes) related to my coding process were identified. The document was also shared with my professors (see Appendix A).

### **3.7 Data Collection**

One very important ethnographic premise is to build strong relationships with the teachers. This included being transparent with them about the fact that our across centre data collection was not in a competitive spirit but more that each was representing their own niche in across centre problem solving or co-construction of knowledge. The aim for all of us was to deepen our understanding and explore pedagogical solutions for the contemporary contextual challenges we face. The ultimate purpose was to be more inclusive and supportive of all children in our classrooms.

### **The ethnographic methods I used to do this are as follows:**

#### **Ethnographic Data Collection**

Ethnography is both theory and practice (Ritchie, 2019). The aim of ethnography is to get as close as possible to the culture one is studying in order to explore the research questions (Geertz, 1973). It is “to understand the patterns of this daily existence” (Geertz, 1973; Wax and Wax, 1980, as cited in Lubeck, p. 49; Silverman, 2021; Punch & Oancea, 2014; O’Leary, 2021).

It is both a process of working to build a detailed picture of the theory of the workings of the chosen culture, *and* a product which is an intricate written description of the picture (Bauman, 1972 & Ericson, 1979, as cited in Lubeck, 1985; Ritchie, 2019). “Ethnography is what the anthropologist does *and also* the written record” (Geertz, cited in Lubeck, 1985, p. 47). Ethnography literally means to write about culture (O’Leary, 2021, p.153). The ethnographer IS the research instrument and interlocutor. “The ethnographer’s task is to apprehend then to render through description the meaning system of an interacting group’ (Geertz, 1973, p.48). Knowing this heightens the importance of the ethnographer’s awareness that they bring their own personal social and political constructs to the research; that they know what it entails; and that they are transparent about it, in order to take responsibility for their orientation because it affects how they look, what they see (Ritchie, 2019).

The way data is gathered in ethnographic research is through the ethnographic data gathering techniques of semi structured interviews and observations. Clifford Geertz articulated what needs to be done. He explained that the task is to unravel webs of significance,

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is the explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatic (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

To support his statement, Geertz famously he articulated the difference between ‘thin’ description- that is, description that gives us facts about social behaviour such as, for example, ‘the boy blinks’ and ‘thick’ description, which means reading the meaning of the behaviour (the boy winks being the most basic step in that direction). Seen in this way, description ceases to be a mere statement of fact and becomes a form of understanding

(Punch, 2014, p.23). “That’s all there is to it: A speck of behaviour, a fleck of culture, and -voila!- a gesture” (Geertz, 1973, p. 6).

### **3.7.1 Data Collection Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews use a flexible structure. Interviewers start with a defined questioning plan, but will shift to follow the natural flow of conversation. Interviewers may also deviate from the plan to follow interesting tangents. The advantage here is being able to come away with all the data you intended but also interesting and unexpected data that emerge (O’Leary, 2021, p. 251).

In a bid to understand, describe and interpret a way of life from the point of view of the participants. The researcher deliberately suspends their own judgement, with the intention of getting as close as possible to understanding the perspective of the researched. This is premised on the fact that how one processes the world is constructed and constrained by cultural experience (O’Leary, p. 153). As mentioned, the key style of analysis is thick description therefore, the idea of the interviews is to collect detailed data (*Women on the Line*, Glucksmann, 1982; Geertz, [1973] 2000, as cited in O’Leary, 2021, p.154; Lubeck, 1985; Ritchie, 2019). Understanding participants' perspectives is built through cultural empathy. This means being open to taking multiple views into account and trying to grasp the meanings that the participants use to make sense of the world, aware that it is impossible to be impartial, or completely neutral (O’Leary, p. 153). The goal is to go beyond an exploration of simply what is, and begin to explore why it is (Lubeck, 1985).

### **3.7.2 Data Collection: Classroom Observations and conversations with a purpose**

Ethnographic approaches to observation tend to be unstructured (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 196). The ethnographer starts with questions and intentions and follows leads in a natural open-ended way. “Whatever the recording technique, the behaviour is observed as the stream of actions and events naturally unfold” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 196). The process of observation evolves through a series of different activities. As the study progresses the nature of the observation sharpens in focus. Ethnographic research should have a characteristic funnel structure being progressively focused over its course (Hammersley & Aitkenson as cited in Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 197).

In this research I was able to discreetly video all observations on my iphone, with permission from the teachers. I offered them copies of my recordings and one teacher asked that I download the videos captured into a folder on their shared centre computer, which I did

on my final day. I felt very fortunate to be able to capture observations and conversations on video, as it meant I could be fully present in our conversations.

Sharing my ethnographic positioning as a participant observer both insider and outsider with the teachers from the outset, meant that I was also able to combine observations with informal interviews to clarify things that had happened in the lesson immediately afterwards if required, and so I was able to capture their fresh thoughts and reflections. This happened between myself and one other teacher, or groups of teachers. Being able to join conversations as an insider, was another good way of helping the data gathering remain a very natural process and consequently I felt that the teachers regarded me as reasonably unobtrusive, and this meant the data flowed naturally.

### **3.8 Data Analysis: Ethnography**

Ethnographic data analysis occurs as the researcher goes through the research process. They make selections and funnel the focus over the course of the research (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 197; Madden, 2010). The funnelling and interpretation of data is expressed through the writing of the thick description. "Writing is part of the ethnographic method, not addendum to it" (Madden, 2010, p. 166). The stories that develop from within the webs of data should reflect four things: the researchers purpose for 'being there', the written description should give the authority of 'being there', they should be engaging with analysis and interpretation and finally they should sustain their reason for 'being there' through to the conclusion of the project (Madden, 2010, p. 157). Ethnographers may find that they need to write in one style or another, depending on the context. "It's a case of 'horses for courses' one needs to be a flexible enough ethnographic author to write for these different contexts of ethnographic writing" (Madden, 2010, p. 166). Van Maanen (1988, as cited in Madden, p. 163) says that ethnographers might possibly overlap three styles, 1. Realist, 2. Confessional and 3. Impressionist, in order to communicate the message and tone of the presentation (Madden, 2010, p. 162).

Over time the research problem needs to be developed or transformed and eventually its scope is clarified and delimited and its internal structure explored. In the sense, it is frequently well into the process of inquiry that one discovers what the research is really about, and not uncommonly it turns out to be about something rather different from the initial foreshadowed problems (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995: 206, as cited in Punch and Oancea, 2014, p. 197).

### **3.8.1 Analysis Process**

The focus of analysis is finding pedagogies, and their characteristics, of relationship based pedagogy for the super-diverse child in A/NZ ECEs (Bishop, 1999). As a general guide at the beginning of the research, I set myself the task of looking for the principles or indicators in four general areas: In the classroom environment, in the professional dialogue, in pedagogical design and in teaching learning relationships. If they were present in these areas then I would be looking in a positive direction. My reasoning was that pedagogical examples used by teachers in the super-diverse classroom which contained all three hopeful approaches (CRP, REI & DEM), would then enable me to identify the three REI principles that were being used in quality ways for the super-diverse child in the projects that the centres were working on during my research. Then I would be able to open each centre's data for investigation in greater depth. This would help me find out how REI pedagogy is embodied in support of the cultural languages of the super-diverse child.

### **3.8.2 The Focus of Analysis**

#### **Analysis step one:**

The narratives and stories were collected as ethnographic data. They were deductively sourced based on the coding tools and inductive reasoning was also applied, based on interviews and observations with the teachers.

Analysis of Chapter 4, Part 1 and 2, what is super-diversity? and who is the super-diverse child? revealed that super-diversity is part of life in all centres, and that teachers are adapting the REI approach to support super-diverse children.

The analysis process also revealed pedagogies based on REI principles (or themes) environment as the third teacher, the hundred languages and the POL contained the strongest indicators of each hopeful approach, REA, CRP and DEM in each centre.

#### **Analysis step two:**

Within the REI pedagogical stories, the researcher used a combination of the qualitative tools of inductive and deductive reasoning based on the coding tools (deductive) and the empirical evidence provided by the teachers (inductive) (O'Leary, 2021, p. 351). I connected the threads into ethnographic webs/themes using Geertz's thick description (Geertz, 1973). These were the unique RE inspiration of the CRP, DEM REA principles identified in each centre's RE pedagogical projects which are described in the following chapters.

### 3.8.3 Findings

The first of these findings, RE's principle the environment as the third teacher (E3) is shared in chapter 5. Environment as the third teacher was one of the three strongest REI principles to emerge as a strong theme across all of the ECE centres in the research. The second set of the strongest of the three themes will be presented in Chapter 6, the hundred languages of children; and the third in chapter 7, the pedagogy of listening and documentation.

In chapters 5 and 6 I have chosen to represent each centre's environment as the third teacher and hundred languages projects by their particular RE inspiration. These are as follows:

- Arrowtown- REI's Environment as 3rd teacher for super-diverse bicultural Māori child.
- PBK- CRP Environment as 3rd teacher for immigrant children.
- BP- DEM Environment as 3rd teacher listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse Kiwi/ Chinese children.

### Final data analysis

In chapter 7 the same ethnographic processes were applied where I collected data via semi-structured interviews, observations and documentation. The ethnographic stories in chapter 7 were not part of the chapter 5 and 6 projects, but new and smaller projects.

This time the analysis was done in two ways: Firstly I analysed the project based inquiries in the light of the coding tools, as before. Secondly, using Vertovec's social organisation of difference model, in a micro analysis, I analysed the specific ways, or pedagogical actions, or political choices made by teachers which supported the bridging of difference. I unpacked and analysed the data carefully by rewinding and rewatching the recordings. Also by revisiting the literature (including new literature) and looking in very close detail to find the strongest examples. I used Post-it notes and memos in the margins of the transcripts to identify webs of connection, patterns and themes, once again pulling together webs or themes of indicators or principles which were related. This information, too, was collected together in co-constructed understandings.

### Outcomes

The outcomes provided understandings about pedagogies for the super-diverse learner ranging from:

1. The adaptation of REI pedagogies using CRP, DEM characteristics, specifically based on the findings of E3, 100L and the POL.
2. Secondly, the characteristics of relationship based pedagogies which address issues faced in the contemporary ECE classroom such as regeneration of culture, building new cultures, welcoming cultures and bridging cultures.

These are presented across chapters 5, 6 and 7 and then the co-constructed understandings are collated in chapter 8.

## Chapter Four, Part One

### What is Super-Diversity?

#### 4.1.1 Ethnography

The role of ethnographer is a very privileged position. To be in the precarious position of a researcher who is both insider and outsider (Clair, 2003) was one that I struggled with in the moments I was aware of being a primary teacher, and not an early childhood one. And yet, as a Reggio Emilia Inspired (REI) ethnographer charged with leading our co-constructed investigation into discovering who the super-diverse child is, being an outsider made the open researching perspective more accessible. There were benefits to having both perspectives.

Similarly, being a primary school teacher from Aotearoa New Zealand (A/NZ), a woman and mother who is inspired by Reggio Emilia's (RE) philosophies is a different plane of experience to the teachers who live the experience in REI centres every day. This is just as I imagine there is a difference between being a teacher in a RE preschool, and a REI teacher in A/NZ. Perspectives are relative and subjective. I am acutely aware that the opportunity to become an ethnographer on the inside, when I was also an outsider, one who was granted the opportunity to be immersed in the RE educational culture both in Italy and in A/NZ, has given me an unique lens, as another voice to add to those who promote the rights of children.

I believe that it was valuable as an ethnographer to maintain an awareness of this particular mindset construction, because it meant that ultimately I would be able to share with the reader my unique insider/outsider perspective on the outcome of this research. Additionally, I will also be in a position to be able to share an equally important outcome: a story which describes what it means to be inspired by RE, in a way that comes from a collaboration between RE theorists and REI teachers in A/NZ, from the viewpoint of a REI researcher who has embodied the prepared to be unprepared approach to listening.

#### **Ethnographic mindset**

The aim of ethnography is to get as close as possible to the culture one is studying in order to explore the research questions (Geertz, 1973). It is "...to understand the patterns of this daily existence..." (Wax and Wax, 1980, as cited in Lubeck, p. 1985, p. 49). It is both a process of working to build a detailed picture of the theory of the workings of the chosen culture, *and* a product which is an intricate written description of the picture (Bauman, 1972 & Ericson, 1979, as cited in Lubeck, 1985; Ritchie, 2019). "Ethnography is what the anthropologist does and also the written record" (Geertz, cited in Lubeck, 1985, p. 47). The

ethnographer is ultimately the research instrument and interlocutor. “The ethnographer’s task is to apprehend then to render through description the meaning system of an interacting group’ (Geertz, 1973, p.48). Knowing this heightens the importance of the ethnographer’s awareness that they bring their own personal social and political constructs to the research, that they know what it entails; and that they are transparent about it, in order to take responsibility for their orientation because it affects how they look, what they see (Ritchie, 2019).

Having an awareness that ultimately one's ethnographic comment is situated historically and contributes to shaping trajectories is also part of the responsibility, as is representing the participants’ ideas. This is an act of trust. Fortunately for me, having the chance to undertake my PhD through the RE Foundation, I had access to and support from RE professors Carla Rinaldi and Harold Gothson. Speaking with them enabled me to take responsibility for my insider/outsider perspectives. I was fortunate to spend time with each of them in person when I moved to Italy at the end of 2019 to take up the PhD. This set up the trusting relationship we have maintained throughout the process by Zoom, due to the fact I had to continue my research remotely after returning to A/NZ in early 2020 after the onset of Covid 19 in Italy.

As a teacher, being an ethnographer is a familiar tool to me. My particular style is very much aiming to walk in another’s shoes, or trying to understand other people’s perspectives in relation to my own. This was always with these questions: ‘How might these ideas collaborate, meld or morph? How can I support the learner in my care by getting alongside them?’ trying to work within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). I recognise the open researching mindset of the REA in my own approach (Gothson, personal communication, 2023), and the value of research was also prominent from my first meetings with the REI teachers in A/NZ. This made me feel assured that REI approaches would safely support and enable this research to be undertaken within A/NZ's ECE sector. The first questions to be addressed in this research were: What is super-diversity? and Who is the super-diverse child?

### **REA Theoretical Frame**

In terms of declaring the political stance of this educational research my allegiance is with relationship based ECE education which is culturally responsive and set in a democratic classroom. The principles and values of REA bring these philosophies to life, enhancing Te Whāriki, the A/NZ ECE curriculum. This combination is the approach which frames the way I looked at the empirical data.

The search for insight into the question, *who is the super-diverse child?* is a co-constructed dialogue in a shared knowledge-building process, by a team which is inspired by RE's constructivist paradigm: the professors, the literature, the head teachers and teachers, and myself as the researcher.

### **Who is the super-diverse child?**

Evidence in demographic data indicates that A/NZ, particularly Auckland, meets the description for super-diversity as described in relevant literature (Vertovec et al., 2016; Chen, 2015; Li, 2019), and as discussed with my professors. I believe that I experienced super-diversity in my own primary school classroom in 2019 so I considered that it was highly probable that this same practical reality would also have been experienced by other teachers in similar situations.

### **However, the first task was to define super-diversity**

Loris Malaguzzi talked about learning being like a tangle of spaghetti (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 7). He was suggesting that learning takes a non-linear trajectory. I felt our ethnographic research process was spaghetti-like because of my desire to co-construct meaning across centres. My aim was to take into account all of the voices involved, to try to uncover and make visible the child as super-diverse. Non-linearity was certainly the case. However, it was imperative that as much progress towards insight was made as soon as possible, because our end goal was to find pedagogies for the super-diverse child, which are needed in classrooms now! In order to achieve this we needed to understand the nuances of the identity and social construct involved in finding and understanding this child, whom we urgently need to provide for.

The teachers were also aware that our ultimate quest was to understand how RE pedagogies may be adapted and embedded for the super-diverse child, so many of their responses to the questions in this chapter simultaneously alluded to pedagogy, which was to be addressed in chapters 5, 6 and 7. This made it rather tricky to decipher or pinpoint their definitions of super-diversity for analysis. Considering that the goal was to accumulate understanding or gain insight across centres over time, when their descriptions were unclear (i.e. had inferences to all of the research questions) I needed to pinpoint the essence of their message within the context I was focusing on. The goal was to ensure that each contribution provided further insight towards the meaning as it contributed to the across centre contextual dialogue toward collective understanding.

In the following passage I will attempt to explain the non-linear 'spaghetti' process as it unfolded, including the insights gained through the ethnographic semi-structured interviews

and/or observations. The knowledge development of these was discussed with teachers in staff meetings and then fed into the next phase.

### **Professional Development: background work.**

Prior to meeting with each ECE team, early in 2021, I provided each centre leader with a selection of literature related to the super-diversity topic which included the theorising from my professors, my problematising presentation and a series of semi-structured questions so that they were aware of what we would be discussing. It is important to reiterate before I begin the description, that the work of the team here was to have a shared dialogue about the child as super-diverse, in order to gain insight, with the goal of supporting the super-diverse child better in ECE education.

### **Meeting the Centres**

Due to Covid19, returning from Italy and re-finding my direction, my engagement with centres was more delayed than I would have liked, but in the summer of 2020, around Christmas time, my plan to involve centres from three key avenues in the REI A/NZ ECE system came to fruition.

In 2019, I met Margot at the RE Foundation, in Italy. At that time Margot offered me her support if I needed to do any research from A/NZ. Margot was one of the first teachers to bring the REA to A/NZ in the early 1990s, and has worked closely with Harold Gothson. She advocates for RE study tours. She is based at Bear Park in Auckland, one of the most super-diverse cities in the world (Vertovec, et al., 2016).

Margot is a very professional, welcoming and supportive contact, who obviously holds a great passion for the REA. In the early days, I communicated with Margot via Zoom, email and WhatsApp and she provided me with access to the Reggio Emilia Provocations network (REP) of teachers. Here I met Stephanie, Head Teacher of Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten (PBK) in South Auckland. After sending official invitations to join the research to Margot and Stephanie, in December of 2020, Stephanie and I met by Zoom for the first time. Stephanie is a long time Head Teacher of PBK and totally passionate about her community of learners. She immediately related to my initial references to the super-diverse phenomenon shared in the description of the covering letter which accompanied the invitation to be involved in the research, as her centre at that time had seventeen different languages spoken amongst the 34 children. Between the five teachers, all of those languages were covered (spoken),

"We are a super-diverse kind of place - we've got about seventeen different languages spoken here; and we're a fairly diverse team... that's being purposeful on our part, because we want to reflect our community" (Stephanie, 18.3.2021).

Harold Gothson has also worked closely with PBK over several years.

Also, during the summer of 2020, I met with the committee of Reggio Emilia Aotearoa New Zealand (REANZ) to find an ECE centre from their network to join the research. Our meeting was also held by Zoom. REANZ is a comprehensive network of teachers who are very active in most provinces throughout A/NZ. At this meeting I presented the same overview I had shared with Stephanie and Margot, which was a more practical and in-depth idea about the topic of the research. The REANZ teachers discussed recommendations of centres who may have been interested in joining my research team and got back to me with the recommendation of Arrowtown Preschool (AP), which is in the rural South Island of A/NZ, within an hour and a half travelling distance from my home. Having taught in this province as a primary school teacher, I was very familiar with the environment. I first met with Head Teacher of AP, Izzy by telephone. She is a very busy head teacher of both AP's Infant/ toddler centre on Cotter Avenue, near the primary school in town, and also their Durham Street Centre, near the historic township and the Arrowtown River, where the older 3-5 year-old children attend.

Having gathered my teams, shared the invitations and outline of the research topic and plan, the literature and my super- diversity presentation with head teachers, we allow a few months for the head teachers to delve into the super-diverse topic with their teams and plan to meet in March 2020, to begin the empirical research.

All of these initial team meet-ups were held in March 2021, by Zoom, due to Covid19 lockdowns.

A couple of weeks before the zoom meetings I emailed an outline of the semi-structured interview questions that we would cover. These were focused on the teachers' understanding of the concept of super-diversity and the super-diverse child as a learner in the REI classroom which uses the POL to tap into the needs, interests and aspirations of the child. Encompassed within the set of questions is reference to teachers as cultural learners of children (Durden, 2014) which is a provocation about being open to children whose personal constructs sit outside the traditional white middle class teachers' lens. This provocation includes our new identity, the child who is super-diverse. All of the semi-structured interview questions are based on the literature package/PD sent to the head teachers at the beginning of the research.

As mentioned I was certain that I also had a class of very diverse learners in 2019, so from a practical teaching perspective I connected strongly with the idea of a child as super-diverse and felt excited to speak with the ECE teachers about it and lead the co-construction of ideas.

The constructivist task of combining ideas from across my information stream and synthesising them with my own and each other's is work I am challenged by, throughout the research. I am reminded by my key mentor Harold Gothson that RE interpretation will depend on how each centre has contextualised it according to their centre's needs and professional inspiration. From what I learned at the RE Foundation, certainty is not always a given because 'it depends.' It depends on the child, upon one's frame of reference and social construct, so I know in my mind that subjectivity will always be part of the essence here. What we see and how we listen depends on our image of the child (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 54). This knowledge extends to my understanding of the practice of democracy in A/NZ education which allows each REI centre's image of the child to involve their own uniquely constructed philosophy, or set of principles and values. Therefore, I go into the knowledge-building exercise understanding that although each centre's curriculum framework originates in Te Whāriki it also involves the perspectives I have shared from my professors, takes into account my PD literature package and presentation about super-diversity and importantly will encompass their personal RE inspiration. I expect to find that each centre's constructivist interpretations are reflected in the life of their centre and welcome with great interest the individual nuances of these.

Factored into the equation is the ever-evolving research on super-diversity globally, which in academia continues to spin off in a myriad of directions (Rigney & Kelly, 2023, Morrison et al., 2019; Li, 2019; D'warte & Woodrow, 2023; Chan and Ritchie, 2020; Chan and Ritchie, 2019; Ritchie, 2016; Tatham-Fashanu, 2021). In RE super-diversity will always be fundamentally about the right of all children to multi-dimensional identity and education. The learning process will be entered through the POL and Progettazione, where teachers collaborate with each other and/or with children, to design pedagogy which enables access for all.

As I went into the first round of interviews, although I have my professors' interpretations in my head. For example, Carla Rinaldi: "We are all migrants, we are all super-diverse"; Harold Gothson: "We may even be diverse from ourselves" and Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney: "a new super-diverse child is walking into the classroom" and my own thoughts of my 2019 class, I have the same feeling that I related to Gunilla Dalhberg in

the RE's Romolo Valli Municipal theatre during Loris Malaguzzi's 100th Birthday celebrations, after my meeting with her and Peter Moss earlier in the day, when she asked me, "Are you okay, after our meeting this morning", and I replied, "I am, but I feel like I am on a magic carpet, I have no idea where it's going, but I am ready for the ride!"

The first Zoom interviews were held in March 2021. I was at the kitchen table at home in Central Otago, and the teachers were gathered in their teaching teams. Immediately I felt in familiar territory when the Zoom call opened and there was a group of smiling teachers in front of me. They met with me in their afterschool staff meeting time, which I know is precious and I was appreciative of that. Meeting REI teachers felt like a very special privilege and I was intrigued to learn about how their RE inspiration connects/dialogues with their world renowned bicultural ECE curriculum Te Whāriki.

In the first interviews, the main aim was for teachers to explain what they understand about the phenomenon of super-diversity. Theoretically the concept was new for them (for all of us) and I was intrigued to get their perspective since they were the ones who front up in the super-diverse classroom on a daily basis. I expected that each centre, being a democratic community in its own right, would have developed its own set of constructivist interpretations which will be unique to their place

Although I knew the teachers were prepared for the discussion, I felt that it might 'break the ice' rather than launching directly into the questions if we shared some teaching stories. It was our first meeting and hopefully this might set the scene, across screens, for developing relationships of trust and collaboration. I would like to be seen by them as a participant (ethnographer) in this process. So, I shared the story of my super-diverse 2019 class; of the moment I watched K, a Māori girl realise she had an activist side; of how C, my gifted boy had to have his fix of 'The Dictionary of Difficult Words' by Izzy Solomon each day; of R, the non-speaking autistic boy who needed to be learning through purposeful active projects; of H, having challenges developing relationships with her friends; of B, who was dyslexic and Māori, and who thrived on practising his reading with his peers.

And then the stories started to flow! REI teachers dealing with the child who is super-diverse are alive and well in A/NZ ECEs! During our meetings I was able to naturally introduce the questions which I had prepared for discussion.

I was thrilled to find that across all three teaching teams (17 teachers/three centres), there was receptivity and a positive feeling amongst the groups about having a researcher connected to the RE Foundation in their centres. There was consideration for the rights of the child *and* I was very pleased that there is a diverse range of community representation across

the centres. The RE image of the child and rights of the child oozed from the teachers, and with all three centres I found myself thinking that I would be very happy for my own children or grandchildren to be there.

The question at the centre of this research which we now address first is *Who is the super-diverse child?* This the reader should frame in relation to RE's principle of the rights of the child which fundamentally supports the child's right to identity: "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 and difference, and in his or her own rhythms of growth and development" (Indications, p.10). This sat amongst the wider RE constructivist framework which was the specific orientation which each centre was inspired by.

#### 4.1.2 What is Super-Diversity?

Prior to posing the question, *who is the super-diverse child* and in order to focus on the bigger contextual picture of the research, I first inquired: "*what is super-diversity?*" and we took the time to reflect on each other's theories so far.

The original descriptive term defines super-diversity as a phenomenon which was coined more than thirty years ago now, by Dr Steven Vertovec to describe the outcomes of migratory movement and interaction on people's identity (Vertovec, 2007). At that time Vertovec's work on super-diversity particularly involved migrant groups, for example refugees, migrants and internationals in London (Vertovec, 2007; Li, et al., 2021), people who may have migrated for a myriad of reasons such as work, war and famine. The phrase used by Vertovec to explain super-diversity was *the diversification of diversity* [emphasis added], but more specifically it meant the outcome of multiple diverse variables such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, legal status, skills and human capital colliding as people interacted, affecting identity in a kaleidoscope of ways.

Super-diversity encapsulates new complex social identities, groups, communities and society. With an increasing variety of worldviews, super-diversity brings more attention than ever before to the implications of difference in relationships. Although this diversification of diversity brings a richness of human complexity, it also highlights continuing and new inequalities in institutional experiences, and unequal political, health and economic outcomes (Vertovec, 2021, p. 1).

Eight years after Vertovec's coined super-diversity in his article, *Super-Diversity and its Implications* (2007), he and his colleague Fran Meissner wrote, "The super-diversity concept that supersedes diversity is now about more than cultural diversity or the inclusion of

immigrants and more broadly encompasses social identity, because people themselves are diverse (Vertovec and Meissner, 2017). This I relate to Reggio Emilia's expression "I am who I am because of you" (Gothson, n.d.); which acknowledges that the influence of any relationship, life experience or more broadly the environment, directly affects one's social construct and identity.

Super-diversity has complex, exciting and urgent provocations and implications in education because it confirms identity as a greater variety of individual uniqueness involving more depth and layers to be discovered by the teacher. In Reggio Emilia a person's individuality, complexity (or layers) are reflective of the principle of the hundred languages (Malaguzzi). Super-diversity is a research provocation where the child's super-diversity sits in the realm of being discoverable; or as Malaguzzi inferred in his invocation of Alice in Wonderland *to be lifted up...or, to be made visible* ['emphasis added']. This research asks the question, how is the child's super-diversity listened to, discovered, welcomed and valued by the teacher... *or not?* (Cagliari et al., p. 347)

"Who am I then? Tell me that first. And if I am a person I like being, I will come up, otherwise I shall stay down here until someone comes to get me. I would like very much for someone to put their head in here and say something, because I am tired of being alone" (Alice in Wonderland, 1865, cited in Malaguzzi, p.347)

As Harold Gothson says, "There is a certain pair of eyeglasses one needs for listening to the child as super-diverse: those which are open, researching and prepared to be unprepared". Malaguzzi deepens the provocation suggesting, "For the teacher-pupil relationship to rise to the level of educational happiness it must be immediately made clear that no method is truly fruitful if it does not imply the active and joyous participation of children, does not create a feeling of security, trust and success (Cagliari, et al., p.82). This is the teacher's role.

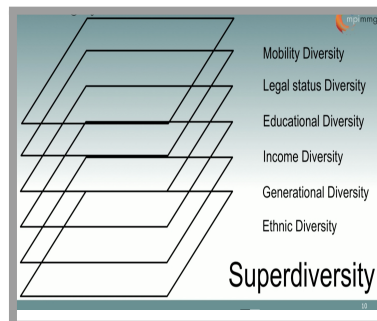
Suffice to say that for the team involved here, we are all building a shared picture of super-diversity based on deductive and inductive reasoning (O'Leary, p. 350; Punch, p. 103; Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 56-59). From my understanding so far, Vertovec's concept of super-diversity and RE's image of the child seem quite conceptually related due to how they both look below the surface of the human being, to their layers of complexity. These first interviews are our entry point into the collection of empirical data needed to prove the existence of the super-diverse child in A/NZ ECEs. As we began I was unsure about what to expect in terms of the teacher's melding of the theory and practice on the topic, but I very much looked forward to contributions from the practical, practitioner's perspective.

### 4.1.3 Bear Park Early Learning Centre (BP)

#### First Zoom

My first meeting was with co-ordinator Alice, from Bear Park's *Tui Room* of three and half to five year olds, centre director Julia, and CEO, Margot. It was held on the second of March, 2021 and, due to Covid19, was via Zoom. The two teachers, Alice and Julia, and Margot the head teacher seemed very ready to get into discussing the topic, so I asked, "What is your understanding of the term super-diversity?" Straight away it seemed that they have an affinity with this new social and political difference. Julia commented, "With the term diversity, people's go-to can be...*age, gender, culture, family & religion...* and I don't think a lot of people actually go to that next layer..."

The super-diversity literature confirms Julia's thinking, that the first key to understanding super-diversity is about the person's construction, to think of it as multi-dimensional or in multivariate configurations (layers). "When multiple variables come together, we can think of a person or a place as being super-diverse" (Alan Gamlen, Keynote Lecture, 2018 International Metropolis Conference, Sydney; Creese & Blackledge, 2018, p. xxiii). The model below represents layers of super-diversity, presented by Alan Gamlen during this online lecture (2018).



In the classroom this multi perspectivity comes alive in the children's ways of knowing, relating to the world (being) and storying of knowledge (Creese & Blackledge, 2018). Vertovec's (2016) concept of super diversity aids the possibility of bringing to life that idea that for children (all human beings) there are an infinite number of identifications and experiences, home cultures and capacities which far exceed flat, two dimensional demographic categories (including categories of ethnicity or visible forms of sociocultural identity and organisation).

To recognise the effect of complex social formations and movements of families within and across borders, traditional territories and communities that are experiencing new dynamics of spatial segregation, displacement and contact (Vertovec, 2016) is to validate

children's hundred languages and begin the research into the child's education. Alice confirmed that this was knowledge that they account for at BP,

"...the relationship we build with the child and with the whole family is something that's paramount to anything else that we do after the relationship is built...you know, it's a knowledge of who they are, where they come from, and what they come attached with, that sort of builds our pedagogy for them".

The teachers continued to discuss education on this deeper level and made connections between super-diversity and their Reggio Emilia Inspired curriculum framework,

"I think that super-diversity is something that connects really well with Reggio and Te Whāriki, because we focus so much on the relationship. It's almost innate that we recognise the super-diversity concept, because every relationship is unique" (Alice).

"It is through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things that children have the opportunity to try out their ideas and refine their working theories. For this reason collaborative aspirations, ventures and achievements are valued" (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 21).

Julia explained the story of some investigative work she was leading in the centre with the teachers around Reggio Emilia's image of the child which reflected their desire to support the children's learning which aimed to tap into the children's different styles of thinking,

One of the things I've been doing is looking at experiences the children are engaging in and finding out a little bit more about how each child responds to an experience or how they process information. What is their way of knowing?...are they imaginative thinkers? logical thinkers? Do they like to work by themselves or alongside others? Once you understand that about a child then you can use that information to invite them to participate and contribute in a way that fits within who they are (Julia, 2.3.2021, 20:57).

Julia's colleague, Alice shared, "I think to be perfectly honest, the concept of the image of the child kind of encapsulates a lot of the super-diversity. So for my personal journey, as a teacher, I feel like when I started reading about super-diversity, I was like, all right, this is kind of the implementation of the image of the child in practice; but like Julia said, bringing it to people's awareness, I think will completely shift their perceptions"(Alice).

We agreed, in addition, that the idea of the image of the child as super-diverse was further enhanced by Malaguzzi's concept of the hundred languages, helping the teacher to look for further deeper layers of complexity which defined each child.

In the BP centre the teachers colleague and atelierista, Ada joined the teaching teams as they discussed and planned specifically to stimulate thinking around activating the children's hundred languages in order to enable greater access for children to learning.

Later, during my first field trip onsite, I had the privilege of speaking with Ada about her work supporting the teachers to bring the hundred languages, or the super-diversity of the child, to life. She described the super-diverse phenomenon in terms of the child's hundred languages and also talked about the importance of recognising the interdisciplinarity within and between the languages, as they shaped the (super-diverse) identity of the child. This included how one child's (and teacher's) super-diverse identity shaped the other's (culture building/super-diversity in action). She linked these ideas to the notion of the constant evolution of culture building which was always being constructed within learning relationships and groups in the classroom.

Culture is always something that is constructed within the context, it's quite organic...ever evolving, so you don't have this sort of (fixed) idea even of culture you know, so ...especially today...it's really important because, I mean...culture is probably more solid in history, but we've become more transformative as individuals and families as well...we're rolling faster and faster (Ada, 12.5.21, 26:51).

In effect, what I believe Ada was describing is super-diversity evolution, in action. In support of her thinking, I remembered that Carla Rinaldi talked about transformative dialogue, where as a result of interaction both parties are changed by the new knowledge they create together (Rinaldi, 2021, p.83). "Preschools are places where culture is not only conveyed, but made"(Carla Rinaldi 2019).

Because the conversation was so rich we agreed to hold a follow-up meeting with the teachers from the Tui Room at BP on the fifth of March, 2021, and again due to Covid19 it was held via Zoom.

#### **4.1.4 Bear Park Second Zoom**

So, later that week on March 5th, 2021 we continued with our quest to extrapolate the meaning of the term super-diversity with the goal of checking whether we had fully exhausted our ideas from last time. The same three teachers, Margot, Julia and Alice joined me for the interview. The conversation and ideas about what super-diversity is, continued from three days prior and is further brought to life with their learning stories.

They picked back up on the idea that Ada was talking about, the super-diverse identity as the collision of multi-layered/dimensional cultures coming together and creating new cultures both in the individual, the group and the classroom. The idea of creating new

cultures was evidenced by the following story of how the teachers and Chinese families negotiate and meld traditional Chinese cultural family ideas with experiences in the natural environment which is very much an A/NZ cultural reality. Alice explains:

I was working with infants and toddlers, who from our observations, it's very clear that they had never encountered *grass* before. You know, we can assume that for some of these children it's potentially because of their family life. If we've done a home visit then we know that they live in an apartment perhaps and through that transition period that we talked about last time, we kind of have a bit of that background information of, *no... they haven't been... going to the park isn't a family thing that they've done, and this is the first time they've been out of the home.* So we can sort of see that that's a HUGE effect that the family culture has had on them, that going outside is perhaps not what they're supposed to do when they're so young. So they'll come here and they see grass and it's just *woh!...mind blown!"*

Margot went on to explain a bit of the background philosophy of the BP centre and this helped clarify their stance on learning through the environment (the environment as the third teacher). She talked about how Ann Pelo's book, *The Goodness of Rain* inspired the teachers to deliberately use the natural world as a provocation for the children to show/document their uniqueness/super-diversity, "We've got a wonderful photograph of one little boy, I remember that he had the tear, or the raindrop that was coming from his head, on his eyebrow, and we've got a photograph of him looking at it absolutely enamoured by this piece of nature."

However, Alice was careful to explain the care and consultation taken by the teachers in their relationships with parents as they negotiated the bridging of the indoor and outdoor cultural constructs of the children's families and A/NZs outdoors-based psyche,

But then (we) also always include the family in the *why* behind that. So, respecting the fact that they've come from a long line of culture that has potentially taught them that going and playing on the grass or playing in the rain will make the children unwell, or it is dirty and not good for children... from their perspective it's not respectful...so really bringing them to why that's a really important thing...(The reason being). We're much more interested in the way that children encounter the natural world in its rawest possible form, and it's a care situation, you've got people separating it from where it comes from, and we want the children to stay connected to the whole.

Further description regarding how teachers managed the coming together of cultures in the ECE centre was expressed by Julia further into the conversation,

One thing that came through in our parent-teacher interviews, was there were a lot of Chinese parents where we asked them about what was important to them, in regards to supporting their child's cultural identity, and they said, 'learning about Te Reo Māori and connecting with the environment', because they see themselves as Kiwis and that bicultural identity is a really important part of growing up Kiwi. Now that's something you wouldn't usually expect in a Chinese family...you'd think they'd want to celebrate Chinese New Year or other things specific to Chinese culture. It is nice to see that, you know, there are a number of our families who probably feel as though the Chinese culture is well represented within their family and within what they do outside of being here. And so when they come here, yes, of course they also want their child to be celebrated, as a Chinese person, as a Māori person, as a Thai person... as whoever they are, but they also want them to be able to experience a culture that perhaps isn't what they experienced at home, but is such an important part of New Zealand.

She continued, explaining the depth of conceptual consideration which can occur between teachers and families,

And we've had quite a few conversations with families about this... while you know, they're proud of their culture, there's aspects of it that they would like to move away from with the next generation, particularly in regard to and that freedom to actually be a child and to have that time to play and know.

The two teachers complemented each other in the sharing of the conversation, Alice adding to what Julia had shared, that they have an awareness of the complication of the situation as well,

I think that somehow, sometimes we see that blindness that you sort of speak of may come through, because while these parents are coming to us and saying, we are trying to sort of move away from that, because they see the (Reggio) research, they see that this has been done for the children.. to be children. But we can say, 'okay, great, that's what the parents want'... that might be what they want, but they're still experienced and entrenched in the culture, from their parents, and their parents, and their parents. *There's a tug of war still for them*, so while we might be saying, great, we're meeting their needs, we still need to be aware of the fact that while they may

say they want that, there's still other feelings mixed in with that as well. You know, we still need to acknowledge where they are coming from, and where they want to go.

Alice spoke of leading reterritorialisation of boundaries, which teachers in the super-diverse classrooms are involved with now (Rigney & Kelly, 2023),

[...] especially with a lot of our Chinese and Indian families who traditionally have a lot of input from their grandparents. So while mum and dad might be kind of at a parent-teacher interview and saying, we really want them to be able to be a child and to play and to enjoy water play and to enjoy the grass, they're going home to grandparents who are saying absolutely not! So they're in a middle place there; I think it's really, really important for us to be aware of that and how we support our role in that.

### **Summary**

So far, this early on in the research process, I was struck by the openness with which the BP teachers have shared, and also the kinds of conversations that they and the families are willing to hold as they shape the identities of the preschool children at their ECE centre, facilitating the bringing together of multiple variables and languages. The documentation shared shows that the teachers were supporting multi-dimensional identity construction being created in negotiation between the home cultures of the migrant families and that of their new home country, A/NZ. Teachers listened to the multiple life experiences and world views that the children and their families brought to the classroom and were negotiating the reterritorialization of boundaries.

#### **4.1.4 Arrowtown Preschool, Central Otago (AP)**

##### **What is super-diversity?**

I first met the whole group of teachers from Arrowtown Preschool (AP), with whom I will be carrying out the research, two weeks after my second meeting with the teachers from BP. It was summer, Monday the fifteenth of March, 2021, 3.40pm at their after-school staff meeting. Again, due to Covid19 the semi structured interview was held via Zoom.

Prior to our meeting the AP team was given the same literature and information about super-diversity as the other centres, and this was my chance to find out how their thinking about the topic was proceeding, and to welcome them to the shared knowledge building process.

I had communicated with head teacher Izzy Foster on the phone and via email leading up to the visit, but again, this was the first time I had met her face-to-face (through a screen). This meeting included her team of teachers, Rebecca, Nicky, Frankie and Fiona, who taught a group of 43 three to 5 year old children.

As with the introduction to the BP interview, I shared my recent teaching experience to “break the ice” for them, which then paved the way for their sharing. It didn’t take long for the teachers to warm up. I detected a hard working, and happy collegial atmosphere amongst the group. They were keen to share and soon we were chatting away (me with my primary school teacher hat on) and making me feel like one of them, as the stories from this beautiful part of the world that I know so well proceeded.

For me, I viewed our semi-structured interview conversation like I imagine RE’s documentation process to be and I was attuned either to direct references or inferences about what super-diversity might mean to them.

The teachers were open and giving, sharing rich/detailed examples, particularly of RE principles and values such as environmentally based and child centred learning experiences which were also strongly tied to A/NZ’s bi-cultural ECE curriculum: Te Whāriki and which reflected their belief in the children’s individual uniqueness and encouraging their agency:

Rebecca: “There was one child as well, who was this little girl here (Rebecca is holding the project book up to the camera so I can see the photo) she was quite, um she was very... *how would you describe her?* (speaking to the other teachers)..

Julia...she was particular, *very*...particular. And...

Izzy: Almost on the gifted...

Rebecca: At the start, she didn't really want to be involved with any of the group stuff, she just wanted to work by herself doing her own thing, um...so into it.

Debbie: Was she so *into it*, was she?

Rebecca: Yeah, so she made a huge big Moa foot out of plaster of paris and we measured it so it was the exact size. And then we tried to do a big... made a huge big Moa out of newspaper, just like rolling it up and tried to get her and involved in that- to get like, more group stuff, but then it hit me and I didn't really want a bar of it, she was just very individual... on her own tangent.

Debbie: So that is a window into super-diversity in itself isn't it?...you noticed the individual person.

Rebecca: So that.. the project with the newspaper, she didn't want a bar of it. But in

the end, we kind of got her, because she was so creative... We ended up, ... they, the children used their imaginations and they created a book about the Moa. So she helped tell the story of that and drew the illustrations; so that was her way of...it was still kind of an individual activity but, kind of as a group. So they made a book all about the Moa. So this was kind of like the end product of this journey that went on for probably a good couple of terms.

As we speak I am interpreting the strong references to RE's 'image of the competent child' as part of this centre's Reggio Emilia inspiration. This is where RE teachers choose to see children as competent which I believe might be a layer of individuality; Rebecca is using the story of the tulip to express an example of how they envision it in practice,

We were looking at the tulips in the garden & one little girl came up to me and was like, "oh, I wonder if they like... do they have a smell?"

Like, obviously she knew that lots of flowers smell really nice; and I was like, "I actually don't know if tulips smell..." and a parent was walking past, coming up to collect the child and they just instantly were like, "no tulips don't have a smell".

And then the child just instantly became like, okay, cool, there's my answer and just walked away.

Oh, and that just ruined it!

As we talked I was considering their collection of stories in the light of our focus question, what is super-diversity? I decided to hold off asking directly about their interpretation of super-diversity in favour of letting the stories flow, and either asking when the time was right, or attempting to decipher their understanding through inference later on.

During the interview, my awareness developed that although the group have discussed the literature, they were still in the early stages of processing an understanding of a factual interpretation of the theoretical concept of super-diversity (layers of variables interacting in each human being), recognising that their stories seemed to be reflecting a more one-dimensional view that the world has traditionally labelled people with; Izzy comments,

We've got six, six children Māori, identified as Māori; and that's a Māori-European mix. But it's with the very middle class, we don't really have any super-diverse children here. Well, we did talk about that with everybody (and) we did sort of think probably the biggest...one of the biggest things here...is because with being the only preschool in town, we've got people, very wealthy families and then we've got some who live very much week to week. But (I guess) we were sort of looking at it through the lens of those that actually... it's probably more about the whānau, the family...

I think Izzy's comment directly reflects what Vertovec pointed out, that the shift from diversity to super-diversity has tended to be seen as a shift from the commonly and widely used 'diversity' variables of race and ethnicity, to the outcomes of multivariate complexity, a different way of seeing (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1026). And I must admit, that upon reflection, I now recognised their 'teacher' descriptions in my own 'teacher' description of my 2019 super-diverse class whereby each child tended to be described in a one dimensional way (i.e. the gifted child, the Māori child, the dyslexic child, etc), even though I know that I certainly understood children from a much richer perspective *and I could tell these teachers do, too!* This was the reason that although they have a way to go in terms of the theory, I felt a lot of hope with this group of teachers, because I could hear from their descriptions that they recognised that there was so much more than one variable in children (super-diversity).

An example of their awareness of children possessing their own distinct identities was in the story they relayed which I have called, 'Birds'. Here the teachers were commenting on the multiple intelligences of the children (Gardner, 2006) therefore recognising the multi-dimensionality of languages present in class, but each child was identified as having one strength/disposition, as opposed to many variables per child.

Rebecca: So one morning a girl came in, and she just bought a Moa bone from home, and then just from that one morning meeting it just got all the children *so excited* that it took on this... *the Moa bone ended up being a whole big project!* So we just followed... lots of children took- *just with their dispositions...* liked different areas; so we explored heaps of different things. One thing we did was measure the different sizes of Moa - our real sciency, mathsy children were really involved in that. Others were more interested in the facts and the research side of things, so there were little groups with that; others were really into creativity and like drawing Moa and doing all the different art experiences around Moa...

Fiona: They made the paper Moa out of newspaper and stuck it all together to make a life size one, in the classroom.

In the retelling of the story, I heard the teachers' openness to supporting the different strengths that the children brought to class. It reminded me that early on in my communications with Professor Rigney he posed the following very pertinent question, "Are teachers tapping into the funds of knowledge: skills, intelligences and talents that the super-diverse learner is bringing to the early childcare centre, or are they asking children to leave them at the door?" (Rigney, personal communication, 18 June, 2020).

The AP group were recognising alternative worldviews that super-diversity brings, due to their bicultural knowledge and were finding more culturally responsive ways to support the child. The following story was representative of this. The teachers explained,

### **Story Stones**

Rebecca: So, we've got this one child who...they spend a lot of time down by the Arrowtown River. And the mum is learning...she's learning Te Reo, she's really interested in the culture and everything. And so they went down one day and collected all these rocks.

Fiona: He was quite a quiet child, so he was sort of very under the radar at preschool. They identify as Māori. This book called, 'In The Beginning' came out, and he sort of blossomed (because of it), so we invited them (his family) to collect the rocks and then created the story on the rocks, using... *We cut out the story characters* and he took it home and he shared it with his whole family. So we bounced back and forth with the family on this one, which was really nice. I mean,

Rebecca: He was a child, like, that hardly spoke or didn't really want much interaction with teachers, and so doing this sort of experience...(really helped). So these are the guardians of the creation story (holding rock up to the camera for me to see). He really blossomed, like he just blossomed and gained so much confidence and would chat more amongst a big group and in the family as well.

Fiona: So Dad was quite a quiet guy and wouldn't chat a lot, but then bringing that in (the story stones), he'd tell us what they were up to in the weekend, to do with the experiences that we'd given them to extend at home, and now he's really open and chatty- *which is lovely*.

Rebecca: Cody made a set for here and for a set at home, so he could tell the story with the stones here, and then back at home with his whānau, which was...

Izzy: ...and they spend a lot of time as a family down at the river. And, you know, so collecting the rocks would have been a weekend exercise. So yes. And he was the sort of... *such a good kid very easy to slip under the radar, because just quietly kept himself involved*; so that (description) was just the teachers finding a way to, to bring that out, and also through the family.

Nicky: Yeah, and Mum would speak Te Reo Māori at home, but he didn't have the confidence to use it here, so it's a way of incorporating his interests, and obviously,

his family aspirations for him.

Debbie: That's awesome. So you guys, did you make the pictures on the rocks *for* him?

Fiona: No, *we made them together*. He helped me shrink the pictures down from the book, and cut them out and really try to figure out how to stick them on. He did it, and the other children came around and asked, "what are you doing?"...they were so interested. He was able to tell the story. We can take some photos and send them. We've got a story to go alongside it, so we can share that with you.

Debbie: That'd be really good. Oh, that's awesome. So that's an example of you really listening and noticing the individual.

The group dynamic of this teaching team felt like a safe space where they were open to learning from each other and the children, not knowing all the answers and making mistakes. This was a good prerequisite for understanding super-diversity, which requires an open researching mindset: as Harold Gothson says, "being prepared to be unprepared" as learners of the children.

Izzy: And I think too, for the children, to get to understand that *we are learners too*, and for them to see us wondering! That's a very big part... *not giving them answers*, but showing interest in what they're saying. We were just talking today about how this is very much where the team comes in, and has to be on board, because the questions... you're needing your teachers to come in with that modelling as well, *that we are listeners and we listen to each other...* and to be surprised and what each other is saying.

In terms of new identities, culture building and teachers' awareness of shaping relationships which is the evolution happening behind super-diversity (Vertovec, 2021), it seemed evident from that discussion that the AP team was aware of the shaping of the child's agency, which they promoted. Frankie and Rebecca explained,

As a team, we've really been trying to look at that whole POL at that morning meeting, and using that as our base for not trying to guide too much with what we want them to come out with. Just putting it out there and seeing what they'll come back with. *Because there is a temptation to decide where you think you want it to go.*

Rebecca: One of your questions further down the list is, what are the challenges? *...it's that whole questioning and not knowing where things are going to lead us sometimes; it's like whoa!!...where are they trying to take us? and trying to take the product out of*

*the beginning part of it?*

Debbie: You say that you find this challenging, but are you comfortable with this concept?

Izzy: I think it's something that is always hard for new teachers coming in...because it's quite a new way of looking, and it's hard in that you really are giving up ownership... a lot of the ownership... to the children. And also, you might have a bit of an idea in the back of your mind about where the learning will go, but then, when you see the excitement and the things coming out of the children...even just this morning, Rebecca shared the dialogue of the feedback and the discussion.

In it, there were about four provocations that could come out that are so exciting!

This reflected power sharing pedagogies (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019) where all children had a voice, and was resonant of the group co-constructing new cultures that Ada and the BP teachers were speaking of, “we value reciprocal relationships.” AP linked their commitment to Te Whāriki and the Treaty of Waitangi to the group culture, “...the whanaungatanga/kinship values: it's very much like a part of what this programme is... that everybody has a role and that they work together, and we need each other”.

At this stage AP's links were not made directly to the diversification of diversity as they were with BP. However they clearly understood the idea that children have their own unique identities and worldviews (notably the Māori children) as empirical evidence showed that they were listening to and supporting the unique identities of individual children. I reminded myself that super-diversity is a new concept for the classroom, and it was the point of my research: to lead a co-constructed knowledge building exercise across all of my research informants. So, it was discoverable.

I felt a strong sense of responsibility in terms of going forward. During the time after the first Zoom interviews and when I was preparing for the first set of onsite field trips, I unpacked the teachers' transcripts and studied voraciously (including meetings with my professors) in order to understand the concept of super-diversity better, so that I could support these teachers to come to grips with the idea and identify it in their settings. During this time I was reading and writing an article with my Italian colleagues, Anna and Barbara, about the image of the child and the role of the teacher in the learning process, both in Dewey's work and in the REA. Interestingly I read that Dewey was, “focused on the child as an individual and social being, as someone with a unique background and valuable talents who could contribute to the well-being of others, and along with the teacher and classmates, could

become both a co-learner and co-teacher in a learning community” (Simpson & Stack, 2010 p. 206). This prompted me to remind myself again that these understandings about super-diversity are a co-construction, where we were all helping each other build knowledge together. I felt that the best way to handle my desire to further support our process was to return to the teaching position I would always use in the classroom, which was to orient within Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978).

To aid the ethnographic funnelling, and the co-constructed understandings I decided that when I met with the teachers’ in person on the first field trip, I would collect further evidence of progress. Then afterwards when we met in staff meetings to reflect and plan forwards, I would, with their permission, share their examples of super-diversity with each other. It is RE constructivism in action.

#### **4.1.5 Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten (PBK), South Auckland**

My first meeting with the teachers from PB Kindergarten, and a class of 3-4 year olds was on Thursday the eighteenth of March, 2021, 3.45pm. Due to Covid19 it was held via Zoom. There were five faces smiling back at me from behind the screen, head teacher Stephanie, teacher and atelierista Phoebe, and teachers Georgina, Sarah and Mary.

Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten in South Auckland has many immigrant families. From the outset Stephanie, the head teacher, made me aware that because of their demographic the PBK teachers live the reality of the migration related super- diverse kindergarten, which means that the children represented a wide variety of countries of origin. I found out later that some of the countries represented are Poland, Uganda, Canada, Sri Lanka, Samoa and Tonga.

"We are a super-diverse kind of place. We've got about 18 different languages spoken here; and we're a fairly diverse team... that's being purposeful on our part, because we want to reflect our community." Later she explained that the 5 teachers cover all of the languages spoken here.

Stephanie goes on to express the teachers' understanding that super-diversity means that the children represent many world views and these will inform the way they make sense of events, “...the children have theories about perhaps why events happen in their lives, they will try to make sense of it in the way that they know.”

Georgina shares an example of how they might support an openness to multiple worldviews in a learning situation. Adapting traditional tales was a way of sending the message that alternative narratives and multiple worldviews were part of life. She relayed a

drama based lesson where she and the children acted out the A/NZ Māori legend, *Maui and the Sun*, using fun and humour to make the point,

Georgina: “Last week we did ‘Maui Catches the Sun’.”

Samuel came to me and said, “Can you be the sun?”

I said, “yes, I can”, and I’m standing up like this (gesturing with arms up in the shape of the sun).

He said, “I’m Maui...you’re walking too fast, I’m going to slow you down”.

I got caught and he pulled it ....and some other children came, and they all tried to hide when I rose up and they hooked me down... they tried to slow me down. And I was holding like this, and I said, "I'm tired! you're all dragging me...then... Angus, she came and said, "Maui's got four brothers, but I'm your sister...I'm going to help you! It was really kind and the love was there; we are sharing..."

Stephanie encourages use of adaptation, adding, "We can alter the narrative!"

Georgina agrees, “So it's a new version - a sister for the sun! So Maui has four brothers... so I got support from my sister there! But it's nice to see that they are acting out their cultural stories, they're acting out and they want to be the characters”.

Georgina’s example is a way of including other ideas and cultures, and helping children to understand that there is not just one way, or dominant culture (Sleeter, 2011, p. 6).

Teacher and Atelierista, Phoebe who migrated from Hong Kong to A/NZ at age 15, shared the humorous story of how her own limited experience in nature as a child, meant that she was learning alongside the children who were in the same boat at their Kindergarten. Phoebe was reiterating the fact that no matter who you are or where you have come from, that connecting to place through relationships plays a vital role in the development and sustenance of identity (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. 71). I could hear the empathy in Phoebe’s voice, as someone who has migrated, when she spoke of supporting the super-diverse children who perhaps may have been feeling like they were out of their comfort zone in the A/NZ outdoors. She turned the unfamiliar into a fun learning situation.

*“Stephanie: Phoebe needs to tell your story too...”*

Phoebe: A secret!

Phoebe: I said to Stephanie, look at the children - they enjoy jumping in the puddle... and to be honest I’ve never jumped into a puddle before! (But this is my background, so I can share my story with them). I came from Hong Kong, to be honest you can’t visit nature quite a lot, until your mum or dad have time. So I remember, I went to a

beach; I haven't been to public gardens, forests, and parks. I've never climbed on trees as well... because usually they have a sign saying, NO CLIMBING! In Hong Kong, textbooks (Kindergarten textbooks) would say, "NO CLIMBING TREES!; DON'T PICK UP FLOWERS". So for me, they are not related to me... no connection. But I remembered I LOVED THE BEACH! This is what I did with my mommy and daddy... I waited for them to have time, then I went to the beach with my family and even though the water was quite salty, I had lots of fun playing in the water. So I told them (the children at Kindy), I've never had gumboots...I had umbrellas! Some of the families and children might never have used gumboots when they were in their own country as well. And, that day (the rainy day at Kindy) I was so embarrassed, because it was my first time jumping in puddles with my 'GUMBOOTS!'

Stephanie: And not only that, she was running from the other side of the field, with the kids, and jumping into the puddles and screaming, "this is so much fun! I've never done this before, I'm going to make Hannah (her daughter) jump in puddles too!"

Phoebe: After that, I realised that maybe I'm not the only one like this. There are people who came from China and other Asian countries who might have not experienced this connection with nature. I told them, when I moved to New Zealand when I was a teenager, why I needed to jump in puddles - it sounds weird, because in our country, there are a lot of apartments, a lot of cars, and very busy traffic, where there would be no place to jump in puddles . So (experiencing nature) is a big commitment, you need to have a day or weekend to go somewhere with your family and experience nature.

Stephanie commented, "they don't need more, they just need something different.

And that opens us up to be able to see them as having opportunities and possibilities that are just outside our parameters of thinking at the moment, but we need to watch and listen carefully so that we will understand what it is that will help them and unlock the potential that they have." Stephanie.

Professor Rinaldi speaks of the value of play, of fun, of emotions, of feelings, essential elements of any authentic, cognitive and educational process. "Learning thus becomes a value because of its power to bring about a synthesis between the individual and his or her context, in a warm relationship between those who learn and that which is being learned, a relationship filled with emotion, curiosity and humour" (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001, p. 43).

Next, teacher, Sarah and Head Teacher Stephanie explained that they were “quite interested in Māori world views” (Sarah),

But for me, I walk in two worlds, a large part of my family is Māori, so for some of our children it will be about Māori ways of knowing and being in the world. And that is why we ground in the pepeha to start the year, because we like to think about how we bring a A/NZ perspective for the Māori, and even Pacific children who have a similar world view (Stephanie).

Stephanie shares a Māori scholar with me, Wally Penetito, who has had a strong influence on their work in the centre. “As Penetito explains, reproduction of Māori culture does not mean returning to the culture of a century ago, but the power of Māori today to define their own goals and processes for achieving these goals” (Penetito, 2006).

Russell Bishop’s (1999; 2006) research found that secondary school students identified that the relationships they have with their teachers is the most influential factor in their ability to achieve in the classroom, and that when teachers connected with them through their own worldview it strongly influenced whether they became engaged in learning or not (2006, p. 254). John Hattie, too, found the teacher is key (Hattie, 2003).

Mary has been learning Te Reo Māori (NZ Indigenous language) and although she is still building her confidence, the benefits of trying, even when not fully competent yet, is clear to her:

Mary: "Well, at the moment, I am working on my goal of learning Te Reo Māori phrases and vocabulary that are most often used in the EEC setting like, you know, e noho ki raro, you know, the things you use quite often. And I've been doing that for a week and a bit now, and today, one of the boys was on his knees on his chair when he should have been sitting on his bottom and eating his lunch; and so I just said, “e noho ki raro...sitting down”. And he happily sat down. And then a few minutes later, one of his friends on the other side of the table had gotten up and started wandering around- and I noticed when I was about to open my mouth to say ‘e noho ki raro’, he said it! So, um, so he saw his friend getting up and he's like, ah, I know what I need to say here, and so he said it for me! So I thought that was pretty cool, that he was picking up on the narrative also! Joe's part Māori?"

Stephanie, "He's Cook Island Māori and Samoan".

Mary, "I haven't heard him speak Māori".

Stephanie, "I think he's picked it up here, I don't think they speak it at home".

Mary, "So that was quite... just meaningful for me, seeing, hey, you know, this is... it's not just making a difference for me learning Te Reo, it is, you know, helping him as well.

For those learners who do not fit the dominant white educational convention, it is important to not only acknowledge multiple truths, but that they see their teachers as lifelong learners and as open to learning about other perspectives. Having a go, as Mary did, and perhaps showing vulnerability, along with power sharing pedagogies which let the children be teachers, supported their educational satisfaction and engaged them more, setting them up for success.

The PBK teachers were supporting each other to respond in several ways in their super-diverse classroom. They acknowledged and showed they valued multidimensional perspectives by employing staff with a range of language skills which supported the group. They used fun, play and humour as conduits and substance for the children's need to belong; and they adapted pedagogies creatively in a way that showed they were open and accepting of many ways of being.

At the end of my first round of semi-structured interviews, we had co-constructed our first set of understandings which related to Steven Vertovec's concept of super-diversity and I summarised these in a paragraph to share across all of the centres.

Super-diversity is a new way of seeing things. It can improve the quality of relations. The individual is super-diverse because their identity consists of many variables (Vertovec and Meissner, 2015). We are all migrants, we are all super-diverse (Rinaldi, 2020); we may even be diverse from ourselves (Gothson, 2023). Examples of variables might include class, religion, education, sexual orientation, age, human capital, gender, disability, sign language, linguistic diversity, ethnicity, translanguaging, patterns of spatial distribution etc (Vertovec, 2016).

Groups are super-diverse because people move and influence each other's identity, contributing to social construct. This phenomenon first came to light in academia when Vertovec studied immigration patterns and shared his article, Super-diversity and its implications (Vertovec, 2007).

Communities and society continually change, and new cultures are created because of super-diversity. Of course this happened before but now population diversification is rapidly diversifying, impacting the status of A/NZ society today where recent immigration policy changes have produced the new challenge of super-diversity which overlays the bicultural

context of Māori and settler populations and the long standing impacts of colonisation of the indigenous Māori (Chan & Ritchie, 2019).

Because more people are moving and influencing one another, more than ever there are many and new ways of being.

So the world has shifted, and a new super-diverse child is walking in the door of the early childhood centre in New Zealand...and they're Muslim, rich, poor, middle class, having struggles with sexuality, autistic, dyslexic, gifted, twice exceptional, they may have a disability and then there are those with super-diverse ethnicity - the Māori child, the Aboriginal child, the Muslim child, the Tongan child, the Pākehā child, the refugee (Professor Rigney, 2020).

“The A/NZ Education Review Office has described both indigenous Māori children and the children of migrants and refugees’ as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘priority learners’” (Chan & Ritchie, 2020). Therefore the super-diverse lens gives the Reggio Inspired teacher reason to fine tune or check their lens, and listen even more carefully to who the learner is now. Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of RE said, “it is to be remembered that *each child's* psychological portrait or profile cannot be mechanically deduced from a generalised schema, but (emerges) from an analysis and observation of each individual, built on their original biology, psyche and their personal history” (Cagliari, et. al, 2016, p.76).

I am hopeful the RE's pedagogy of listening can unlock the unique code, or hundred languages of the super-diverse learner, in terms of their biology, anthropology, psychology and their needs, interests and aspirations.

If we as teachers potentially know less about who the learner is (because people are more super-diverse) then we do need to check that we have suitable pedagogies. i.e. check our biases...and ask...Who is the super-diverse learner? What do super-diverse learners need? How can we provide what they need? Are we already doing this?

In order to consider what it takes to become further RE inspired we will continue to reflect on the research questions and the information we have co-constructed together in the light of the super- diverse learner by listening closely to each other's experiences with children and attempting to make them visible... welcoming their presence in our A/NZ ECEs by turning to the next research question: *Who is the super-diverse learner?*

## Chapter 4, Part Two

### Who is the Super-Diverse Child?

#### 4.2.1 Analysis Method and Purpose

The analysis methods for this section are the qualitative tool of deductive reasoning and Clifford Geertz's thick description, the same as the last section. The overall concept in the deductive reasoning for this research is that of Vertovec's, the teachers', and my understanding which is also supported by my professors. It is about who the super-diverse child is, and this concept is what is used to search the data for potential conformation'. In this research the teacher's empirical evidence supports the conceptual development and therefore child's right to identity in A/NZ ECEs (O'Leary, p. 350; Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 56-58). In this research deductive qualitative practice originating with Vertovec's concept of super-diversity, and the interpretations of the co-constructed knowledge building comes together, in ethnographic description, with the empirical data from teachers' insights being the significant practical link bringing the concepts to life. Collectively the work intends to contribute towards supporting the child's right to a super-diverse identity.

Although the overall purpose of this research is a focus on pedagogy for the super-diverse learner, it is important that we first develop an idea of what a super-diverse identity might mean. Therefore, methodologically, the purpose of the co-constructed work in this particular section of the research is to pool the resources we have in order to glean, deduce or produce a shared idea of the super-diverse child in the ECE classroom.

#### 4.2.2 Aotearoa/ New Zealand Demographics

To recap for orientation, in previous sections I have understood seen the super-diverse phenomenon in the related literature due to Spoonley, Gamelin and Vertovec (Vertovec, et al., 2016) which shows that the cities of Vancouver, Sydney and Auckland which based in three major countries of current global migration, powerfully represent and demonstrate processes of urban super-diversification. The nature of these cities has been fundamentally shaped by immigration. Nearly 40 percent of metropolitan Auckland's residents, as recorded in the 2013 census, were born outside New Zealand, and the corresponding figures for Sydney and Vancouver in 2016 were, respectively, 43 and 41 percent.

Meanwhile, in A/NZ, recent global human migration and immigration policy changes have brought increased numbers of immigrants, mainly from the Pacific Islands and various Asian countries (Spoonley, 2015, as cited in Chan and Ritchie 2019). "This super-diverse situation is even more evident in the country's early childhood care and education (ECCE)

settings. In 2018, the historically dominant ethnicity (European/Pākehā) accounted for only 48% of enrolments, with the remainder comprising Māori, Pacific, Asian and other ethnic groups” (Education Counts, 2018, as cited in Chan & Ritchie, 2023).

### **4.2.3 Super-Diversity**

Dr Steven Vertovec’s literature outlines that migrational movement has rapidly increased over the last thirty years causing people’s generic variables to interact and multiply prolifically, with the outcome being the *diversification of diversity* which he coined as super-diversity in 2007. Variables include generic categories, for example: class, ethnicity, religiosity, sexual orientation, gender, disabilities, sign language, linguistic diversity, trans language, epistemology, ontology and axiology (L-I. Rigney, personal communication July 23, 2020).

The super-diverse identity relates to Reggio Emilia’s image of the child when we consider that the child’s multi-dimensional identity has been created as a result of interaction and constructed as an outcome of the ontological, epistemological and axiological truths stemming from their personal set of circumstances. The aim of this research is to make their identity visible in the super-diverse ECE classroom, with the main priority being to find ways to be supportive of super-diversity, when its resulting complex identities, social realities and related systems in education challenge the status quo.

#### **The Many Faces of super-diversity**

Scholars have applied the concept of super-diversity in many fields (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015). Vertovec has described super-diversity in different ways over time, highlighting the idea that although in his original work the super-diversity concept developed as the manifestation of migratory movement and interaction particularly related to immigrants who had settled in London (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024), it can more broadly be described as the interplay of factors in human interaction with increased and differentiating characteristics causing more complex identities (Vertovec, 2016, online lecture). Therefore, in this research my deduction is that all learners in ECEs are super-diverse as a result of human interaction and influence.

However, in order to understand more deeply the nuances of super-diversity in relation to the learner in ECEs this has been done in the light of empirical research, in order to make deductions and build knowledge together, with the intention of strengthening the voice of the super-diverse child.

### **Conceptualisations of super-diversity**

- Super-diversity is more than diversity or multiculturalism and recognises the tremendous increase in categories of migrants which led to the diversification of diversity. Specifically, it is the multiplication of significant variables interacting that created the super-diverse phenomenon (Vertovec, 2007).
- Although all people are considered super-diverse, due to the dynamic interplay of variables, Vertovec is particularly focused on the experiences of super-diverse minority individuals and groups (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025).
- Super-diversity is defined by the interplay of ‘significant variables such as: “differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profile, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025).
- “People themselves are super diverse, involving increasing complexities, multiple characteristics, multiple stratification positions and multiple group belongings” (2016, Online lecture, 27:55).
- Super-diversity takes into account the conjunction of ethnicity with a range of other variables when considering the nature of various communities (Vertovec, p.1025). Groups, communities and society are super-diverse.
- Super-diversity occurs among ethnic groups as well (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1026).
- Super-diversity applies to internal migrants and those who don’t move at all (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015, p. 546).
- If more people are more aware of their own social identity complexity and therefore are more able to identify it in others, this has a positive effect on relationships (Vertovec, 2021, p. 12/13).
- Super-diversity raises the issue of relationships across different vantage points.
- Vertovec described his own super-diverse variables in a webinar given at the launching event of the super-diverse academy of UNIC University on March 3rd, 2021,
 

So, for instance, just to exemplify, I just jotted down a number of things about the person I know best, me. You know, I am part of the baby boom generation, married, American British Citizenship, permanent resident in Germany with a work permit, white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, father, high education, upper middle class, English mother tongue, middling German skills - although that is probably a matter of opinion if you talk German, living in a mixed residential neighbourhood, no

institutional religion but with a Catholic upbringing. So for me I recognise some of those categories I belong to (March 3rd, 2021).

- However, in 2021 Vertovec did warn that, “We have to realise that diversity is what they call a floating signifier; it can mean different things to different people in different places” (Vertovec, 20201, p.14).
- A/NZ is now considered a super-diverse nation (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013: Spoonley, 2015, as cited in Chaland Ritchie, 2019, p. 53).
- A/NZ is a bicultural settler society which has unresolved inequities towards its indigenous people and super-diverse risks compounding inequity (Chan and Ritchie, 2019).
- The concept of super-diversity has also been written about by many other scholars; Guofang Li, in the field of education is one which aligns with this research (Li et al., 2021).

The above conceptualisations have contributed to the understanding of super-diversity in this research as we consider super-diversity as an updated view of the child in our classrooms (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1026).

Importantly, super-diversity is a reminder of hopeful educational politics: of RE’s value of democracy in the classroom, and the responsibility of the adult to have a critical awareness of how the choice of education determines the way we understand the super-diverse child and contribute to the shaping of their identity. Although a key focus of this study is supporting super-diverse children of minority groups, including ethnic and bicultural children in A/NZ, REI pedagogy involves supporting all super-diverse children and listening to them and supporting them as they relate across difference in complex super-diverse settings (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025).

#### **4.2.4 Empirical evidence: semi structured interview questions**

Having begun an ongoing co-constructed conversation: What is super-diversity?, in relation to the child in the ECE, we were now able to turn our attention to the question Who is the super-diverse child?

The leading semi-structured interview questions which were shared with the centre leaders before conversations were as follows:

- How do exemplary Reggio Inspired Early Childhood Teachers in New Zealand listen to super-diverse learners, particularly those who may be marginalised?
  - How are teachers cultural learners of super-diverse children? (Durdin et al., p. 583)
- This is significant because it addresses an urgent international need to understand how teachers redesign their practice to capture and extend (children’s) cultural (background) knowledge”... in support of learning.

- A super-diverse lens is one where the teacher understands their own biases and responds to the challenge of the child's identity, i.e. their needs, interests and aspirations through culturally responsive practice. Therefore, I was interested in how the teachers' traditional belief systems were questioned, challenged, and grown together?

I was hoping to explore how the teachers employed the RE Inspired pedagogies, particularly the pedagogy of listening, with an additional super-diverse lens, which in effect means to explore the ability of the teachers' to 'notice' and then 'actively listen' to the new social conditions in support of the super-diverse learner.

Some of the following empirical evidence was gathered via online Zooms. After Covid lockdowns had stopped, I was finally able to visit each of the three centres onsite for the first time during April and May, 2021, so some data presented here was from face to face interviews and/ or observations. All were recorded and safely stored so that I could go back to them later.

#### **4.2.4 Teachers Enable Access to Quality Pedagogy for All Super-Diverse Children**

I had met Arrowtown teacher Nicky on many occasions by the time the following conversation naturally unfolded. I had joined her during my first onsite visit to Arrowtown Preschool, as she was preparing a small group of children to head out of the preschool grounds and around the block where they would gather flax stalks for making mōkihi/canoe paddles.

Nicky related incredibly well to all of the children, but as she was preparing them for the outing, Cody, one of the group members, was putting his beautiful framed copy of his pepeha (an introduction of oneself in Māori) away when Nicky called him over to share it with me. The way that she spoke to him kindly and supported him to read this special personal story prompted me to comment to Nicky about how beautifully she nurtured him in this moment. She then proceeded to tell me about what I now interpret as her own personal super-diversity, which involved a close connection with the Māori children and families at the centre, with whom she was particularly mindful of supporting, which helped me to understand her handling of the super-diverse situation, now evident with Cody.

The back story began the day before at morning tea time on my second field trip to AP, when Nicky and her colleague Rebecca explained to me that ERO (Education Review Office) have designated under two year olds, Māori, Pasifika and English as a second language children as priority learners, and so this was something they were "mindful of".

Nicky explained that there are parents here who were Māori, but who didn't have a rich cultural upbringing, and so when selecting a preschool for their children, they looked for a preschool who could support this. Nicky says that although all teachers in the centre actively worked to support this important goal, this was something that she felt she could take extra special responsibility for in the centre, because her own personal situation provided her with some of the understanding of children's ways of knowing and being to support children and their families to work more deeply in this way. She gave me an example:

“With Leo, he's Māori on Mum's side and she's expressed that she wasn't brought up Māori, she never spoke the language and wasn't involved so much in typical Māori culture. And she came and visited Arrowtown Preschool and said that she wanted... she said, *'this is me, and I would love my children to be in a setting where they get to do Māori and waiata and they can engage in that.'* So, in a way he's not coming from a rich background and because he is kind of a shy child, (as a teacher) it's all about trying to engage him in ways that are not, you know, forcing him. So I remember last year we did waiata (singing) and kapa haka (action songs) and I'd invite him in and I could see that he wasn't confident. He was a bit shy. Like that wasn't his thing to sing, you know? to be in front of other children, so it was like...trying to find the ways to empower him to connect with his culture” (Nicky, 8.12.2021, 2:04).

Then, on the following day as Nicky was waiting for the children who were to accompany her on a small around the block preschool excursion to collect flax stalks, our conversation picked up again and she explained that she 'walks in two worlds', that she grew up in the North of A/NZ with a Māori mother and Pākehā father and went to a Māori immersion primary school. She too was interested in regenerating her Māori ways of being and was now on a shared journey with some of the parents who had the same ontological relatedness at their preschool.

### **9.12.2021**

Nicky: I think Māori come from...*could* come from a rich Māori culture, and that's how you would learn...you could learn from those families- there's just a different relationship I think that you'd have to build...

Nicky: But here (at this preschool in the South Island) these Māori families are reconnecting to their Māori side, and it's like, how can we support that?

Debbie: One word I've come across about that as *regeneration*.

Nicky: Yeah, yeah.

Debbie: And I think about that quite often.

Nicky: It's a great word.

Debbie: I think that's probably what you're talking about?

Nicky: Yeah.

Debbie: I mean, again we can't assume. Yeah, but I know what you mean. Like, maybe in a richer cultural setting, for example, as a generalisation - the North Island, it might be more...it might be easier, but you've just got to find your way to support that regeneration?

Nicky: Yeah, and I don't know if I mentioned it but I grew up speaking Māori as well, so I've got that side, so that's kind of where that passion comes in.

Debbie: Oh, wow...that's... very special!

Nicky: Sorry I probably have put that into context of why I... you know?

Debbie: So what's your background?

Nicky: So...I grew up in the far North, and my Māori side came from my Mum's side. I went into a bicultural class and then full immersion.

Debbie: Oh, wow.

Nicky: Yeah, but then you're stopped after primary school.

Nicky: So and for me...I... my Mum being Māori, but not... she didn't come from a rich Māori capital. And then she put ME into schooling to learn, and then I stopped...

Debbie: You were regenerating for her...?

Nicky: Well, yeah, she's not really even fussed!

Debbie: Oh, okay...

Nicky: Yeah, you know, she's kind of like, "ah who cares", kind of attitude... But for me, like, going and being in that world, because I was always bouncing in between the two worlds because I had a Māori world when I was at school and then at home I didn't really have that, and...

Debbie: Interesting...

Nicky: Yeah, and so I'm just myself...I'm wanting to reconnect to that too and that's probably how Paula and I connect, as well because she's... sorry Huxley's mum...

Debbie: Yes! Because it's the same sort of thing?

Nicky: Yeah, exactly...

Debbie: And so that's interesting then when we think about kids.. and Huxley, for example...and Olly, you know, YOU have a real insight ...a lens that gives a real insight, into a deeper understanding about what that experience might be.

Nicky: Yeah...exactly. Yeah.

Debbie: For them, and their families.

Nicky: You know, because Huxley being dark skinned Māori, they probably expect him to know Māori, or, you know, 'BE Māori', or you know....so it's not putting that pressure on children as well..

Debbie: Exactly

[...]

Debbie: Oh, that's very cool. Very interesting. One of my... just to finish off - the school in South Auckland that I'm at... Stephanie is the head teacher. And she is similar I think.. I'm not really sure of her backstory, but she said to me, 'I walk in two worlds' as well...

Nicky: Mmmmm...yeah, and I still do it. If I go home and I've got all my, my Māori friends and like their whānau, and I'll go and catch up with them, and that's like, you just get back and then you come back to my other world, so it's... I love it, like, and I love that I still have, you know, those connections.

Debbie: Totally.

Nicky: Yeah...even though I've been away for so long, they're always there and that's a part of who I am. Yeah..

Debbie: And how cool like, again, that links back to my sort of assets, perspective...non deficit, and joy!

Nicky: Yeah.

Debbie: That, that's a wonderful experience- not a negative.

Nicky: Yeah...whereas when I grew up, some people did see.. "oh, you're in that class!"

Debbie: Yes, of course, and some still do..

Nicky: Yeah...oh, yeah, exactly.. It was probably a bit more prevalent.

Debbie: Yeah.

Nicky: But it's so great, like I was saying to you yesterday, because there's not such a rich Māori culture here, but we talk about Māori culture [...] like the haka, and that the Māori are warriors and you know, all these great things... and we read all these legends and children are just... like, they just want to embody all those things, especially children like Olly.. or when you're referring to Māori people it's like, oh you know...and then when that kaumātua came in, and it's like, because we see it in such a positive way and we portray it that way the children are just like, wow that's so cool, you know...and I think in some, in some ways, children see.. (because they probably haven't seen a lot of dark skinned Māori) that...that they're superheroes, you know? Yeah, well that's why the children aren't negative..

Debbie: So it's genuine, um... one other thing I'm reading about is aesthetics

Nicky: Oh...okay...

Debbie: Which is, um probably the indescribable feelings that you have. I don't, I won't explain it very well, because I'm still reading about it, but you know, you can't necessarily put your finger on the feeling that's created. But it's almost what you're saying...

Nicky: That there's something about it that makes the children just yearn to know more - or embody more...

Debbie: I think sometimes a passionate teacher, who sees it from the assets perspective...

Nicky: Yes.

Debbie: Who's coming at it from that perspective must make an enormous difference for children.

Nicky: Yeah.

Debbie: Because imagine if you didn't listen...and so I think you need to self reflect about that about your... the richness that you're bringing for them.

Nicky: Yeah

Debbie: You ARE bringing a real assets perspective.

Nicky: Yeah, yeah.

Debbie: About their culture. Yeah,

Nicky: Yeah. Yeah, like it's something that everyone does to you know, to uphold their responsibility but um yes, I feel when it's Yeah, I guess my assets.. and... yeah, I guess that passion... driving, behind it, might be, yeah...might be different to how other teachers may..

Debbie: Totally... Oh, for sure it is...

Nicky: You know? ...facilitate it

Debbie: Oh, I'm sure it is...

Nicky: Yes. Yeah.

Debbie: Oh, thank you.

### **Summary of *Who is the super-diverse learner?***

#### **- Related to Arrowtown Preschool's empirical evidence**

The super-diverse child has an increased number of differentiating characteristics (Vertovec, 2021) which have been shaped by the environment in which they reside, and which are discoverable by the teacher. Identity has moved beyond diversity and multiculturalism, into super-diversity (Rigney, personal communication, 2020).

Unfortunately, well before the emergence of super-diversity there was an existing complexity to the historical, political environment in A/NZ affecting its people: a colonised bicultural settler society, where relationships have been handled badly and caused Māori citizen's rights to identity, culture and equality to be marginalised with the outcome of

oppression and isolation for our indigenous population. This has had the effect of propelling intergenerational trauma into the future... namely, into relationships, and it has woven deposits, in varying degrees, both seen and unseen, of these influences onto the developing super-diverse child to this day (Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p. 4; Clark & Grey, p. 50).

This complex historical, political and social environment requires careful nurturing in the classroom, especially when adding another layer of social construction, super-diversity, in a country that is still coming to terms with a commitment to its indigenous people (Chan and Ritchie, 2019, p. 53 *Critical pedagogies of place*). Vertovec describes the situation, "...new waves of migration with these divergent combinations of all those sorts of factors have mixed with the old diversity and produced a super-diversity, a more complex social system than existed before" (Vertovec, 2021, p. 10).

Humanistic educators believe that it is the right of *all* children to be listened to by their teachers, and to have their many languages and life worlds recognised *in quality pedagogies in order that they reach their learning potential* (Morrison, et al., 2019; Li, 2021; Chan and Ritchie, 2020; Rinaldi, 2021; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2023; Lipina, lecture to Reggio PhD group, 16, February, 2022, Gothson, personal communication). Listening to the child as super-diverse, upgrades the lens through which we learn about them, and this is an urgent requirement for teachers in the light of these challenges in A/NZ ECEs. Negotiating complex historical relationships and identities alongside recognition of the rights of all super-diverse children in the classroom, is a hidden aspect of super-diversity which will take very careful listening and understanding if teachers are to provide environments and pedagogies which support the child's right to identity, equity and freedom. In a conference entitled, *Who Am I Then*, (1990), Loris Malaguzzi talked about the need for extra support for children who are "muted" using the metaphor of Alice in Wonderland, famously saying, "Who am I then? Tell me that first. And if I am a person I like being then I will come up, otherwise I shall stay down here until someone comes to get me. I would very much like for someone to put their head in here and say something, because I am tired of being alone." (Cagliari, et al., 2016, p. 347).

A/NZ's founding constitutional document Te Tiriti/ The Treaty of Waitangi is promising, because it is understood to be inclusive of all immigrants to A/NZ, whose welcome comes in the context of this partnership. This thesis aims to support this right by looking into the CRPs which teachers use to support the relationship building needed here including working to support the regeneration of children and families who have been isolated and voiceless; these children have been designated priority learners of the Ministry

of Education (Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p. 8). Clues to how this can be achieved are well documented in the Global North, but are less common in the Global South (Professor Rigney, personal communication, 2022). As previously expressed, the hopeful pedagogical approaches I selected for this research came from the democratic pedagogies of RE and also CRPs because these are, “pedagogies that actively value and mobilise as resources the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship” (Morrison, Rigney, Hattam & Diplock, 2019, p. v). We know that,

“Whatever its content (be it understanding a mathematical principle, making sense of a poem, or examining what gets in the way of fairness in a school), learning is, at its core, a liberating act. It involves getting immersed in and making sense of questions that matter to us, with autonomy to decide on the pace and form of our learning, connecting our experiences and knowledge to make meaning of or solve new puzzles, transforming ourselves and, in the best examples, changing the world in the process” (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019, p. 11).

### **Conclusion**

The voices of super-diverse children, past and present; indigenous people or recently settled here, who are muted, marginalised, oppressed, isolated and traumatised are an urgent priority. They have rights which have been kept at bay for too long. Understanding what it meant to be in a position of support for the children of today, who are impacted by this compounded situation is a responsibility which is difficult, but preschools such as AP, who demonstrated a commitment to this reality, as exemplified in the story of Nicky showed a considerate way forward. I was looking forward to following their journey, as we moved further into the research to discover more about how such empathy, determination and regeneration unfolded within their CR, REI pedagogy; in support of the super-diverse child in relation to A/NZ’s bicultural politics.

#### **4.2.5 Super Diverse Children Respond to Democratic Pedagogy**

Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten- Supporting the child of special rights through the Outdoor Explorers programme

The outdoors is a big part of life in A/NZ and many ECEs use the outdoor environment to support their programmes (Maley-Shaw, 2012). PBK was no exception, and during my first field trip there I joined a group of children and their teachers on their weekly outing. However, prior to this, during our first Zoom call, the PBK teachers relayed the story of Max, a special rights boy and how the REI team nurtured him in a positive direction.

Max's story evidenced the deliberate choice by the teachers to change the lens and mindset of everyone in his community, therefore shaping the trajectory to a strengths based, asset perspective.

Georgina & Stephanie: So what we're trying to do is build the children's idea of themselves as resourceful. That they have resources within themselves... So that's the 'putting in a kete', "I want kindness or 'loveness' or maybe I need some calm or some peacefulness, so they can put that in their kete and in moments when they are struggling, we can say "do you have anything left in your kete?" So it's all part of that... we've been working on building learning power; and so it's building children's idea of themselves as full of resources that can help them manage what's going on in the world around them.

Stephanie: I think it's particularly important for our children with special needs. We don't have that many at the moment, but one of the things that we decided when we started our Outdoor Explorers' programme, is that the children with special needs would be priority people; so when we started we had a little boy who was on the autistic spectrum and his paediatrician had said to Mum, "don't have too many expectations, he will never toilet himself, he will never talk, he will never feed himself, he will never do this, he will never do that."

We were about the third place that she'd come to... that she'd been to, looking for an early childhood centre... I think she'd had a couple of bad experiences at other centres with one of his stims (self-stimulating behaviours) where he used to pose with a stick, and he would look at himself in the windows... his reflection, but other people saw that as threatening behaviour. So in his previous place, he'd gotten told off a lot. They'd come to... you know-people would say, "Max is doing this, Max is doing that" and he would get told off... so he kind of retreated - he had quite a.. he's got, still got quite a strong sense of social justice. The fact that he always got blamed when he wasn't doing anything wrong made him retreat into himself.

So when he came here, we watched for quite a long time, and when people said, "Max is scaring me," we would say, "let's stop and watch what Max is doing." Because actually he was just posing. He wasn't doing anything that would cause any harm to people. If he didn't have a stick he would be quite happy to pose with a pen (It was just having something to use as he posed). So we prioritised him for Outdoor Explorers; we normally take a group of ten.

Debbie: This is to the estuary?

Stephanie: Yes, it's where we go out around the estuary...we go for a walk, we take a group of ten children and two teachers. We decided that for the first couple of times with Max, because we didn't quite know how it was going to go, we would take (what did we take?)...we would take three or four children and Max...and what we discovered was for children who are on the spectrum, that the green, being out in the green, actually had so many benefits that we hadn't anticipated.

We had a leader's stick, and Max liked to be in the front, he wouldn't, he never spoke at Kindy, until we went out on Outdoor Explorers. But the experience of green in front of him gave him a sense of not having people crowding in on him, so he was able to relax and be himself; and the other children, when they saw him, like they suddenly discovered that Max had all these things about him that they really liked. So we watched him develop relationships, and especially with the group - within the group of ten, was a really strong relationship.

His mother said to him that if you're going to go on Outdoor Explorers, you're going to need to learn how to put your gum boots on, and your wet weather gear- so he learned to dress himself. "If you're going to go on outdoor explorers, Max, you need to learn to go to the toilet", ... he learned to go to the toilet, so he could go.

So what we've discovered is that it has all these spin-off benefits for our children who have special needs, that enables us to transform them from being "needy", to just requiring something different. They don't need more, they just need something different. That opens us up to be able to see them as having opportunities and possibilities that are just outside our parameters of thinking at the moment, but that we need to watch and listen carefully so that we will understand what it is that will help them and unlock the potential that they have.

Sarah: I didn't go with that group, because I went with the other group. There's two different groups of children that go on different days, ten children in each group. But when he came back to kindy after Outdoor Explorers you could definitely see a difference in him. It felt like he had more mana, like he had taken responsibility for this group - his group. You could feel this as he walked in, because he had the leader's stick (everyone wanted the leader's stick because that meant they were the one who stood in the front and walked in the front of the group) so if he had the leader's stick, he would come in and you could definitely see....

Stephanie: ..."But the thing that I found really interesting was the children were incredibly tolerant... even if they had the leader's stick- they actually didn't mind Max

being in the front, because they knew that he needed it and he liked it, he liked it better... he didn't like it at the back. And on those days, I think that's when the talking broke loose - because he had something to talk about. His mother said on the days of Outdoor Explorers, he would go home and he would talk the whole way home in the car... and that he discovered that...he was watching pukeko. Do you want to talk about pukeko Phoebe? Or do you want to add something else?

Phoebe: I also noticed that the children who were usually scared of him made friends with him. I think this is the big, the biggest part of it as well, it's not only about him - it's about the group of children, they know him more, they build relationships with him more - after they've been out for a walk for a few times. So they played together, in the end you could see the relationship changing between him and the other children. I could see his smile when he realised that the children are not scared of him anymore. Even for the teachers, we didn't know why Max was doing this at the beginning but as we came to know him the relationship between the teachers and him changed as well.

Debbie: Your view of him changed?

Sarah: And I think the children's view- because they'd include him in questions, you know, "Max, what do you think?", and so, he was just part of the group. He wasn't any different to them anymore, it's just part of what.. part of the group and if we were discussing - if you guys were discussing something he'd be included... I remember that actually.

Phoebe: And he also worked with the other children that he didn't know much too...he remembered he remember he saw the pukeko, at that time we were learning about birds, and in the studio Mila really keen to work with him...rather than isolating him, or being scared of him as they were the first time. It was his first time to work with two different children as a group. And then they (Mila and the other child) drew the pukeko, and they showed each other how to draw a pukeko, and Max was sitting there for a long time enjoying working with the group and drawing the pukeko with them...it was so powerful. When Mum came we said show Mummy the pukeko picture and Mum used it for the calendar picture. Mum was also feeling the power of this moment and wanted to share the happiness and joy with the people by ordering the calendar with this picture for the grandparents, for the family and the relatives as well.

Stephanie: One of the first times that we saw Max draw was when we were exploring puddles. We discovered his joy of puddles, and that he could locate a puddle anywhere on the field, and he would run and jump into the puddle. And we had a giant puddle out the front of the church and Max swam in it! The water was about knee high on teachers, maybe a little bit higher even - it was a really big puddle. When he came back, he drew puddles, and he drew the water, and it was the first time we'd seen him draw. And for me, it was just about the JOY that he experienced...and I think about Malaguzzi, "nothing without JOY." And if you can find something that unlocks joy in any possible way! It was about unlocking the joy for Max and gated...a gated environment didn't do it for him...he enjoyed being at Kindy, but it was not the same as being out exploring... jumping in puddles, finding sticks, seeing the green - that gave him real joy.

So when he left here, and, his family moved, and they decided to move down to a more rural area and they got him into a school that had a nature programme. So he was out one day a week with the nature programme. And that's been the key for him to unlock the rest of his learning journey at school."

### **Summary of *Who is the super-diverse learner?***

#### **- Related to Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten's empirical evidence**

This excerpt from PBKs Outdoor Explorers brings to our attention the fact that quality education is about teachers listening to all of the voices in the group, and the significance of their responsibility around decisions which impact the shaping of the identity of the super-diverse children, within that group, reflecting the school environment and pedagogy.

In the case of this example from PBK there is a particular focus on deliberately applying the value of difference as an asset in REI pedagogy which makes a difference for individual learners, especially the special rights child, but also for the group, who are nurtured in a supportive environment to look at others in a new light. This is an indicator of quality pedagogy in the democratic classroom of the REA (Gothson, 2016), it is also a key characteristic of CRP (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 17), and reflects Te Whāriki's Belonging/ Mana Whenua strand. It is a courageous move on the part of teachers who employ democratic pedagogies which involve power sharing strategies where the outcome is not always clear cut but which invites inclusion and equity to the table. It shows the teachers' level of comfort with positionality, that they are aware of power, privilege and bias, using it to listen to the children, and to carefully and collaboratively scaffold support for them in an environment where all have equal rights (Madison, 2020).

Max's story evidences the deliberate choice of action by the teachers to change the lens and mindset of everyone in his Outdoor Explorers' community to a strengths-based asset perspective, through quality pedagogy. "Teachers are in a privileged position of making a difference in children's understanding of themselves and others. Pedagogies as tools of governing can function as a powerful force for reconstruction: children and adults can learn to govern themselves in ways that foster diversity and difference in a global society" (Clark & Grey, 2010).

The super-diverse child has an increased number of differentiating characteristics (Vertovec, 2021) which have been shaped by the environment in which they reside, and which are discoverable by the teacher. The lesson here is that children are a product of our image and shaping within their situation or environment, including shaping by peers, groups, teachers, the school, parents and community. Vertovec says, "I hope that you get the sense of the complexity of super-diversity: multiple characteristics and multiple stratification positions" (Vertovec, 2021, p.11).

The super-diverse learner is in many ways at the mercy of the forces of their world, and this is why the environment in which the classroom is such an important consideration. At a time in life when children are most vulnerable it is vital that teachers are aware of the many forces at play and able to provide quality professional support to children and their families which enables them to access and begin to build on their rights to their own unique identity.

Teachers are in fact the gatekeepers to enabling access to democratic pedagogy, a position of great privilege. Awareness of this involves openness to exploring one's positionality, to research and to the awareness one is shaping not only the image of the child, but of groups, communities and of society.

#### **4.2.6 The Super-diverse Child is Shaped in Relation With Others**

Bear Park Early Learning Centre- Teachers as conductors of the rights of the super-diverse child to identity.

The story below is empirical evidence from the REI teachers at BP supporting the idea of super-diverse children's complex identities as continually developing and evolving, amidst the forces of others, including the environment. To be able to say who the super-diverse child was before them, REI teachers use the pedagogy of listening, with its open researching attitude, which Professor Carla Rinaldi describes as, "like a laboratory, to listen to the rise of new behaviours" (Carla Rinaldi, 2019). Behind this concept is the idea of

how you look is what you see, creating one's image of a child. Situated in this research was the idea that all children are super-diverse (Rinaldi, 2020), as supported by the teachers' evidence, which connects to Vertovec's notion, "people themselves are super diverse", because they both see that identity involves increasing complexities, multiple characteristics, multiple stratification positions and multiple group belongings (Vertovec, 2016; 2019; 2021, p. 11).

The understanding we were looking to explore, in the empirical evidence, as expressed by Professor Rinaldi, was, "how the RE Inspired Approach has been supportive for the maintenance of the super-diverse, for the enrichment of super-diversity...and for the dialogue of super-diversity; so, they (all children) should become, super, super, super diverse.... and, also the responsibility of the diversity of the adult." The last part of her statement means that the teachers need a level of self-awareness of their perspectives, including biases, so that they are knowledgeable about the presence they bring into their relationships with children. This was important because, social psychologists show that, if more people were more aware of their own social identity complexity and therefore were more able to identify it in others, positive intergroup interactions flow from that (Vertovec, 2021, p. 12/13), and this is a significant gift we can give to children. "The issue here is about making each and everyone more aware of our differences and more responsible for them, so that these differences nourish one another from and in relationship with others"(Carla Rinaldi, 2019).

Julia from BP explains,

It's at the heart of all the world's conflict...is different ideas, and people getting more attached to their own ideas not being able to consider others' perspectives, and it's our job...and talking about culture and super-diversity...like, *we are* creating a new culture - a culture of a generation that understands that we're all going to see things differently and have our own ideas!

The following discussion related to the question: *Who is the super-diverse child?* which was supporting the idea of the individual's right to their own uniqueness as a result of the forces within the group, but also the responsibility of the teacher, for guidance. It talks about the value of group dynamics, where the teachers consciously and constantly work within interrelationships between 'self and Others maintaining an awareness of supporting and developing connections between children's unique perspectives, yet all the while maintaining and growing each child's individuality and dignity. It describes the competency of the BP group of ECE teachers' who are in tune with the evolutionary dynamics at play in

the life of their centre.

In the REA such interactions are part of the collaborative ongoing planning and discussions, or projectzone, which as they demonstrate, contribute to the discovery, which is ever evolving, regarding the question *Who is the super-diverse child?*

This empirical piece was accessed from the teachers retelling of their practical experience: it was a snippet from the BP team taken during our second Zoom interview (2 March, 2021). The conversation was elicited from one of our semi-structured interview conversations where the teachers talked about the children's uniqueness and how they guided interactions in the learning process, in a way which respected their personal perspectives, but also helped them negotiate ideas and developed identity from a strengths-based perspective.

Margot: What I loved about what Carlina Rinaldi did in *Making Learning Visible*...was making it very, very clear... acknowledging the individual who is part of the group! And we've actually had challenges in conversations with the Education Review Office over the years, where they say, "we don't see any individual learning." But we say, "yes you do," because there's your individual learning journal that we created [...].

But we believe in groups of learners...so, I can't be who I am without relationships like this because I'm part of a group, you know?...we are not fully a person until we acknowledge the relationships that we form with others, with places and with things.

When Per Bernemyr was visiting us many years ago he started his discussion with us by talking about the importance of relationships and connections and that through these we become who and what we are. It is through these connections and interconnections with places, things and others that we therefore create a context of being, of existence and of importance. And I think that's why I love this investigative learning that we do...and that's come from Reggio as well - in the sense of this idea about how you do 'select' the group, and there are considerations that you take, you take into account the different uniqueness of each child and how they work, maybe together... and maybe we get it wrong and things do change, but you're trying to piece them together so you've got this group of learners.

Alice: We connect one child's ideas to another child's idea: we act as conductors sometimes. And we're also trying to, within investigative learning ..and even just

within spontaneous learning, we're trying to hold onto those threads that we can see will connect a child to...one child's ideas to another child's idea...you know, we want to act as conductors sometimes, to see what IS possible to combine.

Debbie: I've realised that it's quite important to highlight the similarities as well, when I'm talking so much about diversity: I actually think that it's really important.

Julia: I think often when we're in conversation we're like, so 'I think this and Alice thinks this...but Margot's saying something different ...*does that mean that she's wrong, just because she thinks something different to us?* ...Often that in itself is a conversation to be had... and so then you use the differences and the similarities to have a discussion to come to a shared understanding. *So maybe that shared understanding is, "you know what, it's okay to disagree..."*

Alice: ...somebody's really certain that the dragon is going to have scales ..and the other one is really certain that the dragon's going to have feathers.

Julia:...we are creating a new culture: a culture of a generation that understands that we're all going to see things differently and have our own ideas...

Alice: Something that we often will pose to the children when there is that bit of tension rising that somebody's *really certain* that the dragon is going to have scales ..and the other one is *really certain* that the dragon's going to have feathers: it's like *it's actually okay to leave it at that and have different ideas.*

And, so now you often hear in the classroom, when somebody says, "it's okay that we have different ideas...and that's what it is...you don't actually have to have the same idea".

Debbie: That's the sort of thing that I hope that these children as adults will remember...because it's what we need in the world.

Alice: I would take it one step further and say, it's not just okay to have different ideas ...*it's important to have different ideas!*

Margot: But I think it's trying to use that term '*the toolkit*', we are giving them the tools. So they've actually got this toolkit when they leave that they can actually have the strategies and understandings, that they can actually tweak it to the different situations but it's still is this tool kit.

Debbie: And some would say, you know, if we did learn to accept our differences and similarities we would have less Christchurch Mosque shootings.

Margot: Oh, definitely, definitely!

Julia: It's at the heart of all the world's conflict...is different ideas, and people getting more attached to their own ideas not being able to consider others perspectives, and it's our job...and talking about culture and super diversity...like, *we are* creating a new culture - a culture of a generation that understands that we're all going to see things differently and have our own ideas!

### Summary of *Who is the super-diverse child?*

#### - Related to Bear Park Early Learning Centre's empirical evidence

The super-diverse child has an increased number of differentiating characteristics (Vertovec, 2021) which have been shaped by the environment in which they find themselves in, and which are discoverable by the teacher. The super-diverse child's multidimensionality is the "outcome" of many generic variables colliding with those of (many) other people's, which have created complex identities, and social conditions (Vertovec, 2007). The recognition of the individual as a complex and discoverable being has similarities to Malaguzzi's principle of the hundred languages, the multiple truths, multi modal literacies and cultural repertoires and intelligences of CRPs (Morrison, Rigney, Hattam & Diplock, 2019, p. v), and Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner). Vertovec says, "...in super-diversity you have, simultaneously, an increase in numbers and an increase in the differentiation of characteristics of the people that comprise a social system and then through various social dynamics, you have an increase of the interdependence of these people and their characteristics" (Vertovec, 2021, p. 8). The dynamics are always evolving, and this is why the POL is key for the teacher.

Malaguzzi's words from his 1963 Speech at a symposium on the 'Relations between Psychiatry, Psychology and Pedagogy', reminds us of the importance of listening. He reminds the audience, "each child's psychological portrait cannot be mechanically deduced from a generalised schema, but (emerges) from an analysis and observation of each individual, built on their original biology, psyche and their personal history" (Cagliari, et al, 2106, p. 76). Professor Rigney talks about the non-homogeneity of super-diverse children...

Now an Aboriginal child used to present to an Australian classroom with cultural differences. But now an Aboriginal child can be non-binary, have a disability, have a foreign born parent and an Aboriginal mother and have a disability. And so these diversities are very much new... different from previous theorisations of multiculturalism (Professor Rigney lecture to Reggio PhD group 28.6.22).

At BP Alice RE inspired teacher, Alice describes how she listens to the children, expressing the epistemological knowledge and understanding that there will be many truths amongst the group:

I'm in the classroom with the three and the four year olds, the class is fairly diverse... I think at first glance, you would notice that certainly, we have a large number of Chinese children. But if you look a little bit deeper, then you can see that just because many are Chinese does not mean that they are all experiencing the same things & that they are all from the same family, belief and cultural situations. So I think it's too easy to go: look, there's lots of Chinese children... without knowing that actually, this child's family is from Taiwan, and this child's family is from Hong Kong; and these children have lived in New Zealand for three generations of the family.

The NZ ECE Curriculum, Te Whāriki, also takes this stance, “Rather than focusing on a particular truth, singular category of development, or outcome, early childhood assessment practices in A/NZ have more recently promoted opening up to possibilities of many truths, and to children’s learning and abilities as often fluctuating and unpredictable. This focus sees children’s lives as always entwined in intricately woven relational webs, with their peers, their physical surroundings, their teachers and wider communities” (Arndt & Tesar, 2015, p. 72, as cited in Ritchie, 2018, p. 221).

These ideas reflect Vertovec’s 2016 comment, super-diversity is *about more* than cultural diversity or the inclusion of immigrants, and more broadly encompasses social identity, because people themselves are diverse. I feel it connects to Professor Carla Rinaldi’s 2020 statement “we are all super-diverse” (Rinaldi, 2020 personal communication; Rinaldi to Vatican).

Throughout the research process I am intrigued by how much I see in Malaguzzi and Rinaldi’s literature which connects to Vertovec’s super-diversity concept.

How can we make the languages truly one hundred in a “project of alliance” with this cultural pluriverse that surrounds us?...The construction of self, of the individual becomes increasingly defined as a point of intersection of multiple identities. More and more the individual will express an intercultural, intersubjective identity. So the quantity and quality of his or her encounters and experiences will become increasingly important. Intercultural education thus represents one of the essential guidelines for defining the quality of our future, to the extent that the interaction between cultures is not only a political issue, but a cultural and cognitive one” (Rinaldi, in M.L.V, 2001, p. 46).

“We are all super diverse” (Rinaldi, 2020).

#### 4.2.7 Outcomes: Who is the super-diverse child?

The concept of the super-diverse child in this thesis begins with A/NZ census statistics, or population data, which was then combined with academic and empirical evidence in a co-construction between the research participants.

Based on recently emerging geographical and demographic data we understood the children in A/NZ are super-diverse. Auckland, A/NZs largest city is now home to much greater ethnic, or country of origin diversity. This involves the multiplication and proliferation of the significant variables of people from 160 different languages ( Royal, Society of NZ, as cited in Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p. 1). This means that in the daily life of a preschool here, the interrelations of children and their families involve a dynamic of greatly increased diversity than ever before (super-diversity).

Children’s ethnicities and countries of origin combine with additional significant variables causing the proliferation of language, religion, age, migration experiences, geo political orientation and history, legal status, skills, intelligences, learning styles, trauma, special rights, family support, financial status, ontology, epistemology and axiology. This involves many personal truths and world views, with the interaction of these variables *creating a dynamic interplay (super-diversity)* which affects “where and how people live” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025) and in preschools where, how and with whom people teach and learn (Gogolin, cited in Li et al., 2021, p.1).

Harold Gothson (4.8.2023, personal communication, 1:44:53) recently described his thoughts about the dynamics of super-diversity at play, within which the child (and the learning group) can be conceptualised at the centre; for him,

Super-diversity is more like a room (than layers)... a room with different vectors or forces working, and all of them working at the same time, but in the middle is the human being and surrounded by so many different forces of demands and claims and so on. Where is the identity really? Because something is happening all the time, that is, depending on new meetings and so on, and I think this is what superdiversity tries to grasp (Gothson, August 2023, personal communication). I appreciate him sharing his conceptualisation. It helps bring the following description of a super-diverse identity to life a little more,

A Māori child used to present to an A/NZ classroom with cultural differences. But now

a Māori child can be non-binary, have a disability, have a foreign born parent and a Māori mother.

We might listen to the super-diverse child as a multidimensional identity who also encompasses their own set of hundred languages, intelligences and world-views (Cagliari, p.104; Edwards et al., 2012, p. 301; Indications, 201, p. 10; Morrison et al., 2019). The child is an image or mirror of those surrounding them.

“But I feel it is necessary to specify that the hundred languages of children is not only a metaphor for crediting children and adults with a hundred, a thousand creative and communicative potentials. In our opinion the hundred languages represents a strategy for the construction of concepts and the consolidation of understanding. But above all it is a declaration of the equal dignity and importance of all languages, not only writing, reading and counting...” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 175).

Super-diversity is a more complex social construct which can be interpreted from various lenses, depending on how one looks, it is a “floating signifier” (Vertovec, 2021, p.14). This is because listening to the child is always political. Around the globe there are many ways that children are listened to, varying from Reggio Emilia’s competent child to those children who are invisible (Cagliari et al; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2022; Professor Sebastian Lipina to PhD Seminar 16.2. 2022; Bishop, 1999).

The conceptual thinking of Vertovec and Professor Rinaldi seem to share similarities about identity, “We are all super-diverse, we are all migrants” (Rinaldi, 2020). “We are talking about all people/humans”- a way to describe people’s complexity” (Vertovec, 2021, p. 7 & 11). Loris Malaguzzi describes listening to the child from a holistic perspective,

However it is to be remembered that each child’s psychological portrait or profile cannot be mechanically deduced from a generalised schema, but (emerges) from an analysis and observation of each individual, built on their original biology, psyche and their personal history” (Cagliari, et al., 2016 p.76).

The responsibility on the part of the teacher is a balance between listening to the super-diversity of the child and being aware of how their support (or not) shapes the image of the child they interact with on a daily basis. Teachers, parents, peers, schools, communities and society are constructing the child... so the child can construct. In this research it included the inquiry into how REI teachers supported each other to broaden their RE image of the child, from one of diversity and/or multiculturalism, to confirm the complex identity of the super-diverse child. REs image of a child is one of rights to democracy, equity and freedom (Rinaldi, 2020). They are ready and waiting to be discovered by the teacher and supported by

humanistic pedagogy. We all have an image of the child... the image we project stems from our own construct/ image (belief system). This necessitated the need to emphasise and check our teacher lenses in terms of the child's right to their own identity. Teachers have not been prepared (Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney, personal communication, 2021) and therefore need to examine their own super-diversity, including lenses and biases (Vertovec, 2021, p. 12/13). The old diverse and multicultural lenses have not done this well and Māori children have remained isolated, causing over-representation in A/NZ of negative social and economic indicators (Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p. 4). Migrants too have felt silenced and largely ignored in A/NZ (Bartley and Spoonley, as cited in Chan & Ritchie, 2023, p.5). The silencing and ignoring is in direct contravention to what MoE's expectations are when implementing the Treaty: expects, "to live together in a spirit of partnership and the acceptance of obligations for participation and protection (Ministry of Education, 2017: 3; as cited in Chan and Ritchie, p. 3,7 & 11)". In the REA they are prepared to be unprepared: they are open researchers (Gothson, personal communication, 2022). The teacher as the gatekeeper enables access to quality education by listening to the child's super-diversity profile. "What we can do to support positive relationships, or sensitive opportunities for contact for people to meet by way of their multiple identities, their multiple categories' is key" (Vertovec, 2021, p. 15).

The social organisation of difference model (Vertovec, 2015) helped me to investigate how teachers listen to the child through a super-diversity lens, as a unique human being with their own particular set of variables, and then how they nurtured relationships in order to give them the best possible opportunity to develop as learners and citizens, within a democratic values based society.

The REI teachers in the A/NZ ECEs showed that they relate to the super-diverse children in their centres with an understanding of them as super-diverse individuals who encompass their own unique composition of variables, or languages. They took responsibility educating them with the awareness that their own image affects children's variables, contributing to their social construct.

The examples shared by PBK and AP in this part of chapter four exemplified stories of teachers specifically working to support super-diverse children from priority special rights cohorts in the A/NZ ECE setting. The story shared by the teachers at BP demonstrated their acute awareness of balancing the super-diverse children's individual perspectives and connecting them with others in the group. Working with super-diversity in this respectful way was welcoming and nourishing. In AP's case was providing a gentle source of regeneration related to the families' wishes, and was based on using RE's pedagogy of listening. Working

with super-diverse children in these asset based ways supported children to take up their rights to a super-diverse identity and belonging in the classroom where they could blossom and flourish.

In 2022, when onsite doing empirical research at BP, one of the teachers shared her planning with me, and handwritten amongst the pages was the following quote from Jerome Brunner, a friend and honorary citizen of RE. Perhaps it summed up her thoughts as she was planning for her super-diverse children:

These groups are not only places of instruction but also centres of construction of personal identity and collaboration...places where cultural reciprocity is practised, which brings greater awareness on the part of children for what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why” (Brunner, n.d).

Super diversity is a kaleidoscopic view of any child, anywhere. Super-diverse identity exists within a continually evolving microcosm of the individual's unique variables which continually interact and grow.

To know the super-diverse child requires listening to them.

## Chapter 5

### Environment as the Third Teacher

#### Introduction to Chapter 5

The first stage of my onsite empirical data gathering began with a whole day at Arrowtown Preschool on the 8th April, 2021, and then three weeks later on the 10-14 May, 2021, I spent a week in Auckland, with two days at PBK and three at BP. By this point all of the ECE's were open and fully functioning onsite again after Covid19. However due to not being able to gain onsite access to the Auckland ECEs the data for this introduction to their main projects was gathered off site. PBK's was by zoom and BP's was through documentation which I collected when I eventually did make it onsite.

As previously mentioned, I hypothesised that here with these hopeful approaches, it would be more likely that I would find reflective REI teachers willing to face the challenge of not only how to adapt their pedagogies to tap into the cultural identities of super-diverse children, but also to accept the deeper self identity reflection required by those who choose to take on the responsibility of educating children. Part of the RE teachers philosophy is the awareness of their own impact, influence or power, in other words, quality teachers. We know this issue sits at the core of RE, it is a point that has been carried through the years. To this day it remains a powerful part of the PhD induction process presented by Carla Rinaldi. My reasoning was that pedagogical examples used by teachers in the super-diverse classroom, containing all three hopeful approaches, would then enable me to identify the three strongest REI principles and values used in the projects that the centres were working on during my research. Then I would open each centre's E3 data, for investigation in greater depth regarding how REI pedagogy is embodied in support of the cultural languages of the super-diverse child. This was my data analysis process. The narratives and stories were collected as ethnographic data. They were deductively sourced based on the coding tools. In the following three chapters the analysis will be presented ethnographically.

#### Environment as the third teacher in A/NZ Reggio Inspired ECEs

##### Analysis Process in Chapter 5:

The unique characteristics of the CR, DEM REA inspiration identified in each centre's story are described in the pedagogical projects in chapter 5. Within these stories, the researcher used the qualitative tool of inductive and deductive reasoning and the process of ethnographic thick description to pull together patterns or threads based on the coding tools (deductive) and the empirical evidence provided by the teachers (inductive) (O'Leary, 2021, p. 351).

**Outcomes:** The researcher connected the threads into ethnographic webs/themes using Geertz's thick description (Geertz, 1973). A critical discussion of each ECE's data, then went towards a co-construction between all three centres about how the super-diverse child could be supported, based on their practices. This analysis process went on in each centre's data and was used to produce the findings revealed in the chapters.

### **Findings**

The first of these findings I shall now share. It is RE's principle, the environment as the third teacher (E3). E3 was one of the three strongest REI principles to emerge as a key theme across all of the ECE centres in the research. The second set of the strongest of the three themes is presented in Chapter 6: the hundred languages (100L); and the third in Chapter 7: the pedagogy of listening & documentation (POL & D).

I have chosen to share the centre's REI E3 in support of the super-diverse child through their project based stories. The stories presented here in chapter 5 are continued in chapter 6. Each uses RE's principle of the environment as the third teacher to listen to, and support the voice of the super-diverse child.

- The natural environment is Arrowtown Preschool's RE inspiration. They were listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse A/NZ children.
- At Bear Park it was the democratic learning environment.
- At Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten it was a culturally responsive environment listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse kiwi/ immigrant children.

### **5.1 The Principle of the Environment as the Third Teacher**

“Perspectives on empowerment are culturally located, hence teachers/ kaiako need to seek the input of children and their parents and whānau when designing the local curriculum” (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 18).

E3 inspired my three centres in different ways. The critical discussion throughout the text contributed to the co-constructed understanding at the end of the chapter.

A key point of the principle of the environment as the third teacher in this research is to accentuate how each REI centre provided CRP in relation to the super-diverse child. I was looking to find environments which were particularly nourishing of children's cultural intelligences and languages of super-diverse child in A/NZ, including the super-diverse Māori child in order for them to become, “super, super, super diverse” (Rinaldi, personal communication, 2021; Indications, 2010, p.13).

In the REA the physical space can be defined as a language, which has been shaped according to precise cultural conceptions and deep biological roots [...] it is therefore a constituent element in the formation of thought (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 53). The environment and the individual are active and shape each other, and this idea is the premise of super-diversity in this research. When listening to the child, teachers need to be sensitive to how the environment the children have come from has shaped the children in the classroom: do we ask the child to leave their cultures and intelligences at the door, or harness them in holistic pedagogies? Equally important is the way that the pedagogies shape the child when they arrive (Malaguzzi & Vecchi interview, 1992, as cited in Edwards, et al., 2012 p. 339; Bishop, 1999).

“What determines the quality of a project is its capacity to transmit and support a certain image of the child, a child who has a hundred languages and the right to an environment that is rich, multifaceted, complex, well tended, beautiful” (Michele Zini, in Vecchi, p. 97; Rinaldi, 2006 p. 83 ) with the possibility of the terrain (including the design of furnishings, furniture and buildings) being an adaptable as part of this psyche, “*building a school of thought*” (Rinaldi, in Vecchi, p. 98). A place of “horizontal...” where all participants can manage this together, as opposed to a frame of domination. It all contributes towards the culture of childhood, (Cagliari, p. 380/ 381).

## **5.2 Arrowtown Preschool: Environment as the Third Teacher**

### **for the Super-Diverse Child and the Super-Diverse Māori child**

It was a warm autumn morning at the end of April, 2021 when I finally made my first onsite empirical field trip to Arrowtown Preschool. I followed the loud and happy sounds of the playground to the entrance gate and enjoyed the sight of children all over the outdoor playground. It was fabulous to finally meet Izzy and the teachers in person and they welcomed me to find a place in their shared office and join them as everyone settled to begin their day.

During the beginning of day, at mat time, the children and teachers were discussing whether or not they will actually float the Mōkihi (a traditional Māori flax raft) they have made in the Arrowtown River. I was encouraged by what I saw: the children’s learning seemed authentic in that there is a purpose for the mōkihi; and in Arrowtown which is mostly famous for its gold mining history, adapting this narrative to include another historical element - traditional Māori culture helps deepen the range of cultural languages available in the super-diverse classroom. I believed that there would be super-diverse children here of

Māori heritage who would particularly benefit from this perspective on history. But as Māori history is also a responsibility of our bicultural partnership, to honour the Treaty of Waitangi, it is an important part of the curriculum for all children (Te Whāriki, 2017). It also showed that the teachers are supportive of super-diverse children from cultures who may traditionally have had less of a voice in pedagogy.

Because the group was not sure if the mōkihi will float, the children were sharing their theories to solve any issues they foresee. One child, Olly, suggested that if they were going to float it, then they would need to be able to stop and anchor it to one spot sometimes. At this point head teacher, Izzy mentioned that a group of ten four year olds would be heading to the river area for their weekly 'Nature Explorers' outing that morning, and she told the children that it would be a good opportunity to think about such issues when they were there. Education in the outdoor environment is an experience which is highly valued in A/NZ education (Maley-Shaw, 2012; Wattachow & Brown, 2011).

The teachers were supporting children's critical thinking and theory building through an environment where their ideas were welcomed in class. Izzy was bridging the learning to the real life experiences that the children would experience in the outdoors later in the day, and planting a seed of an idea for the children to trial their own theories.

On the walk to the Nature Explorers setting the preschool leader Izzy and I chatted about her personal Reggio Emilia origins as we both ponder the super-diverse child in this light; the "inspirational REANZ professional development days", the "strong connections with Te Whāriki" and how when reading about the REA, she thought, "this is the way we work... let's look into this a bit more." In 2008, she joined an REANZ study tour to RE, and although it "turned everything upside down... *it actually deepened our practice.*"

She explained that their Nature Explorers programme had adapted to encompass CRPs and also how it offered another opportunity to listen to the voices of new families.

It (Nature Explorers site) is so close to the preschool, that it has become an authentic part of the children developing a sense of ecological identity and responsibility. They have become like kaitiakitanga/guardians of this community. A lot of our families, who have moved here for work, it's not that they've come from generations of families who have lived here...so it (Nature Explorers) is really great for the families and children who have joined to develop their connectedness.

Place had a vital role to play in the development and sustenance of identity (Wattachow & Brown, 2011, p. 71; Penetito, 2009) and Izzy's words reflected her understanding of this. She was also reflecting an approach to learning which is CR. The CRP critical thinking,

activist orientation which indicated that children were involved in real life problem solving challenges that mattered in their lives (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p.146, as cited in Morrison, et al., 2019). Izzy intended that they led a culture of welcome for the families who moved into the area as she explicitly expressed her awareness of the importance of how their programme can support the building of new connections. I felt that Izzy was making a super-diverse connection here, and her words connected to those of Veia Vecchi's (2010),

The social and cultural transformation taking place around the entire planet, in situations of massive migratory flows, originating in the need to survive, to work, or in tourism, our relationship with environments is an element of enormous importance, because it leads us to a reconsideration of profound aspects connected to cultural, individual and social identity. This general responsibility involves education (Vecchi, 2010, p. 94).

Before we headed over the bridge and into the Nature Explorers area, the teachers did a comprehensive safety check with the children.

We all wandered along the path beside the stream together. As we arrived at their Nature Explorers base, Rebecca demonstrated a REI democratic approach, which welcomed the voice of the child, when she was giving me a quick tour of the traditions developed by the children here. She remembered, "the children have named quite a few spots, like (this one) the music tree. Past explorers were really into music so it's just kind of carried through; they liked rattling the leaves and they were like, 'the music tree!'" The preschool, classroom and/or group was the perfect opportunity for children to learn about being part of a democratic society and the traditions Rebecca was mentioning which have been developed and passed down by different groups of children, such as the naming of their special locations, indicated that the children's voices were valued, that the teachers' image was of a competent children who had a right to a voice. These were all REI democratic indicators, and it made me look forward to finding out more about the nuances of how they listened to the voice of the super-diverse child.

I could hear Rebecca's passion for the opportunities the outdoor environment provides for the children.

Our hope is that a sensitive approach to our surroundings can constitute a positive element for participation and conscious solidarity with others and with that which surrounds us, an indispensable attitude for the future of democracy and humanity. (Edwards, et al. 2012, p. 340).

Three little girls invited me to an area where a mound of dirt about a metre in volume acts as their stage and began to sing from the top of their lungs the well known Māori waiata Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi, in a heartwarming moment where nature provided a stage for their great solidarity. The language of music seemed to be well and truly alive at Nature Explorers, from what Rebecca had mentioned so far, and with the interdisciplinary nature of combining it with our indigenous cultural language, it seemed this place flourished with natural, little opportunities to use TW's bicultural curriculum as an interwoven part of how the super-diverse child was supported to enjoy their voice.

To add a deeper super-diversity perspective they could perhaps listen for and encourage the other cultural languages which children in the group may have experienced and encourage the inclusion of these into learning situations, adding more possibilities through the musical repertoire. This of course requires teachers' open researching skills, as they look to open up wider perspectives that super-diversity brings, being aware of how the subjective interaction of ever evolving identities and this inspiring natural environment might really harness and deepen the opportunity for meaning making in this continuous reciprocal exchange (Rinaldi, 2021, p. xxiii & 84).

Rebecca continued, “and then we’ve got the prickly forest...and the log which they have to shuffle across...slide across...*Lupin Beach* (in the spring there’s lots of lupins around it and the forest which is a big jungle of trees). She explains, summer and winter explorers are quite different, because it's obviously so cold. In winter it's a lot more about the ice...smashing the ice and moving to try and keep warm; whereas in summer it's about the river and the trees.” Before moving off into their chosen activities, the group of teachers and children sat along the river bank for morning tea. Izzy described some of the benefits of Nature Explorers to me, which involved exploration of many things...

Risk taking is big in this programme, it's about them giving things a go...that they see themselves as capable; we don't help them, if they want to do something they have to try it themselves, and our thing is that if they can't do it themselves then they're not ready. Climbing trees and things like that, we're always watching. We talk about the safety rules at the start...we want it to be as natural as possible.

I related what Izzy was expressing to the RE principle of the competent child and to the CRP indicator, ‘High Intellectual Challenge’, which uses anti-deficit discourse through pedagogies that view all learners as competent and intelligent (Rinaldi, 2021, p.61; Morrison et al., 2019, p.22). Izzy told me about the children in the programme who may be confident in class, “within four walls”, but less confident in nature, and vice versa. Thinking out loud I

suggest this was perhaps a link we could use to think about *who the super-diverse child might be...* that all children are unique, having their own set of 100L and deeper, each with their own nuanced identity.

Izzy was sharing with me how she notices the nuances in the children's abilities in response to both indoor and outdoor environments. This reflects REI's open researching teacher who is seeking to find and make sense of more of the children's languages.

Izzy thought carefully about my comment, taking a moment to ponder whether it raised a useful nuance that might be a consideration within the realms of seeking a deeper understanding of the super-diverse child.

Simultaneously, I thought about my teaching career and how I have experienced that situation where teachers and parents can give children a blanket label (positive, negative or greyscale) which can become a self fulfilling prophecy. I was keen to reiterate with Izzy how super-diversity brings to our attention the way that we shape each other's identity. This was why we were discussing it in relation to teachers, because it was important that we as teachers provided an environment which shaped the image of the child the way that Arrowtown Preschool seemed to.

From what she was describing they shared RE's image of the child as competent. They deliberately intend to give the children the opportunity to explore their own individual agency, strengths and weaknesses, which is another example of a positive message for the children - that within the structure and safety of the outdoors, there was the freedom to challenge one's physical languages in relation to one's own capacity. Our shared wondering was touching on territory deeper than just noticing variables of super-diverse identity, and both of us were pondering opening up to the many possible languages within (Celada and Hobba, 2022).

Next I wandered with teacher Rebecca as we followed four of the children towards a little stream which was very shallow, but in its deeper parts it had enough water to float sticks. As it wound its way along, the width increases and narrows as streams do, by about two to three metres.

We could see from just behind the children that several tourists standing by were watching the children, who have found a bunch of sticks, one of whom (Olly) has gathered them into an armful sized nest and dropped it into the water, connecting with all of the children in great anticipation as they looked to see how well it floated. Mentally I made the link that the children were taking Izzy up on her suggestion from group time in class this morning. As we caught up, Olly, who had captured the nest of sticks at the end of its journey

(which is over about fifty metres) ran, carrying it towards Rebecca shouting, “Rebecca, look what we found!” They were all joyously following him and in this evolutionary moment of connection between the environment, the time and place and the children’s attention to learning, Rebecca listened, registered their engagement with the language of floating and sinking that they had tapped into as a group and made the link back to Izzy’s provocation earlier in the day asking “did it work?” (my interpretation of her comment being, please show me - I was documenting what you have found) while at the same time the children were putting Izzy’s provocation to the test.

This was the pinpoint moment that the teacher tapped into this super-diverse group’s languages of floating & sinking (*which is also part of their wider ongoing project, the Mōkihi*). In the authentic learning environment thinking was deepened when it was transferred across disciplines. In this case into the natural environment where they could test their theory in a real life situation. Here Rebecca as a REI teacher supported the children’s learning progression by listening closely to where they were at and questioning in order to build on their learning. Also, later she would share what she had noticed with her colleagues, so that the learning opportunities could be expanded on in other situations, with other teachers.

Olly *propelled* the nest back onto the stream to repeat the experiment, knowing that Rebecca was watching.” The group followed the nest as it bobbed downstream for a second time. They were hopping and skipping alongside the water’s edge, waving their arms, even swooshing the water with their hands, seeming to want the bundle to move more quickly. Rebecca was now walking along with them proudly, “*it’s floating, you were right Olly!*” When it reached the end of its trip a tourist tried to help by stopping it going further downstream, but Rebecca was nearby in her gumboots and rescued it for them. She then suggested they go back upstream and, “*put it up there and we can watch it again.*”

While they ran back, I commented to Rebecca about what a great link it was to the mōkihi in the classroom, and she told me they had been doing it for a few weeks (rewinding or transposing learning). She recalled a previous conversation where some of the children found a piece of bark at Butler Green which they wanted to carry to the stream, and when she asked them, “*what are you going to do with that?*” They exclaimed to her, “*It’s the waka/raft/mōkihi Rebecca!*”

While the children experimented Rebecca explained to me that the Nature Explorers programme “*promotes creativity and provides links to numeracy, literacy...with all the signs and everything, there’s heaps.*” I said that I could see how strongly the Māori culture was

woven into what they did too, and Rebecca agreed, “yes, the guardians, too”, I suggested, “it’s developing links to their own individual languages and cultures as well.” Rebecca told me that they also gathered sticks down here and took them back to the classroom to use in floating experiments.

After several trials, the nest happened to fall into two parts at the end of one of its runs, and inspired by the group experiment they had just been undertaking, the children were prompted by the nest *dividing into two parts...and then into four pieces*, to each begin their own individual floating experiments, “*oh...you’ve each got one now!*”

They spent time tracking them in this little part of the stream while Rebecca took in the nuances of each individual child’s floating languages as they were now separately experimenting in slightly different ways with the same concept, “you could have a race,” she said to three of them who were dashing back upstream, *but they didn’t because Olly the leader, who launched his nest first (probably because he was now competent at throwing his stick into the channel of water deep enough to set it confidently on its way)*, was well in front of the other two children, who had developed their ideas about how to propel sticks into the water by watching Olly, and were now getting their own experience with how to pick a steadily flowing channel of water. The boy at the back was following the lead of the others, but he had placed his stick near the water's edge, and because it was shallow, it kept catching on the stony bottom and slowing.

Super-diversity might come into the dynamics of what is happening here for the following reason. Although one cannot, and must not, without self reflection in the light of super-diversity, make assumptions, it is reasonable to begin one's research by theorising about what might be going on for each child.

- I started by considering that a child who has grown up in A/NZ was quite likely to have had the opportunity to have done this kind of experiment before and maybe because Olly was quite confident he was one of those children?
- However, the teachers have enlightened me that one of the children in this group has an A/NZ born father and his mother is Singaporean, and until very recently they had lived the child’s whole life in Singapore. It was a strong possibility that his father may have grown up in the outdoors with these kinds of experiences, but it was also possible that if his son had lived in the city, he had not been exposed to this kind of learning. We don’t know until we investigate (listen). But this reinforced the idea which super-diversity raises...that people’s socio-cultural life experiences are more varied and nuanced now, and that we don’t know... until we listen and find out what

their experiences and languages are. Until we know the truth we can't connect to the absolute heart of the learning moment with this child in order to progress their learning in the best way.

This example of floating sticks, although a great Nature Explorers experiential learning opportunity, was also doubling as a kind of metaphor for the idea that this kind of situation could happen with any kind of learning experience, in any super-diverse classroom. When you listen without assumptions (with reflection) then you will learn more about the child.

- Of course, there will be floating and sinking experiences which the Singaporean child has had with water, which A/NZ children and teachers can share and learn from.
- What is really important here is that every child in their learning, feels welcome and confident to try, and in RE language, that they not only have their languages listened to and validated with new learning being built on prior experience, but also they are welcomed to contribute their own life experience to the learning situation.

Teachers Rebecca and Izzy were listening to the cultures of the super-diverse children here using the REI pedagogy of listening, which built on the children's learning with what had gone before, and they connected to their languages in the moment. They used their connection with the child to welcome the next challenge.

A democratic education is one which teaches children to think and question (Gothson, 2016) and I could see that the teachers supported opportunities for this to happen here. The E3 is a major principle of the RE. Malaguzzi talked about "the nido"(nursery school) as *terrain*, "a community authority" able to be an open field for welcoming children and families and where material and immaterial problems are open for reflection and discussion (Cagliari, 2016, p.318 ).

### **5.3 Arrowtown Preschool's Contribution to Co-construction**

#### **Environment as the Third Teacher**

Through their choice to educate in the natural environment of the outdoors the teachers at Arrowtown Preschool were providing opportunities for super-diverse children to grow their personal languages, intelligences and sense of self through using the physical and conceptual opportunities that nature offered here. The opportunity for the children to be part of traditional routines which have developed over time created a sense of participation and belonging. As Izzy explained, it also led to a sense of *kaitiakitanga* or sense of being guardians of the place, also creating an ethic of care and responsibility for the earth. In *Ve*

Vecchi's words the environment can promote "tenderness and care for other lives" (2010, p.116).

Nature also offers learning in the ECE which are unseen and in ways which are hard to ignore: beauty, fun, aesthetics, challenge and joy (Mannera, 2022), including opportunities to transfer learning from one setting to another and deepen understanding of concepts, such as the floating experiments.

By offering super-diverse children the opportunity to experience the natural environment together, teachers were opening up opportunities for the children to understand each other through alternative ways of thinking and being, outside of the classroom, and as Izzy explained, some children's strengths were revealed in the outdoors.

Nature based education is identity shaping because of its direct experiential opportunities with the natural world. Veia Vecchi sums it up, "For children empathy with surroundings is kind of a natural bridge to a relationship with the environment and this an indispensable basis for relations with others" (2010, p.116).

#### **5.4 Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten: Environment as the Third Teacher for Super-Diverse Immigrant Children.**

##### **Focus: Place and Belonging.**

In early 2021 while the global environment reeled and regrouped due to the horror of Covid19 pandemic, different countries were, to a large degree, at the mercy of the different ways their governments chose to manage the risk to their citizens. At this stage in A/NZ the government would lock regions (provinces) in relation to numbers of cases reported. The Auckland region of NZ is our largest city, with a population of 1.6 million and during this period of Covid19 they were locked down more than other provinces in A/NZ. Overall, due to the way it was managed here, I believe we were extremely fortunate that deaths due to Covid were kept much lower than the devastating losses experienced in many other countries. But of course continual lockdowns still created their own train of impacts for A/NZ citizens. The reason I explain this is that two of the three ECE centres in my research were in Auckland. For the children and teachers in these centres, this was a tough time during which both centres created online learning opportunities for the families of their centres in order to maintain contact with each other, and to support parents with some ideas for learning.

In terms of this research project, the onsite empirical data gathering in these Auckland centres was postponed twice before I was able to get there and observe. Twice I landed in Auckland, a two hour flight from my home in the lower South Island of NZ, then found out

on my first night, or the next morning after I had landed in Auckland and then had to abort the research and return home. Third time lucky.

After the second return trip, due to Covid19 lockdowns Stephanie (PBK) and I decided to try and see what we could achieve by having a second whole staff meeting via Zoom to continue to try and make progress with data gathering in the form of another interview being that observations were not possible at this point. So, on the 8th April, 2021, and feeling very grateful to Stephanie *and* Analysis, an online platform like Zoom, I was able to join PBK at their after-school planning meeting in order to gain insight into how PBK teachers face the challenge of planning for their super-diverse learners - or to flip it, how the teachers meet the challenge of ensuring that the struggles of their super-diverse learners are addressed. Again, the ability to consider this problem would in the initial phase of my research be analysed mostly in the light of my coding tools CRPs, REA and DEM, because these approaches provided opportunities to face super-diversity in a deep way.

The meeting gave me useful insight into the direction and emphasis of PBKs “inquiry which was based on *developing an ecological identity*” (Stephanie). Ecological Identity is connected to TW’s strand, Exploration/ *Mana Aoturoa*. This turned out to be an interesting connection for me because I also found that the empirical evidence from the onsite data gathering at Arrowtown Preschool (gathered two weeks later) was based on developing Ecological Identity also, and this concept is very connected to RE’s principle, *the Environment as the Third Teacher*. Therefore a contextual pattern was emerging in my research.

During this Zoom, Stephanie informed me,

“Our overarching goals and plans at the moment are connecting to local space. So everything that we're doing is about connecting to the place around us, the land, the creatures, the different places that we know. And so we have been talking about... *our inquiry that we're working on is how we're supporting children to develop an ecological identity*. So we're looking quite closely at what they notice, you know like in Outdoor Explorers we've been noticing the insects - looking closely at the insects in some of the plants... so it sounds random *the leaves* (one of the lessons today) but there's a thread around it all, which is about ecological identity and connections to this place.” Sarah contributes further detail, “this inquiry theme also links to Te Whāriki’s strand Belonging/ *Mana Whenua*, having a sense of where they are” (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 31).

I was particularly fascinated to hear how they planned to use this inquiry to provide meaningful pedagogical experiences for the super-diverse children in their centre, as I imagined the group would certainly encompass many languages and world views. Amidst the many authentic based curriculum ideas that the teachers discussed during the meeting I also had my ear to the ground listening for the nuances which obviously would have to be made when their programme was clearly based on experiential learning, noticing uniqueness and REs image of the competent child - an alternative to the dominating, top down, prepackaged kind of educational experience.

At the start of the meeting Stephanie explained a CRP link which connects the children's learning to their life worlds. She said that part of the reason behind their decision to undertake this Ecological Identity Inquiry, was that: "children go from place to place in cars, so they know destinations such as kindy, church and the rugby club but they don't know the in-between spaces" and so the idea of the teachers was to enhance opportunities for the children to notice more of their places, and more about them, by providing meaningful real life projects, experiences which connected to the children's life worlds, which is an indicator of CRPs. They were discussing ideas for these as we talked together at their meeting: making volcanoes, moth plant harvesting involving maths skills of estimating, counting and sorting and drama, to name a few.

"One of our goals was to think about what else is living in the environment with us because we depend on all these things that are part of life. And all the insects... ants are incredibly important as they are caretakers and cleaners of the planet."

Care for the planet attracted my attention as this is an urgent global concern we are all acutely aware of, and it is an area which some of the literature ties directly to neoliberalism (Ritchie, Rigney) which, as a consequence, directly links to the way we educate. Because the overuse of the narrow measurement techniques for learning outcomes, demanded by an incessant quest for being able to tick-box type outcomes in less quality pathways to assessment, our pedagogies are being channelled in a direction which denies attention to the super-diverse child and care for their holistic development.

When Covid was over and the kindy was able to go out and about again, Stephanie said that their regular weekly *outdoor explorers programme* will restart as an experiential opportunity to support the children's development of ecological identity. They intended to take the children to Pakuranga's local *maunga*/mountain, 'Pigeon Mountain', where they could "walk the land". She described the value of this kind of experience,

I grew up with the worldview that if you want to know the *whenua*/land you walk the *whenua* through your feet. So if you're constantly driving in a car, it's like being a *waka*/canoe between islands... and these are islands of knowledge rather than an overview and a map. So we're trying to connect in a deeper way because often children sit for a long time in traffic, and they are often playing on iPads and phones and things like that, so actually, they don't know the between places at all. They know their house, they know their kindy, they know their church, they know their siblings' schools, they know I know their rugby club or things like that, but they don't know that between, but yeah, so that's what we're trying to do, to connect a bit more deeply because it changes your relationship with a place when you've actually been there."

This kind of learning, the teachers explained, developed a sense of belonging for the migrant children and families at the centre because it was another way to help them to come to know their new home better, to build a connection with their new surroundings. It was also, "part of our identity formation, because for some of our families connecting with your *awa*/ river and your *maunga*/ mountain are part of who you are." The teachers reiterated the value of this kind of learning, where the ecology of the environment was used to promote belonging for both learners and families in their community. Pedagogies for the super-diverse exemplify participatory democracies which welcome migrants "to sit with us, be part of us and to share what is unique to them" (Stephanie, PBK, 22.2.2022).

### **Pepeha/ mihimihi Story**

Dewey famously made the revelation about the importance of experiential learning (1938). Malaguzzi and Rinaldi built upon this and expressed quality learning as being that which builds on what has gone before (Fondazione Reggio Children Charter on Quality Education, 17 December, 2021). The idea also links to CRPs where teachers use the background knowledge children bring to learning, from their life world, using it to instigate new learning. This is what I thought the teachers at PBK were describing when they talked about how they deepen the pedagogical experience here through the use of Pepeha.

Pepeha is a traditional way of introducing yourself in Māori that tells people who you are by sharing your connections with the people and places that are important to you. The teachers say that by supporting children to share their places of cultural origin, they have been able to add a deeper layer of meaning to the place based relationship building experience of walking the land, because the children can make direct connections between their new places in A/NZ and those of their homelands. For super-diverse children who are transnationals, migrants or refugees this helps to build their own understanding of the

combination of their past and present identity, to celebrate it even supporting them to see their social construct as a real asset (Li, 2021). This relates to the CRP indicator, high intellectual challenge where teachers use, “anti-deficit discourse” through pedagogies that view all children as competent and intelligent” (Morrison, et al., 2019).

Stephanie explains,

Over the last couple of years, we've been involved with research with Waikato University and we've been quite focused on belonging and identity in different ways. We were looking at belonging and identity for immigrant children so that they developed a sense of belonging here, but also retained their sense of belonging in their own country. And so I'm gonna chuck over to Phoebe, because Phoebe can tell you about the research.

Phoebe is the centre's atelierista. She is a warm and empathetic “New Zealand Hong Konger” teacher who immigrated to A/NZ with her brothers, and without her parents who stayed behind to work, when she was fifteen years old. Phoebe's mother language is Cantonese, English is her second language and Mandarin is her third language. She describes some of the ways that the use of pepeha has instigated a process of connection for the children at PBK.

### **1. The pedagogies of sharing special places: involving translanguaging**

Phoebe: We begin with pepeha, because we always like to ground it in New Zealand, and the children begin talking about the mountains in their own countries. Stephanie makes some pepeha you know, like, paper for each of the family to write down where they come from, and who is in their family and ah, where's their river and mountain.

And so we can collect all the pepeha and then we have a look and then we decide that maybe we ask the children to have a look at some of the pepeha with us, so we can know, where in the world did they come from?...and know more about their own country as well. So because we are in New Zealand we definitely we don't know some of that mountain and river that they belong to, so we used a website and search it and we've got some children, they came from China and some from India and America and Burma and those...and for us, although we come from... we know, maybe some of the background we know a little, but we definitely don't know much about them.

And so we searched with the children and then they were so excited about it!..they know more than us to be honest...and we know nothing (laughing) but they

know lots of things, and, ah, this is, you know, interesting because sometimes they prefer teacher know more, but to be honest, if they're talking about their own story, actually, they know more than us. They feel confident and comfortable to share with us ...and we ask them to share about their mountain and the river and they told us lots of story about their place that they belong to. And I work with two, I mean a few Chinese children and even though I, yeah, I can talk to them in their language and then they talk to me about a lot of things about what's happening when they were there. They talk about their grandparents, they talk about...they have been to the mountain before and they talk about the size and what does it make... you know, like one of them talk about rock mountain that is make by rocks and they were so excited to tell us about it.

## **2. The pedagogy of sharing special memories, supported by a connection with the children's families and drawing...**

And some of the...a few of the Chinese family, when they go back they stay for a long time with their grandparents, so they talk about what they did with their grandparents- *they have birthday...their first birthday or second birthday over there*, and recall lots of their sweet memories. And then you also talk to their parents when they came to pick up their children and they tell us more about where did they come from like this; and I asked the children to draw the picture of their mountains and draw their picture of the river and their families over there, and we use drawing as a tool for them to express their idea, and their feeling, and ah memory, and experience with us.

## **3. Developing a culture of listening**

I remember one of the girl's families, ah, (turning to other colleagues) Fiona's mum and Robyn's mum... ah, from Burma... ah, *Elizabeth!*... Elizabeth (told us that she) went to Prayer Mountain... and Prayer Mountain is quite important to the family - Mum always feel like she really want to go to the Prayer Mountain in Burma, and the girl actually, she knows a lot of things about the Prayer Mountain, *but she hasn't been there before...*

Stephanie: Because of the way she was talking, we all thought she'd been!

Phoebe: And then Mum says this is her dream area, she really want to be there, but she hasn't been there. But then we searched with with her daughter and talk about how important the Prayer Mountain is, even though she hasn't been there, and we haven't been there too, but we know that that mountain is quite important to them...and they

talk about the what size is it, and what their peoples are doing in there, and what is the decoration look like, and she draw and painted a picture; and even though some of the children with her didn't know much about her her culture ... I mean the Prayer Mountain, they was also feeling excited about searching her place- even though that place did not belong to them as well. We could see the children's around in our kindergarten are also excited about where the other children come from and wheres are their (own) mountain as well.

#### **4. A pedagogy that helps children make connections to each other**

It's interesting, we found some collation between children as well, for example, we remember Madi and Hazel, they came from the same same city, in China, but they didn't know each other. But when we researched the mountain and the river- ah, Madi didn't go back to the/her country quite a lot, but Hazel did. Hazel talked to her about what's over there, so we can help make a connection, and then I talked to her Mum about the connection and they met together and talk about... a little bit more about their own country. And so it is a connection as well, it is not only their individual story but they make a connection.

Near the conclusion of this meeting Stephanie shares a general summation of the PBK team's planning,

We do this kind of generalised thinking and wondering about where we're going and everybody goes off and does their own kind of thing. Instead of getting too specific... because these are very creative people who I trust to do their own thing, so we talk about it generally and it kind of simmers away and happens.

#### **5.5 Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten's Contribution to co-construction of the Environment as the Third Teacher**

The environment they have created at PBK showed that the teachers tookcare with supporting and shaping children's identity. They showed the children that they have listened and they were aware of the lives and places in the world they have come from. They demonstrated the CRP of recognition of cultural difference as an asset, by giving the children opportunities to learn who they were in relation to others and their new home (Morrison, et al., 2019). Stephanie's decision to employ teachers who can speak the languages of the children in the centre was also CR. It helped them to make connections with the children in their home countries and gave them opportunities to talk it over. Involving the children's

families who can help with relating the stories of home and who can fill in the gaps, was also showing respect and welcome to new migrants.

It was interesting to notice the little girl picked up on the mountain as a place of connection. Maybe because of the pepeha. Rather than growling at her because she spoke as if she'd been there, they fostered her interest by helping her to research more about it. This included the way that the children were encouraged to make connections with the other children on the understanding that they too had moved to A/NZ and helping them to look at their move to a new country as interesting and exciting. The teachers made space for the children to talk to share each other's stories and built the idea of there being many truths to peoples' lives.

### **5.6 Bear Park: Environment as the Third Teacher**

#### **A REI Democratic Environment Listens to the Cultural Languages of Super-diverse Kiwi/ Chinese Children.**

##### **Background**

Leading into my data gathering from the teachers' projects with the children I have already gained a sense of the importance of the REI democratic environment at BP.

Although the majority of my ethnographic data collection was gathered by recording interviews or onsite observations, ethnography meant that I was *also* able to use relevant documentation from the centres, if need be. In the case of BP's major project which I have called, The Tui Dragon, this was great because I was able to use a combination of information: documentation, interviews and onsite observations. Also, when I was first introduced to this project, it was during my first field trip to BP on the 12th & 13th May, 2022. But, the project had actually begun earlier that year, in the intermittent periods when the children were onsite, between Covid19 lockdowns, and I wasn't there (similar to my situation with PBK). This fact also explains why the group of children involved in the project changed a little in composition over time. The group dynamics were affected due to reorganisation of classes within the centre, and children's attendance was affected due to families' childcare arrangements during Covid19. For example some children's parents decided to keep them at home longer than they officially had to, when a lockdown was in place.

So, arriving at BP when the Tui Dragon project was already underway meant that I did not observe its origins, and therefore to support my understanding of how the teachers

were exploring working with super-diverse children, they put together a package of the backstory for my information, and posted it to my home address.

The work was summarised by Ruby as part of her monthly teacher reflection. This she then shared with me. I will share parts of it for the reader, below.

It is important to note that the focus of this project shared by BP is democracy. It was clear from their early interviews that the BP teachers understand that the super-diverse child is not homogenous. This is reflected in Ruby's monthly summary below, where she refers to the identities of individual children. The REI teachers are planning for and working with the children in a way which respects the children's uniqueness. They use children's theories and perspectives in problem-solving situations to provide them with opportunities to learn about working democratically in a group. It was good to see the REI democratic environment style of learning in action in their art lesson, as it was more of a close up account of pedagogy and it added variety to the collection that each centre shared.

The following chapter 5 account is the origin of a bigger inquiry project, the 'Tui Dragon' and it will also carry over into chapter 6.

***Data Analysis for Chapter 5 reiterated.*** Just a reminder that the reason this particular project was selected was because it contained strong traces of a CR, REI and DEM pedagogy. It revealed the strength of BP's use of REI pedagogy in terms of the environment as the third teacher, or, the democratic group environment.

"Democracy is a very special epistemological culture that invites challenging established ideas rather than confirming those that are already known" (Gothson, 2016, p. 22/23). Based on the democratic coding tool my analysis regarding democracy in the classroom environment was looking for three key characteristics:

### **Key understandings**

1. Agency/ rights: The Reggio Inspired Approach supports a democratic culture which applauds diversity as a tool for learning.
2. Experience: Reggio Inspired ECEs are micro political democracies based on the epistemological understanding that learning experiences involving diversity is a wonderful impetus for learning & understanding.
3. Reggio Inspired Education involves a culture of reflection; there is a strong awareness of the responsibility of both the school and society in shaping identity and culture.

## **Start of Bear Park Tui Dragon Story.**

### **The Democratic Group**

The following example of democratic REI environment which was gathered in collaboration with BP Early Learning Centre demonstrates the pedagogical environment as a democratic culture. The teachers, including the atelierista and centre leader were involved in critical conversations about how the pedagogical pathway of the lessons would evolve, both in response to the purpose of the project, and also in response to the documentation from the previous lessons, and also how they developed a democratic culture with the children.

### **Start of BP data...**

Towards the end of January, 2022, BP teacher Ruby decided to spark a conversation with the children about the 'Chinese Lunar New Year'. She wanted to find out what the children already knew about it. This action relates to quality learning, where we link it to what children already know, building on what has gone before.

Ruby's documentation tells us,

Throughout this discussion the idea of making a dragon was brought to light by one of the children, Monty. The majority of the group agreed that they had either seen a dragon during the new year celebration or that dragons were important and relevant during this time. This sparked much interest in the group and soon many ideas were being shared about dragons. Many children had a sound idea of what dragons do or how they look but we soon realised they weren't so sure about why they were relevant to the New Year celebration.

After formulating our own questions and doing some research we discovered that: The dragon can represent 'good luck' and the length of the dragon determines how much luck is brought to the community. This relates to Malaguzzi's nuance from Vygotsky, where he talks about teachers being prepared for a situation of 'circulatory', where the child is about to see what the teacher already sees (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 58). In other words the teachers are upskilling themselves about the topic of focus prior to working with the children.

Ruby explains, "from here, this is when the teaching intent became, 'How do the children see the potential of a dragon as a symbol of something?'"

Then, the children were very much inspired to begin expressing their own ideas about dragons through the language of drawing. Charles said during one of the group sessions that he wanted to draw "A Chinese Dragon". I posed this idea about a Chinese dragon back to the group multiple times to figure out if the children were

interpreting or associating diversity/ ethnicity through the idea of a dragon. Dot described that, “English dragons are green and they fly and Chinese dragons are red” demonstrating that there is a clear distinction, in her mind, between the ways dragons are represented through different cultures. This is when the group began thinking more deeply about the difference between an English Dragon and a Chinese dragon. They identified there were clear differences such as the colour and abilities of each dragon. We were able to see the way that different children associate and categorise their experiences or understandings. Ruby is explaining an example of questioning the different group members to understand their thinking. It shows that Ruby was comfortable with the democratic practice of letting the questions and ideas of the children help to shape the development of the learning pathway.

Skills of democracy were shared by all three of the hopeful approaches. The ‘art’ of the negotiation of difference in the REA is about the negotiation of meaning where the ideas of the two subjects transform into new ideas (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 172; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 187). The CRP characteristic relating to difference is to see cultural diversity as an asset perspective (Morrison, et al., 2019). The democratic educational perspective applauds diversity as a learning tool in the classroom. These are all dispositional approaches which add to teachers and children’s communication toolkits. Learning how to live with an appreciation of difference is a much needed way of being in the world, so this democratic learning opportunity in the context of their dragon work is an important life skill for the children as well.

Ruby continues to share,

One of the key protagonists in this activity has been Monty, who demonstrated many times throughout these experiences his desire for the dragon learning to be a collaborative group project. On one occasion he mentioned, “We need a dragon ‘cause it's long for everyone” and on another day he insisted on us creating one big dragon all together rather than working individually, further highlighting the theme of community and collaboration and at the heart of utmost celebrations is in fact community, coming together and sharing.

Pedagogies for the super-diverse exemplify the negotiation of differences and subjectivity from an asset perspective. This includes teachers' mindfulness that at a deep level they are supporting the negotiation of ontological, epistemological, intellectual and cultural perspectives.

Ruby says,

I wanted to unpack the concept of good-luck further with the children, so that the children can develop a stronger understanding of the dragon as a symbol of a very important aspect of Chinese culture: luck, fortune, prosperity, strength etc. Some of the ideas shared were: "Good luck is when it's something you want and it goes right, it happens, that's good luck" (Hunter). Other ideas were about the way it would look if you could see it, "Good luck is like a heart, 'cause it's when your heart is happy" Monty. "Good luck is like rainbows 'cos it makes people happy" (Z).

Inspired by Hunter's explanation of good luck I asked the group to think about what their dragon would bring them. From here some of the group began relating the idea of good luck to a wish, to me this demonstrates that although this concept can be hard to articulate, they might be associating this with a 'wish' as their own understanding.

Ruby's thoughts were reflective of the POL & D. She was trying to understand what the children were really thinking, from their perspective, "Behind each act of listening there is a desire, emotion, openness to differences, to differences, to different values and points of view" (Rinaldi, 2006, 114).

The following part is where I joined Ruby's learning group on site.

Currently we have been focusing on how we can design and create one big collaborative dragon. The main theme of learning throughout this has been the important aspect of 'mahi tahi' (working as one). As we collaborate to come to a common understanding of how we want the dragon to look, the children can gain great skills for communicating and negotiating. Another example of children exercising these skills was when they transformed a long piece of paper into the dragon. Each child in this group got underneath it and began chasing Ada (Atelerista) around, laughing and growling like a dragon. They had to negotiate with their body, space, and movement to ensure everyone was included and collaborating cohesively.

Professor Rinaldi talks about the importance of fun in learning (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001, p. 43) which in these neoliberal and Covid19 times I think remains a top priority for children. Ruby continued,

Through our discussion about the relationship between dragons and 'luck' within Chinese culture, children are beginning to develop an awareness of symbolic language. "They are developing increasing competence in symbolic, abstract, imaginative and creative thinking" (MOE).

Then we created our mutual investigation intent related to super-diversity, ‘How are the children demonstrating their uniqueness and identity?’ I began to use this as a new lens when observing.

During one occasion Matthew was drawing his dragon and mentioned, “Dragon fly far away ‘because he can’t fly at school, he goes to castle’ which made me wonder if James was expressing or interpreting his own life experiences or feelings through the dragon. Matthew is a very active child and is often told to slow down or stop running inside during a reflective meeting time.

We discovered Bella put dots on her dragon drawing because she had dots on her t-shirt that day.

The individual dragon drawings are often linked to the child themselves in some ways. I also noticed that some of the children were developing confidence in expressing their ideas through their drawings and their drawings were becoming more representational. While other children seemingly confident in expressing themselves through drawing were gaining confidence in expressing themselves through movement, as they were inspired by other group members to see the potential in (for example) the blank piece of paper to become the dragon. Some children were very much comfortable taking on the form of the dragon while all children were confident to be a part of that but you could tell they were more serious and focused on trying to be a part of the group.

Ruby’s reflection’s showed the value of the group to support each other in their learning. Children were using their strengths to support their peers. This is an example of the positive use of difference that REI, DEM and CR pedagogies involve.

Overall, these things link to our mutual intent because we teachers took the children's individual ideas about how and what a dragon should be or look into account. We have managed to take aspects from each child’s dragon to add to our final artwork. It is going to be a large dragon sculpture which hangs along the ceiling as a new representation of their shared Tui Room culture.

Could add a photo of the Tui Dragon.

It highlights the idea of the importance of individual children within the group and how we all come together to collaborate (Ruby, Jan/Feb, 2021).

### 5.7 Bear Park's Contribution to Co-construction

REI teacher Ruby collected the children's ideas and used them to help formulate the learning pathway. With super-diversity in mind, she made sure that thoughts and contributions from many group members contributed to the direction she and Ada led them in, to the making of a class dragon sculpture to symbolise their culture of a group who learn and problem solve together.

The teachers deliberately provided children with the inspiration to collaborate. The children had to decide together how the dragon should look (shapes, colours, patterns etc). The fun activity under the long piece of paper where the children ran around holding it up and making it move by working together like a dragon was another example.

Ruby commented on how her deliberate attempt at looking for the children's individuality of representation when drawing their own dragon also gave her insight as a teacher into their thinking.

The idea of the Chinese Dragon was related to many children in the group because, as described in chapter four their families identify as Chinese or Chinese /Kiwis, so one might assume that it is a symbol with which they are familiar. Ruby connected the idea of the Chinese Dragon from their life worlds to the classroom and she took the idea further by using the Chinese Dragon for the group to create their own new culture. Along the way they learnt about how symbols can represent the meaning they wish to express. The group had to collaborate together right from the beginning, in order to come up with a shared understanding of the expression, 'good luck'. They all had a chance to understand the concept and a voice in their own group's conceptual development. All the while Ruby had her own understanding in mind and she was trying to guide them and pull the threads of their ideas together. As they sparked ideas off each other this helped Ruby to formulate her questioning in a way which connected more easily with what they could conceptualise in order to arrive at a shared understanding.

### 5.8 Three Centres Contributions to Co-construction

Three key possibilities for adapting REI's principle of the environment as the third teacher, to be supportive of the cultural intelligences of the super-diverse child and the super-diverse Māori child in the A/NZ super-diverse ECE contexts are:

**Arrowtown Preschool: The origins of the Mōkihi Project.** The natural environment listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse *bicultural* A/NZ children

- **REI: Participation and citizenship:** The teachers deliberately used the outdoors spaces to welcome and get to know new families during their outdoor Nature Explorers programme.
- **DEM: Awareness of how identity and culture construction happens in relation with the other, including the environment.** Teachers supported all super-diverse children to make decisions and experiment including the opportunity to transfer learning concepts across different activities.
- **CRP: Recognition of cultural difference as an asset:** The teachers were including the language and culture of the A/NZ indigenous Māori perspective into an integrated inquiry project which was based in their local community. **Critical thinking, activist orientation:** The children's experiences in the outdoor environment inspired them to become kaitiakitanga/ guardians of their community.

## **2. Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten: The origins of the Mapping Project.**

The culturally responsive environment listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse kiwi/ immigrant children

**REI:** The environment was a network of social relations where teachers are open to, and supportive of shaping each unique child's growth, through the pedagogies they provided. They were empathetic to immigrant children's journey's and pragmatic about their competency to adapt and fit into the centre.

**DEM:** The teachers educated the children to think and question, for example, to make comparisons with others about their previous and new lives. Teachers connected with the children's families to help them understand more. The teachers who are employed are representative of the children's cultures and they enable communication by speaking their languages.

**CRP:** The pedagogies were about connection and belonging. We were encouraging relationships among each other, school and communities because we learnt about ourselves through others, and diversity improves everybody's learning (Rigney & Hattam, 2020). Teachers developed a culture of paying others the respect of really listening to them. They helped the children to use technology to connect with their previous home countries.

**3. Bear Park: The origins of the Tui Dragon Project.** A democratic environment listening to the cultural languages of super-diverse kiwi/ Chinese children.

**REI:** Through questioning, listening and documentation, the teacher wove a learning environment which used the context of the group to promote citizenship and belonging through a shared project. It involved children contributing to many collaborative decisions,

including thinking together and coming up with shared conceptual decisions for their sculpture.

**DEM:** The REI teacher deliberately created a learning context where the children faced the challenge of working productively together. They set up and guided the children as they navigated the situation.

**CRP:** The teacher provided a high intellectual challenge through a nurturing cooperative learning environment where diversity was seen as an asset to learning.

The challenge for the children was managed and monitored carefully by the teacher. It supported high behavioural expectations.

### **5.9 Final Across Centre Co-construction to go to Chapter 8's Findings**

**The presence of the following characteristics within pedagogies makes them possibilities for REI adaptation and therefore supportive for the super-diverse child and super-diverse Māori child in A/NZ.**

#### **Arrowtown**

- Participatory democracies where everyone is welcome.
- Reverence for bicultural practice.
- Critical thinking, activist orientation.
- Shaping identity and social construct.
- Cultural difference is an asset; difference is a tool for learning; the negotiation of diverse viewpoints.

#### **PBK**

- Identity and social construct: New super-diverse cultures are created together.
- Critical thinking activist orientation: Pedagogies which allow the children to explore issues which matter to them, and give them a voice and choice in their learning.
- Cultural difference is an asset; difference is a tool for learning; the negotiation of diverse viewpoints.

#### **BP**

- Participatory democracies.
- The teacher is aware of identity building as a result of the environment.
- Critical thinking, activist oriented.
- Cultural difference is an asset; difference is a tool for learning; the negotiation of diverse viewpoints.

In chapter 8 the indicators are grouped and discussed as contributions to findings about what the research found in pedagogies which support super-diverse learners. Therefore their presence showed REI pedagogies were able to be adapted to be CR in support of the super-diverse learners.

## Chapter 6

### The Hundred Languages of Children

#### Research question

How do teachers embed Reggio Emilia inspired approaches in A/NZ super-diverse preschools?

#### Why the Principle of the Hundred Languages of Children for the Super-Diverse Child?

The pedagogical examples in the three following projects are called ‘The Tui Dragon’ (BP), ‘The Mōkihi’ (A) and ‘Place and Belonging’ (PBK). All of them embodied strong indicators of REI, CRP and DEM. The RE pedagogical strength in this chapter was the hundred languages of children, and this is the focus of chapter 6. The REI pedagogical projects in this chapter are the next progression from chapter 5, where we also identified REI principles with hopeful CRP and DEM characteristics. However, this time, while continuing to follow the same deep learning projects and looking for indicators of the hopeful approaches, we will also focus on how the teachers use cultural difference as an asset, because this is a characteristic each of the three hopeful approaches shares.

Loris Malaguzzi’s poem, ‘No Way. The Hundred Is There’ describes the essence of the child’s rights to identity. It also shares his belief in listening to the child and the school as a place where children learn in a multitude of ways.

#### ‘No Way. The Hundred Is There’

The child  
 is made of one hundred.  
 The child has  
 a hundred languages  
 a hundred hands  
 a hundred thoughts  
 a hundred ways of thinking  
 of playing, of speaking.  
 A hundred always a hundred  
 ways of listening  
 of marvelling of loving  
 a hundred joys  
 for singing and understanding  
 a hundred worlds  
 to discover

a hundred worlds  
to invent  
a hundred worlds  
to dream.  
The child has  
a hundred languages  
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)  
but they steal ninety-nine.  
The school and the culture  
separate the head from the body.  
They tell the child:  
to think without hands  
to do without head  
to listen and not to speak  
to understand without joy  
to love and to marvel  
only at Easter and Christmas.  
They tell the child:  
to discover the world already there  
and of the hundred  
they steal ninety-nine.  
They tell the child:  
that work and play  
reality and fantasy  
science and imagination  
sky and earth  
reason and dream  
are things  
that do not belong together.  
And thus they tell the child  
that the hundred is not there.  
The child says:  
No way. The hundred is there.

**By Loris Malaguzzi** (*translated by Lella Gandini*).

The field of education recognises the power of interdisciplinarity in learning. Interdisciplinarity is a strong feature of inquiry based or project based learning, which has been used in A/NZ schools for quite some time (Fullan, 2017; Murdoch, 2015; Murdoch, 1998). Te Whāriki states,

Rather than employing a one-world view of human development emptied of context, or articulating a curriculum with the subject-based learning areas and essential skills of the school, Te Whāriki chooses a socio-cultural approach to curriculum based on a desire to nurture learning dispositions, promote bi-culturalism and to reflect the realities of the young children in the services. It makes a strong political statement about young children: their uniqueness as learners, their ethnicity and their rights in New Zealand society (OECD 2004:17, as cited in May & Carr, 2015, p. 317).

### **The aim of chapter 6:**

**To uncover how REI teachers welcome, listen to and make space for super-diverse children's hundred languages in the pedagogical situation.**

In the Reggio Emilia Approach, listening to the child's symbol making (or, proto languages) is a key area where teachers look to identify children's strengths and interests (Edwards et al, 2012, p. 258). Describing this pedagogical action in the words of Durden et al., (2014), "Teachers are cultural learners of children." This is because the teachers are tuned in to, and listening for, the children's unique languages. The quote by Durden, Escalante and Blich also connects to the challenge that the super-diverse classroom poses in the A/NZ context, how do teachers use the REI approach to listen to the super-diversity of children, including the historic challenges which exist? Described by Professor Rinaldi, the aim was "to investigate the richness of the centre's process of how children's cultural theories and languages are welcomed and nurtured" (Professor Rinaldi, personal communication, 2021). Ethnographic thick description continues as the method of making meaning of the teachers' thoughts and actions.

In chapter 6 we have insight into the preparation of some teachers prior to meeting the super-diverse learners in their lessons, as well as the REI pedagogical actions during them. This time the description also identifies examples of some of the struggles or hesitations teachers come up against as they support super-diverse children, both on a practical, pedagogical level, and also, on a personal level.

I will be specifically illuminating pedagogy for super-diverse children whose voice may not be heard or valued. This includes those isolated because of A/NZ's neoliberalism, the super-diverse child. Also super-diverse Māori children who are historically affected by

colonialism (Li et al., 2021; Chan and Ritchie, 2019). In the case of the first example from BP the group of children are Chinese/Kiwi's.

**The politics of pedagogy: CR REI pedagogy is deliberately used for political gains such as equity, freedom & democracy**

The teachers and I will make meaning using an ongoing reflection of how their projects support the challenge of re-calibrating any issues of inclusion and equity, particularly in regards to welcoming the 100L of all individuals and cultures within this culturally responsive, democratic REI ECE classroom.

Simultaneously, and significantly this included facing the challenge of the metamorphosis of the teachers' own belief systems and growing identity which valued the languages of all children, including the bi-cultural considerations and further, encompassing the child seen as super-diverse (Chan & Ritchie, 2020). This is because, at a deeper level the educational dynamics in A/NZ remain largely mono focused around what success means (Rigney, personal communication, 2020; Ritche, 2019). BP teacher Ruby reflected on how this situation has affected her. She comments: “through knowing myself I have great consideration for the children’s super-diversity, because I understand the journey; valuing oneself means I value the children I teach” (Ruby, 12.5.2021).

Super-diversity celebrates the unique variables and languages that the child brings to learning, but it also warns that the teacher must simultaneously self-reflect, explore the meaning that their own social construct/variables bring to the learning relationship. This vulnerability offers the chance for truth in relationships, in order to deal respectfully with the political choices available in relation to their position of power and privilege, and the resulting degrees of freedom or oppression which may also be wrapped up in the spaces of meaning between languages. A re-calibration of boundaries might be at play as teachers seek to rebalance the dominant, oppressive and unhealthy kinds of situations which have often evolved over time, within the dynamics of relationships in A/NZ, as they move through the learning process.

**6.1 Bear Park: The Hundred Languages Supporting Inclusion of Super-Diversity**

In Chapter 6, with these deeper political perspectives and CR hundred languages of children in mind, I joined BP onsite on 12th May 2021. The BP teachers involved in this project whom I observe are teacher Ruby, centre leader Margot and atelierista, Ada. On day one of my first onsite visit to BP, I was able to have a semi-structured interview with Ruby and Margot to capture their thoughts prior to the Tui Dragon watercolour lesson which I

observed later in the day. As well as this I later spent time carrying out an interview with Ada and Margot after the lesson, which further complemented the thinking of the team.

This collection of semi-structured interviews provided the main setting for the ethnographic account which described my observations of two of BP's Tui Dragon lessons (part of their bigger project, to create a shared piece of art), with the purpose of eventually contributing to the co-construction of knowledge about pedagogies for the super-diverse child created in collaboration with all three centres.

### **The Politics of Pedagogy- Rights based education- BP teachers explain pedagogy for the super-diverse child**

#### **- BP's Hundred languages Lens- particularly focused on cultural inclusion**

Based on our coding tools: REI CRPs, DEM and the newly added focus on their shared connection, RE's 'negotiation of difference as an asset', the BP REI teachers set up to share with me their exploration of our goal: the advancement of pedagogy for the super-diverse embodying REI's principle of the 100L in a way which showed their processes were welcoming, engaging and supporting the languages of all of the children's cultures and theories in the super-diverse Early Childhood classroom, facilitated by a democratic and culturally responsive culture of interaction and negotiation. Their collaboration as pioneers who are exploring the struggles and contradictions connected to this ambition in relation to pedagogy for the super-diverse learner is encompassed in the ethnographic account.

#### **Recap**

With A/NZ's particular social justice problems in mind, these REI teachers contextualised learning through an interdisciplinary approach of experiential learning, based in an authentic inquiry (Dewey, 1938; Cagliari et al, 2016; Rinaldi, 2021; Vecchi, 2010). The vehicle to advance our shared educational agenda came from BP's main inquiry project, the Tui Dragon (Fullan, 2017; Murdoch, 1988). Academic and dispositional learning goals stemmed from Te Whāriki and evolved in relation to the children's competencies within a well considered environment which aimed to support individual children's languages, starting from listening.

#### **- Identity and Social Construct**

In this research it was my intention to listen acutely for teachers inviting and involving the super-diverse cultural languages that children bring to learning. During our afternoon interview that day, Ada, Margot and I talked about the dynamic of the cultures and the languages of the child being organic, changeable and influenced by settings and perspectives which are akin to the evolution of super-diverse variables as they are always

interacting, affecting each other and manifesting change. The idea was about listening to and supporting a super-diverse identity. The risk was that the teacher makes assumptions about who the super-diverse child is, culturally, which is the opposite to really listening to them. As teachers of super-diverse children we cannot assume anymore. True listening however is now more complicated due to the myriad combination of traditional values and traditions of culture being passed down through the generations coupled with the knowledge that each interpretation of culture is also always transforming givers and receivers as they interact and the variables mix with others exponentially, always morphing culture in expressions of its evolution. Although the collaboration of both traditional culture and new cultures creates a child's identity, super-diverse identity is the outcome: it is the result of those cultural *and other significant variables* mixing (Vertovec, 2007).

So within the cultural construct of each individual child lie their layers of languages (and or variables) born from their biological instincts and life experiences, which for the purposes of this research we look at in the light of RE's 100L. This is what the teachers were listening for because there was the possibility to hear more: deeper historic *and* new super-diverse languages. In effect they were using REI pedagogy to tap into the evolution of the person's cultural construct in a moment in time.

Previously mentioned examples of this came from the super-diverse ECEs in Auckland, where families have already been discussing their new cultures and identities with the teachers in this research. Conversations confirmed that children may hold allegiance to more than one *or many* cultures such as the "Chinese/ Kiwi" families that Alice talked about at the start. Phoebe the atelierista from PBK described herself as 'New Zealand/ Hong Konger'. Therefore, some children may officially identify, for example, as super-diverse Māori because this is where their historical cultural roots tie back to having been born and raised in A/NZ, however, due to the fact that they have an Irish mother, they may also be biologically half Irish, and choose to identify as a Irish /Māori New Zealander.

These identifications also include the diversity brought about by other significant variables, which have been constructed out of the child's life experiences, their biology, geographic experience, familial culture, religious affiliation and /or neurological diversity, quality of education and within the grayscale layers where variables manifest from privilege or poverty for example, ultimately presenting as the life worlds of children whom we meet in the classroom (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2022; Professor Sebastian Lipina, PhD Seminar 16.2. 2022; Freire, 2020; Moll et al., 2005). There is a lot to listen for. As Carla Rinaldi said to me in July 2021,

But what can come out, is very important to the Reggio Approach: how much teachers influence, but also how they listen and welcome biculture which is full of ‘the hundred languages’: this could be fantastic. So, we need to look not only at how the dominant idea comes out, but also the richness of the cultural ground that allowed these theories to be welcomed. Yes, because it's the richness of the local culture that can allow that...yes, this approach to become a real, real approach (Carla Rinaldi, personal communication, 14th July, 2021).

Therefore, when Ada and Margot took time in our afternoon interview to explain to me how they orchestrated the learning setting to listen to the languages of children, to build on to learning, or to challenge it by arranging opportunities for learning from different perspectives and in different contexts, I was intrigued.

#### **- Teachers preparing with regards to listening to children from different perspectives**

In this excerpt they are talking about the value of listening to children from many perspectives.

M: ...and it (the set up of the learning space) is based on what you've observed with the children, to try and either understand what the learning is that they're doing, or to build onto it...

A: That's one aspect as well (acknowledging that she agrees with Margot), and also, like, context. What Margot has explained is about providing different perspectives, but there's also providing different contexts. So I think...if we think of...multi dimensionally...*as a diverse person*, so I've been thinking about that yesterday. So for example, if I think about my culture, *me as being German*: I'm thinking about myself as a German. I thought about myself differently, being German when I was living in Germany, than I'm thinking about myself as German now in New Zealand. I also think differently about myself as a German twenty years ago, when I arrived in New Zealand, in comparison to now. So it's always in context, always *in time* - always *in a scenario*, like a social context... or it's a time context.

So if you think the same thing with children as they investigate, you can look at it from different angles, but also in different contexts, and also different times... and also the kind of repetition that you need; because today I look at it and see these things, but tomorrow I might see something else. Or my way of engaging with it... being more open to it, or not interested, because I've seen it already... so ...or I might come back again and say, “oh, this thing again, now, okay, today I'm ...” you know?

So it's like, you need to come back to things, but yeah in different contexts, because it is part of who we are, and it changes.

M: But the idea is that sometimes you go back into the same context because...you might...there is that uncertainty of, have you actually captured enough to actually make a really good analysis.

Ada the atelierista brought a mindset which showed her belief in viewing culture from many angles; her awareness of the need to be truly open to all cultures. It reinforced the important role that the atelierista plays in supporting teachers to consider the deeper understandings which are part of daily life in a school. When teachers are open to helping each other to understand the more challenging concepts it supports their openness to the 100L of children and progresses the culture of the team.

### *6.1.1 Arranging for learning in collaboration with the atelierista*

Later in the same interview Ada described REI's 100L as a brilliant tool for super-diverse children's meaning making because within all of the moments of integrating and interacting with and between disciplines, the children are connecting their cultural languages; she explains that they are collaboratively progressing their learning and understanding, or creating knowledge together.

...the atelierista's role has got that idea of being open to new ideas, and new ways of doing things... and also in Reggio they talk a lot about interdisciplinarity. And that means that we no longer think in dichotomies. So we don't think in black and white, but in so many grey scales, so that is as well with the languages.

**Deeper level underlying conceptual learning:** So we don't think about, are we gonna be drawing? Are we gonna do music? Are we gonna do science? Are we doing maths? No, actually we always do it integrated. But also the learning often sits in between, so that's similar (to the organic nature of culture). What those (pointing outside the room) panels that are out there (are for)...so, for example they're about mark making *but they're also about sound*. So, it's about how the children communicate. Let's say again... (she thinks of an example) *in the younger room they were drawing on the panel* but they were also tapping on it with a pencil, and they were looking (she mimics the children looking up and around at each other, moving their heads as if on alert, from side to side). So they were actually collaborating, not just in the sense of drawing, but also listening to each other when they started tapping.

**Transformative dialogue between languages:** So they're learning, and the

communication and the construction is in between those languages. Does that make sense? And it's the same with intercultural, even between religion, even between gender. I mean, you know, that's all interrelated... almost changeable as well (Ada Atelierista, 12.5.2023).

### **The pivotal role of the Atelierista**

Then, Margot and Ada also reflected on the complementary and “pivotal” role the atelierista brings to learning at BP:

A: Within the process, I think we can see other things ...we can see...(because we are process based as well), in terms of, "oh *THIS* is actually something and how do we channel this? How do we extend this?...oh I think, I mean, especially if you've got people who think conceptually.

So it's not so much a question in terms of, of the *craft(s)*, but it is being able to tap into ways of thinking and ways of channelling and working with these kind of questions, those bigger questions that are underlining. and yeah, so it's, it's neat and I have ... the craft or something (that people might need to access, in the atelier) and yes, I know how to work with clay, but that's all obtainable. So I think it's that ... that little bit of abstract way of thinking is really important (12.5.21).

Debbie: Yeah.

A: And probably a little bit of...; so in terms of *politics*...or, [no] not... not politics!

D:...I wondered if you were referring to that?

A: So, yeah [I mean] what's going on in the world, and that kind of ...problems, dichotomy, that whole thinking and the purpose of education?

A: Yeah, and critical thinking, I think...

D: ...and I think, ... like, ... equity is a big thing in our current ...

A: Yeah, it is...

A: And it's hard, too hard to tackle because, I don't...it's hard for me as well I guess, finding answers... I think, ways of looking at that is really finding individual strengths and... and them (children) learning gratitude for what we've got, you know? [...] But finding, I guess, a positive one, and I say like, you can spark something, and say, oh my gosh, I can do this, you know? So no matter what your social status is, no matter what your ... what your physical status is, there are things that you can do. There's things you can engage in, no matter what your learning dispositions, you can find something that you can do and you can do well, and you in your own means, of

course, and in ...but anybody can find passion, and I think yeah, that's where the hundred language is definitely....that's what they're there for, isn't it?

M: Oh, totally!

D: You know, the more you go along, the more you realise that.

A: Yeah. And I think when the child finds...when the person finds what they're good at, they just need one thing to start and believe in themselves; and when they start and believe in their capabilities and that becomes an automatic, it doesn't matter what they're good at.

Ada has been talking about how the teachers use the pedagogies of the 100L and listening are nourishing for the culture of super-diverse children. The open mindset of the teachers' culture, then opens up a school wide culture which then enables super-diverse children to receive the support and access they require for their learning and development.

The conversation led on to reinforcing the way that REI teachers plan, i.e. that it was a consciously political way of how they supported the rights of the child to freedom of thought,

“What is structured is not the outcome. It doesn't matter if you learn about a cockroach or a butterfly. What matters is the way of thinking and the way of learning that happens and the way the children are interacting with each other and expressing their ideas and what they gain from it [...]. So subjectivity doesn't matter; if you think about education and what's usually (seen as) structured...*ah, we going to look at an elephant, and it's got ears and a trunk and a tail...but that's actually the less important part...* that's what we can Google and that's what we've got books for. What we can't...(get on Google or in books) is social interaction, so what is structured is the group...sometimes it's the group size...and it's actually within the group as well, in terms of diversity and things like that. They can learn from each other's dispositions [...]. What else is structured? The context as well, so it's something that has to be very carefully considered” (Ada, 12.5.2021).

Ada and Margot have been describing the science behind the REI lesson. To be precise, what they are saying in terms of considering the super-diverse learner is that there are many ways to look, structure, think about and support identity in a democracy.

### **6.1.2 Teacher Activism**

As the teachers and I have discussed, coupled with the challenge of advancing pedagogies in the super-diverse classroom is the equally important issue, which complements

the super-diverse teaching toolkit: the teachers' own personal and professional politics which come under the spotlight because in addition to their professional commitment to bicultural inclusivity and equity, they are now faced with an even more diverse range of world views. Super-diversity illuminates the idea that humans are not homogenous, and therefore education based on children's rights demands pedagogy which educates accordingly. Therefore, part of the teachers' reflection is regarding their own personal politics, e.g. do they validate, welcome, support and engage multiple world views in the classroom?

Complementary to this is how the group culture of the centre supported the metamorphosis of the teachers to enabling greater access by providing the right kind of nurturing environment. I was internally challenging myself. Is the REI BP culture one where teachers can critically discuss and challenge each other to welcome all languages/ be CR and democratic as REI teachers? As we discussed how super-diversity involves teachers reflecting on their own impact when working with children, Ruby seemed to be very reflective about the experiences in her life which now shape the perspectives she brings to the learning situation. She said she used these to empathise with and support the super-diverse child's perspective. Due to her own life challenges as a person of Māori descent she felt she has been more inclined to understand the need to support all children to have a voice, or, who have something to share in the group situation. It was remarkable to hear her honest account. It provided me with a different lens on colonialism, one where the white person who identified as Māori may also be put at risk of experiencing isolation and feelings of shame. In our interview, together with Margot, early in the day she shared:

**Ruby, Margot and Debbie**

**Ruby:** My main inspiration as a teacher was when I was doing my research, my action research in uni. But my aha moment there which was personally meaningful, is that you have to know who you are as a teacher to then, I guess, value who children are, you know, like *who am I? What do I bring to this?* And so once you understand that really well, then you can see that in the children, and celebrate that in the children as well. And what I really learnt in my studies was like this, I guess.... I've carried a lot of shame like, with myself from... my Nana was Māori, and she experienced more racism back then and so she raised my mother as a Pākehā and then my mom...so, I've had not much connection, and when I have had connection, and I've gone to see my family, I've been basically like... rejected because I was *too white*, you know? So that's something I carried with me and then when I went to University I realised that I don't have to look Māori to be an advocate for what's important *and that was a really big moment...*

Margot: This is a part of Ruby I haven't known! So I'm actually learning more about you.

Ruby: Yeah, yeah. But actually, it wasn't (until she had the aha moment)...

Debbie: Thank you for sharing.

Ruby: Yeah. And I think that's what I realised was really important: seeing children for who they are and what they believe that they are, and celebrating that so that they can feel that sense of confidence and empowerment...

Debbie: ...to allow it to grow,

Ruby: ...to allow it to grow, to share that with people, and to help others learn about what's special about them and unique about them, or the importance of that.

Debbie: And I think schools or universities have such an important role here, because if you're trying to access help because it's not available through your family at this point.

Ruby: Yeah.

Debbie: Then, you know, as teachers, we have to be so open.

Here, we were acknowledging that effectively what we do as REI teachers is always listen anew with an awareness that together has us evolving and shaping culture and USING pedagogy to assist us to address problems in support of children who have had experiences like Ruby's. This includes issues like inclusion, regeneration, equity, re-calibration and re-territorialisation. In the super-diverse classroom teachers addressing issues of equity and inclusion are paramount.

The question we pursued as we considered this was: Will the BP teachers deliberately include opportunities, through their knowledge of individual children's languages and identities, where super-diverse children can practise relating to each other within their REI democratic, culturally responsive REI pedagogical construction? The welcoming of these deeper ideas into learning situations could be similar to this example shared with me by Harold Gothson (22.12.2021, 1:47:05),

“Two children working with clay were learning from each other's ideas, exploring the idea that two heads/ brains can solve the problem. The question that the REI teachers who'd set up this learning situation might ask themselves is, *did the children really experience this value?* or could it really be that you made the wrong decision about how to organise for this kind of learning so that they didn't really grasp this value?”

So, the teachers also need to reflect on whether the way their structuring was organised supported the children to understand the deeper values at play with such a question informing that reflection: Did the structuring of the lesson and what I know about the

children's languages, support the super-diverse child to gain meaning through productive collaboration?

**With these things in mind, the learning goals for today's lesson in the atelier were as follows:**

- For the group to democratically select colours for the dragon's tail.
- To learn about the effect of mixing watercolour, small drops of water, colour paint with different amounts of water, and noticing the effect of different ratios.
- To select from three options of paint brush and use them to experiment with holding and making lines with the paints.
- To each paint their own part of the Tui Dragon's tail on an enlarged draft, in preparation for eventually painting the good copy of their Tui dragon.

**The Te Whāriki goals for the lesson are:**

- Collaboration (Ruby, documentation, May 2021), *manaakitanga*/ kindness, support/respect towards each other.
- Using symbolism in relation to their choice of colours is another goal.

### **Democratic actions**

Ruby: So each child had, ...was focused on a different part of the dragon. They created their own parts: the skin, the face, the body, the wings etc, and we sort of very, like, *pol'... not politically...* but we were very... *together as a group made those decisions* based on the best decision for us, I guess, like taking those different parts and voting on it, "who..who thinks that we should do, Emily's eyes? Or this part?"

Debbie: Did you? I wondered that, with the colours etc, whether you would have... because, to me that's quite democratic? That's actually bringing in democracy...

Ruby: Yeah. yeah, that's what we did, um, allowing them to all make a decision and *but not only just, 'oh, because I like it, but we really had to base our decisions on what was best for our dragon and our concept of it. (Then , thinking out loud)*...and then yeah, I think I do want to go back to that same process with the colour as well...

Margot: You owe it to yourself, because then we've been respectful with your decisions in every other way.

**BP Listening to hundred languages of the super-diverse child- with a focus on this more than just watercolours- *Teacher power, listening and reflection***

Related to the challenge brought by the super-diverse child, the teachers have shared the mindfulness they embody in relation to their positions of power: i.e. to know themselves, and what their own super-diverse identity brings to the learning situation. I thought that in my observation of the lesson that day that I would expect to see the positions they have shared manifest in the way each teacher dialogued with the children. The challenge is expressed by Carla Rinaldi when she says, “The 100L is at its core about really listening to the other *and listening to thought*... trying to hear what cannot be heard...welcoming/ hospitality- openness to the difference of the other, to the coming of the other " (Rinaldi, 2021, xxvi).

With the constructs of super-diverse people being more complex, the nuances of identity may not be not so easily revealed: therefore, it is even more important to listen to the child, than it was before. Therefore, we not only have our relation to historical identities to consider but also new super-diverse identities, who are unknown. I was wondering how these REI teachers would listen to the background of the students in the class. Super-diverse learners bring their intelligence, cultural intelligence to the learning experience: I wondered: Will the teachers ask the child to leave their Hundred Languages at the door, or not? (Rigney, personal communication, 15th February 2023). How will they progress the lesson aware of both harnessing the child’s cultural identity, in the midst of the moving dynamic of super-diversity continually forging itself anew due to the interaction of the group, but also in relation to the skill building and conceptual learning provocations? This was a fascinating proposition.

The interviews gave me a little more insight into how they might be considering their positions in relation to these questions,

**The complexity of looking & listening, seeing & hearing the super-diverse child’s languages...**

Ada explained her thoughts as an atelierista preparing for such a task,

“art needs to become a language to be able to really express an idea. So it's just like writing, like reading... like talking as such, but... um, we're using all those clues, like verbal and non verbal language, to actually get an understanding of the child and their theories and their way of thinking” (12.5. 2021).

She adds clarity to her statement by using an example of how during Covid19 lockdown when BP provided families support with learning activities at home, the situation gave the parents a chance to understood more about children, parents and teachers as researchers,

How to tune into their children's thinking and go with their theories, not sort of just giving them knowledge or giving them the answers, *but exploring them* [...]. I think it gave them (parents) a little more insight, that's it's more that we go deeper, and it's actually, art has more of a research purpose, than actually a finished product [...].

Margot supported Ada's reasoning, "the REI teacher is a very, very skilled listener [...] because I mean it's picking up on the cues from the children whether it's verbal, visual, or whatever."

To complement what Ada and Margot have expressed about listening to the languages of the children during the learning situation, I have a written reflection given to me by Ruby, which also showed how seriously these teachers take the task of listening to children's languages; when I met her onsite for the first time this visit, she handed it to me. She had hand written it after our first BP Zoom interview (2 March, 2021). In her reflection she shared her thoughts about the value and place of the REI POL in her teaching.

**The following are some excerpts from Ruby's thoughts,**

- Listening also highlights equity, not equality. We all have different needs, abilities, interests etc, but (*listening proposes*) how can we all work together to some degree in the community?

- During our planning meetings we have big open discussions about children, and children who are transitioning, and we come up with strategies together, based around the information we have, to figure out how to best support that child [...] We focus on group learning within this, and we realise not only differences and diversities within the group but similarities between individuals. They support each other to pre-empt challenges and consider solutions. I think how helpful this must be for both teachers and super-diverse children. Ruby writes more:

**The Reggio Pedagogy of Listening,**

- We are listening/looking for clues to try to best understand what the children are trying to show/tell us through their verbal and body languages, eye contact, explorations, expression, how they approach something.

-Listening without my own assumptions, to construct a new meaning/ understanding.

-Sometimes being the voice to kind of piece together all the clues the children have given me, and kind of compile that and offer it to them with new words. They may feel understood by me, or may reject it.

-Through this the children are questioned and challenged to realise, 'I can think, my ideas are validated and I can be critical'.

-I feel this philosophy Reggio & Te Whāriki sees the whole child and their thoughts and ideas come to life during our investigations (Excerpts from Ruby's reflections after our first BP Zoom, 2.3.2021).

“It's about the process, never one child against another. Collaborate towards a common goal...I can contribute” Ada,(12.5.21). And stemming out of Ruby's comments about valuing herself, was her comment, “My thoughts and ideas are valued in the group.”

### **Tui Dragon Lesson Preparation**

There were decisions to be made in preparation for the learning situation the next day. In prior lessons leading up to this one, Ruby and the children have talked about what colour their Tui Dragon might be if it was to reflect all of the group's ideas, or *their Tui group culture*.

As observed in Chapter 5 when they were at an earlier stage in the process Ruby had established the learning intent that the dragon they were making together is a symbolic representation of the Tui children's group. One of the children had expressed her theory that different dragon colours seemed to represent different cultures, “English dragons are green and they fly and Chinese dragons are red” The children seemed to like the idea of many colour options. At that stage the general consensus in the group was that they liked pink, they said that ...”pink for the hearts because the heart is love.”

In the tradition of REI Progettazione, Ruby discusses the children's learning with her team. Prior to this day's lesson, Ruby discusses with Margot the structural consideration she was struggling with, *how many colour options (languages) to make available?* She talked it over with Margot, during our interview, explaining that she and Ada had different ideas, “Ada thinks 3 colour options”, and Ruby thought that “because the children have requested the whole rainbow, providing the whole range seems to provide room for more options if they want them”. After some discussion about some ideas of how to go about it Margot's response is “you're going to have to play a very pivotal role in that discussion, with the children [...]. So bringing it back to, this is their Dragon- *yes*, it IS a symbol from the Lunar New Year BUT it is now adapted to be *their* TUI dragon. So then discussing the different aspects of it and getting them to redefine, you know, the parts of the dragon...and what do they think about when they think about colours? What do we think of when we think of a colour for wings?” (Ruby & Margot, day one at BP, 12.5.2021).

I have explained the teacher's background, approaches, positions and responsibilities as they enter the learning moment, preparing to draw out the children's super-diverse

languages, cultures and intelligences through the practicalities of the lesson itself. The following description of the lesson shares what this looked like in reality:

### **6.3 Bear Park: The Tui Dragon Lesson 1: Choosing Colours**

Before morning tea, during the first part of the lesson the children are in the atelier, all sitting around a big group table with the two teachers. In the middle of the table is a large, blown up photo copy of the Tui Dragon that they have created together. As they settle, the children run their hands in gentle movements over the fresh white paper in front of them and look admiringly at the large intricately composed Tui Dragon.

The task for this part of the project was to decide what colours to paint the dragon's tail. This was a good chance for the teachers and I to find out if the way they have set up the lesson provided quality learning opportunities for the super-diverse child. Many questions such as those below were coming into mind, and I was wondering if it was the same for the teachers, who have the responsibility for making decisions about them when they arise...

- Does the lesson open a shared group discussion which allows the teachers to promote democratic behaviour between the group members?
- How do teachers support each child to have their own opportunity to make a decision and have a voice reflecting their own choice of colour?
- Do they support the children to think about and have the courage to share their individual opinion?
- How can teachers encourage the children to support their peers to come up with their own ideas and not have some dominating others?
- Is there space for children to think about and express the connection between the colour they chose and the reason it has symbolic meaning to them (connecting to their life worlds/ high intellectual challenge)
- What dynamics facilitate any moments where the children will negotiate their individual perspectives with another, and build knowledge together, i.e. how does this happen? (construction, not competition).
- How do teachers build on each child's identity?
- How do teachers of children honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by including Māori experiences in the learning experience?
- How is the super-diverse identity welcomed, included and afforded genuine value by the teachers?

After the children had familiarised themselves with the paper, and reunited with the dragon, Ruby introduces the group's decision about what colours they would want to paint it. The children with stronger personalities were very set on the whole dragon being pink, but the teachers managed to bring more balance and a democratic conversation, where the dominant personalities began to consider the other children who had actually been involved in the design and drawing of the dragon from the start:

Ruby: “So, child 1 and child 3, you guys weren’t actually here when we drew the dragon were you? But child 4 and child 5, they were here and they drew the dragon and it took a *long, long* time to add all of the details, and they think if you add pink to the whole dragon you might not be able to see all of the amazing details and the parts of the dragon...

How can we work this out?

Longish pause (enough for Ruby to show that she would like the children to think about some solutions)...

Child 4: “*How about a rainbow??...*”

There seems to be a general feeling of relief in the room that someone had come up with quite a good (and in some ways safe) idea for more options than just pink. Child 5 had *still* not spoken so far in the lesson even though both teachers had been gently asking her opinion about things too.

Sarama reminded the group that child 2 and child 6, who were away today, would need to be kept in the loop about using colours of the rainbow for the Tui Dragon, because they had been involved since the beginning.

*Then suddenly* Ruby then makes a practical link from child 4’s rainbow idea, to the rainbow display in their main classroom, which causes a large amount of thrill! I understand why because I had seen the interactive rainbow display in the classroom, and it is both fascinating and beautiful.

Ruby: “*Ohhh! Friends...have you; did you...have you guys seen Uenuku (Māori:god of the rainbow) visiting us in the classroom?*”

Children 1, 3 *and* 5 all looked at her and said, “*meeee*” in unison. It is the first time child 5 has spoken, and she was *very* animated. It made me wonder if it was because Ruby had made a link to something she was familiar with, which possibly came back to the CRP where examples from the classroom were used in modelling, scaffolding and clarification of challenging curriculum to support the learner in making connections across learning.

The lesson ended with the children naming the colours of the rainbow and going off to morning tea. They were back after the break to learn to use their rainbow watercolours on the draft of the Tui Dragon.

Later the teachers discussed the children's super-diversity and how valuable the group was for their learning. There were further political words from Ada after class when she explained the politics of objectivity versus subjectivity (33.07, 12.5.21).

#### **6.4 Bear Park: The Tui Dragon Lesson 2: Painting with Watercolors**

The children's first watercolour painting lesson is held in the atelier with both Ruby and Ada. After morning tea we met the children of the Tui Dragon group in their classroom and then we moved back to the atelier. On this day there were five group members present and three were absent. The children each brought their own dispositions to the dynamics, and by the end of the session it was easy to identify them, for example, two were rather quiet, one, "is very aesthetic"(Ada), another "is a connector" (Ruby) and yet another has noticeably descriptive vocabulary for her age, e.g. "the end of this paintbrush is blunt." *Te Whāriki* states that it is committed to the rights of all children to be respected and valued for their own identity, to enjoy equal status, and to work towards a more equitable society (Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki*, 2017, p. 8 & 11; Ritchie, 2003, as cited in Clark & Grey, 2010, p.23; *Indications*, p.10). The teachers knew the children and their learning goals well and much later, within the final documentation I read their teachers' comments about some of them,

Although...was absent from a majority of the second half of the investigation, we came up with a creative idea to keep him connected with the group and the investigation via digital media. We noticed ...grew in his identity as a key protagonist and connector of the group. Before the investigation, he was already an innately imaginative and expressive child who loves to share his many thoughts. During this investigation we saw a strong desire to collaborate, include and support others. His ideas, engagement and excitement inspired and encouraged the others in the group to work on this project" (Ruby, documentation, August, 2021).

The first experience in the water colour lesson gave the children the freedom to choose one paint brush from the three different sizes on offer.

Freedom and agency are hallmarks of the REA developed after the war, but the concept of freedom and agency is one which all educational democracies including A/NZ would do well to reflect on, as domination, oppression and isolation are a risk in any relationship (Bishop, 1999).

The teachers encouraged the children to look closely at the brushes and after exploring the brushes by holding, feeling and exploring their movements the group realised, each brush is, “going to make different lines because they are different”(Angus). This was an opportunity for children to notice the difference between the brushes and through their discussion, built theories together about the nuances. I think that they will probably understand more when it is time to paint.

After exploring the brushes each child chose the one they would use for painting their little part of the dragon's tail. One child asked why the white tile sitting in front of her was called a ‘palette’. I noticed that she made several quite articulate comments for her age. Promoting curiosity and questioning, is an indicator of CRP’s Critical thinking-activist orientation (Rigney & Hattam, 2020). High intellectual challenge involves teachers creating environments where the multi-modal languages that super-diverse encompass, where they are valued as assets for learning, and their strengths are used as starting points. In the REA multi-modalism is expressed by the pedagogy of the 100L (Rigney & Hattam, 2020)

Louis, a Chinese boy who was new to the group that day comments that the dragon looks like a *Chinese* Dragon. Maybe he had made a link to prior knowledge from his own culture?

Within REI, pedagogies are CR when the child can see themselves and their culture in the classroom. CR pedagogies build on children's funds of *knowledge and they* view their life worlds and cultural differences as assets (Rigney & Hattam, 2020). Ruby took the opportunity and created the space to acknowledge Louis’ recognition of the dragon as Chinese, but asked a group member who has been through the process, Dot, to explain that it was their new group dragon, *the ‘Tui Dragon’*. One of the challenges that the teachers found tricky during Covid19 lockdowns was that children’s participation in learning and group work was interrupted by children’s absences. During this lesson the teachers supported those who had just joined their group, and encouraged other group members to share, a technique which was always a great way to reinforce learning. The teachers were being democratic in class by power sharing and promoting children’s agency by allowing children playing an educative role in their own communities, which also made this REI project a CRP (Rigney & Hattam, 2020).

They all turned to look at the details that the children had constructed together on the dragon's tail and Ruby asked, “Dot, what are these details about?”. Dot responded proudly, “Love”. Ruby asked, “Why did we add love to the tail?”... but Dot didn’t remember, so Ruby changed the question, “what’s important for our dragon to be bringing us?”, the children

announced together, “LOVE”, Ruby said, “Yes, *you decided it was love, didn't you?*”. Ada sparked another thought for the children... “What colour is love?” and although Dot is mildly shy about sharing her colour, she coily shared that it's yellow. The teachers are both listening to Dot and encouraging her to think about her choice. Ada asks her, “How does yellow make you feel?” and Dot says, “Happy.” Ruby asked, “How does *love* make you feel?” and Dot says, “Happy”. Ruby asks, ‘is that why you're relating yellow to love?’ and Dot nods.

Pedagogies which connect to the life worlds of the children and adapt the prescribed curriculum so that children can be inquirers of their own life worlds & interests, give children a voice because they are validated (Rigney & Hattam, 2020).

The children each selected a colour to paint their little piece of the tile. Ada taught them to squeeze out a tiny bit of watercolour paint and then to mix it with a little bit of water on their tile. There was a lot of industrious experimenting and discussion between the children about how the hues changed with the amount of water added.

After their tile experimentations it was time to use their chosen colours on the draft of their dragon. It had been an interesting build up to actually painting and everyone watched as Natalie applied her rose pink hue first. Johnny and Dot were delighted to discover that yellow and pink make orange because they were sharing a water bowl. Ada talked with Louis about looking at all the little details as his first experiment saw his red brush spread outside them. This work could be seen as the CRP *high intellectual challenge* for the children, as the combination of tools and tasks sparked the learning in many directions.

Dialogic and constructivist informed teaching practices are CRPs. According to Dewey a democratic way of life includes developing the following fundamental traits: reflection, imagination, creativity, inquiry, communication and judgement (also intellectual freedom & freedom of speech).

During all of this, Ruby was snatching moments to use RE's tool, documentation and jotting down the things she wanted to remember, refer back to, and use for future planning—some of which I anticipate she will discuss with her team. Documentation is a metaphor or word for the philosophy of capturing, with one's own lens: the voice of the other. It leads to a reflective process by asking teachers to write down their thoughts and share them together with others, so that we could have common meetings” (Carla Rinaldi, personal communication, 5.5. 2021).

Ada was watching each child's interaction with the activity, and with each other. She was constantly looking to prompt their theory building as they worked on the dragon's tail. I could see her share the odd comment with Ruby about the way someone approached a task,

and she was already reflecting as we went along, commenting about how she could, “set up the laboratory class in the afternoon just on one topic such as mixing.”

Observing Katya interacting with Ruby reinforced that aesthetic 100L is at odds with ‘traditional culture and education’ (Vecchi, xxii) because it is about co-construction, not competition (Ritchie, 2019).

Like any group lesson, there were plenty of dynamics between the children both positive and challenging.

During the painting of the Tui Dragon today, I noticed that Ada was supporting one of the little girls through a tension created by one of her peers, as they painted.

It is relevant and powerful for teachers to guide children’s dispositions such as collaboration and communication. Learning how to relate to others including negotiating across differences is one of the REI values which is shared by CRPs and an important element of the democratic classroom, so it was good to see Ada took the learning opportunity to support both children in this situation:

Ada: “Child 1, this was the part that child 2 did” (pointing to where child 2 has painted over child 1’s work).

[...]

Ada to child 2, “Did you want it yellow?”

*Child 2 shakes her head, looking disappointed (no).*

Ada, “Child 1, remember, it’s about respect.

[...]

Ada, “How about I give you (child 1) extra paper and you can try out all your colours; and we are going to have a think about how we can fix it.”

Child 2, Looking directly but kindly at child one and using a soft rational voice says, “Look at the yellow (pointing to the yellow watercolour on her tile) it just turned wrong in the water (discoloured painting water), and that’s why you can’t see it, and that’s why you did it, but it’s okay child 1,”

Ada, “Oh, *kapai*/ well done, child 2”.

In the era of super-diversity, teachers supporting growth behaviours in a positive way like Ada did in this example, is as important for the child who may be dominated, as it is for the one who may not have even considered the impact they are having on another. It is equally important for children to learn how to navigate relationships positively, and to function democratically as it is to learn how much water to mix with the water colour paint to get the desired result.

“What determines the quality of a project is its capacity to transmit and support a certain image of the child, a child who has a 100L and the right to an environment that is rich, multifaceted, complex, well tended, beautiful” (Vecchi, 2010, p 97). We understand that these biological capacities need adequate contexts, materials and rhythms in order to achieve and express this growth...and RE education is planned to develop these languages, and the documentation “we produce capable of carefully viewing this interweaving of languages” (p.18, Vecchi).

### **6.5 Bear Park’s Contribution to Co-construction**

The REA offers a learning approach which brings children the opportunities to be experiencing social values within which their voice/language is valued for its uniqueness. The teachers arrange the structure of the learning process so that the children are supported to experience the freedom to think and make their own decisions. The group is a powerful setting to develop these skills. In the BP Tui Dragon lessons, the teachers structured the learning environment to help these super-diverse children to learn to work together. Because they each bring their own set of variables, conflict does come into the learning experience, but REI democratic pedagogy values this as an important life skill. It means they can work together to solve problems.

In the super-diverse setting it means the bringing together of ideas in a positive way and where the children are learning to consider or even value the perspectives of others, perhaps making life and learning more interesting. The CRP literature too, promotes opportunities to view the cultural differences that other people bring to the learning setting in a positive way.

The REI teacher understands that they are developing the 100L of the children in order to grow the capacity to embody many capabilities, including seeing things from different points of view or perspectives. So learning with a 100L in mind, values the interaction of many perspectives.

In BP lessons the teachers arrange to provide learning opportunities with a variety of languages or choices as part of the learning experience, such as the choice of colour, or paint brush, so that the children are required to navigate decisions with their peers in the group. During the first lesson the teachers hit an issue requiring the recalibration of dominance by one group member, when a more confident group member chooses a colour and the others immediately follow the confident child’s lead. Ruby finds a way to shift the influence by giving the group a good reason to consider using other colours, and then she proposes the

question back to the group to solve the problem. Her long pause seems to show that she believes they can work it out. When they do, Ruby latches on to a choice which opens more opportunity for individuality for all children, and also makes a link to their prior knowledge and learning, which in a way brings more meaning to the colour choice they are making now in this project. The teacher is pivotal to advancing the group progress with learning and setting the tone of the lesson.

## **6.6 Arrowtown: The Hundred Languages Supporting Regeneration for the Super-Diverse Māori Child**

### **The Mōkihi Project**

Arrowtown Preschool's 'Mōkihi/Raft Project' is an example of the Project Based Learning (PBL) approach, a very familiar pedagogical tool based on authentic educational experience (Cagliari, et al., 2016; Fullan, 2017). In the ethnographic description of this chapter my aim is to try and emphasise the significance of the Mōkihi project as a learning experience which was meaningful and engaging for the super-diverse children and teachers over quite a long period of time (a few months) because the teachers took its direction by listening to the 100L of children. This included the contextual bicultural A/NZ perspective. Part of the interdisciplinarity for the learners and their families was that this project had options within it which I felt were really supporting the regeneration Māori identity and belonging. As many teachers will know, the right choice of project is one where many children can find possibilities or multimodalities for their own meaning making, and this project is an example of that (Edwards et al, 2012). However, the story-line I have selected to focus on from the many possibilities within the Mōkihi Project, is Arrowtown's practical example of how the teaching team at this preschool brought our Treaty Partnership into children's lives, the learning community and the wider whānau/ families in a restorative and joyful way. As an area of need identified by the Ministry of Education, it is important that A/NZ society have the opportunity to experience the positive embodiment of our biculturalism from the perspective of co-constructing healthy societies. As often is the case, our educational institutions have the privilege of shaping communities in a positive way in this regard.

### **Regeneration**

I have called this story, *The Hundred Languages of the Super-diverse Māori child*, with the mindset that it is an important project not just for super-diverse Māori children, and not only because it is an important aspect of growing an A/NZ identity. It is also because it is

an important example of A/NZ citizens learning to live together democratically. Deeper still, it is about the need for many cultures to coexist in a world where all can thrive.

It is important to remember that like any cultural group, no one individual is homogeneous. The super-diverse Māori child is not homogenous. It is understood that each person is a unique identification of the significant variables which determine their identity. And so this is where RE's theory of the 100L is a very useful lens for guiding the learning process. The teacher as researcher, and cultural learner of children uses the POL & D to tap into the voice of the child.

### *6.6.1 The Hundred Languages of Children*

The Hundred Languages is about being an open researcher: an ethnographer, or cultural learner of children (Rinaldi, 2021, p. xxvi; Durden et al., 2014). The teacher as researcher is looking for the communication of the child, and listening intently to their cues in order to interpret as closely as possible what they are saying, so they can build the child's learning from this place. They give equal dignity to all languages (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 132).

The ethnographer of super-diverse children must *also* be an ethnographer of their own super-diversity and languages. They must build an awareness of the presence and quality of engagement they can contribute to the learning relationship; the professional adjustment and updating of one's lens is part of one's essential evolution (Rinaldi, 2021, p. xxvi; Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 48).

The process of documentation, whereby the highpoints in communication within the various learning experiences are made visible throughout a project, was developed by Loris Malaguzzi and Carla Rinaldi (Edwards, 2012, p. 176). "These experiences were very much connected to the principle of the 100L of children, i.e. the many ways that children express themselves, tell stories, and experiment in situations made visible in the video (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 176).

The child's languages stem from the creation of personal meaning using symbolic interpretation, which is strongest when originating from their own natural instincts and interests. The REI teacher looks and listens acutely to see if they can detect the child's languages because for them this is the place meaningful learning begins and can be most potent.

The dynamic behind the theory of the 100L was described by George Foreman and Brenda Fyfe in *The Hundred Languages of Children, The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation* (2012, p. 258). They describe symbols as the origin of language, which when

connected, create meaning. For example, a picture of two pens connected by an arrow will be imbued with the unique interpretation of the person observing them sparking personalised meaning. By putting the same object or subject in varying contexts, such as time, place and space, meaning can be explored in different ways and the view can be understood more deeply. Proto-language is the early form of symbolism in language development. A clay figure of a runner is a symbol but is not of itself a language. However, when ten children make different clay figures to tell the other children how to run a race, these clay figures become the elements of a proto-language. The super-diverse ECE child who loves using the digger in the sand pit is experiencing contextual meaning through the engagement in a proto-language of movement. Through this experience they are a knowledge-producer. As the learner builds knowledge more deeply their epistemological perspective about their learning is formed. Children's deep connections with their languages contribute to their ontological belief systems. Aboriginal children are one with nature, ontologically they feel that, "if you hurt the river, you hurt me." When Māori engage with the ocean, rivers, mountains or forests they are reconnecting with the atua (spirits of their ancestors) that reside within; for this reason, the utmost respect and care must be given" (Phillips, C., 2018).

The epistemological orientation of the REI ECE teacher in A/NZ supports this perspective: that the child is a *producer* of knowledge (Te Whāriki, 2017, p.41). They listen for the child's dominant interests, affinities and intuitions through documentation, seeking, supporting and nurturing the child's languages. This ontological perspective is based on freedom and democracy. Such a belief system sets the conditions for a certain style of pedagogy, learning and meaning making. It is political. The RE hundred languages pedagogy is another lens into supporting the super-diversity of the child because this too contributes to the uniqueness of the individual.

### **6.7 Arrowsmith Preschool: The Mōkihi Project**

Although this narrative is about a REI project, it is the teachers working in support of identified cultural languages of the super-diverse child that I intend to focus on.

The Mōkihi project began when the teachers were inspired by a similar project at another preschool. Nicky explains:

We went to another preschool and they had done a big inquiry where they made their own mōkihi/ *raft* and we thought that'd be so cool if we did the same at our preschool. The children were becoming more curious about mōkihi/ *rafts* as we were telling stories and that kind of thing. And then we thought it'd be quite cool to tie in that with

our ecological identity inquiry. And then we were also told about the *mōkihi/ raft* that was on this river.

Debbie: Oh! (wow)...

Nicky: Yeah, yeah...that's historically how Māori got from place to place, on *mōkihi/ rafts*. But then, we wanted to make it using natural resources, but it needed to be something that we could do over time. [...] So, Jasmine (atelierista) came up with this (mokihi) idea.

Elizabeth (atelierista): So we just worked with what we could get our hands on. I'm a weaver, basket maker, so...it was like...it took weeks to make. The kids brought in materials from home, stuff out of the garden and it was great!

Nicky: The children just wanted to build a waka. But after being built it was in the Arrowtown Festival and also at Polyfest, so by the time I arrived at Arrowtown Preschool it had already had significant other lives.

The reader may remember that on my first morning at Arrowtown Preschool the *mōkihi* sat proudly in the middle of morning mat time, and I was given the grand tour of its evolution by the children. However, it was at this point that they were beginning to talk about the possibility of having a finale for the project by floating it on the local river.

It was a big decision for the teachers to work out if it was wise to continue with the project, when it had already been so big. The day that I joined them, there was a fascinating professional discussion of the pros and cons, between the teachers, as they negotiated this decision. What struck me the most was the way they were all really invested in the decision, and even though they had differing opinions, the way they handled the critical negotiation was very respectful of each other.

In the end Nicky's argument to keep going was the outcome, because "the children really want to see if it floats". They then selected a group of children who had shown a strong interest to rejoin the project and move it along to its final journey to float on the river.

So, the following day the small group, 'the Explorers' Mōkihi Group' began the day with teachers Nicky and Rebecca leading a conversation where the children shared their theories about how they might fix the holes in the bottom of it, so it has a chance of success, "use flax sticks for the bottom of it"... "block the holes with tape" were two suggestions.

The teachers told me that the children have had many opportunities to learn about floating over the past while, including the ones we are aware of: floating bunches of sticks down the river and dropping lupin stems into the water and watching them be carried away by the current, for example. "They have also done floating experiments with sticks and leaves

in class” (Nicky). In order to refresh their learning, Nicky had prepared a video of different sticks floating in her bath, to mimic the experiments they’ve done this year at preschool, so they can revisit this thinking. The conclusion was that the best kind of sticks to put on the bottom of the mōkihi to help it float are hollow flax sticks.

Fortunately there were flax plants growing outside the preschool fence, so after morning tea Nicky organised those in the Mōkihi Explorers group who wanted to, to get their safety vests on and go on a mini mission to help her cut some flax sticks.

This is where I would like to introduce one of the Mōkihi Explorers, Olly, because he is a good example of how these Reggio Inspired teachers harnessed the 100L to support his learning.

At the end of the reflection video where Nicky had made a summary of different varieties of sticks floating in her bath, Rebecca and Nicky quickly reflected on the interest of some of the children in this project. Nicky said: “Olly is *SO* passionate about it; it’s all he talked about at home, and he really wanted to collect sticks” (to bring to school to make the mōkihi). We discussed connecting learning to life worlds and what the children were passionate about: their 100L. These were clues to his languages.

Rebecca explained: “Olly just thrives off being involved in projects: it’s *his* thing!...like this whole year, with all the different ‘group’ foci, he’s been right there.” Olly happened to enter the room and they suggested he showed me the digital stories they have of the children riding on the trailer in the Arrowtown Festival procession. As we looked together he talked about how they made cardboard paddles which broke; his mind ticking over. He thought there must be better options for this time around.

Once the flax sticks had been collected, they were placed in an outdoor shelter area where there was a workbench and child size tools, such as a vice and little saws. The following day Olly had set himself the task of trimming the flax sticks to size in the tool shelter. For Olly there were challenges with learning to measure the sticks so they were all the same length and that tricky part of sawing when you begin and it hasn't quite gripped yet. Nicky is nearby supporting other children and also keeping an eye on how he is progressing, she popped briefly into his space every so often, and in an unobtrusive way, asked a pertinent question, such as: “Do you think you need to have both sticks in the vice to make sure you get them the same length, or do you think there’s a better way?” Olly processed what she was proposing, and adjusted if he felt he needed to. He was on a mission, and I was impressed with the outright stickability and determination of this four year old. In the corner about three metres from him many of the other children are involved in watching baby paradise ducklings

feeding and floating but although Olly had one ear on proceedings, he continued with his task. At one point Olly said to Nicky: “There need to be enough paddles for all the tamariki/children”.

Reggio Emilia’s own municipal micro-project on education for young children, itself is made up of many micro-projects undertaken by children, educators and schools, all sharing an experimental character. The daunting but exciting prospect is whether and how other communities unleash creativity and inventiveness (Moss, as cited in Edwards, et al, 2012, p. 112).

I wondered what the teachers saw as Olly’s languages. Rebecca: “.... isn’t sure, because he seems interested in so many things, but especially projects.” We knew that Nicky was in dialogue with his parents about their desire that he was exposed to Māori culture. I wondered what was driving him in the Mōkihi project, for example, was it learning some A/NZ history of this local area to which he is connected?

This had me thinking about what George Foreman and Brenda Fyfe wrote about in Chapter 14 of *The Hundred Languages of Children*. We can find clues about the child’s languages by their use and interpretation of “proto-language and proto-syntax,” and about how there seemed to be many symbol systems that Olly drew from. “It is the nature of the relation that turns the medium into a message” (Edwards, et al., 2012, p. 258). I recognised the teachers’ desire to read the messages of children from my own classroom experience, and how some seemed within easy reach, and others are harder to grasp. “..and it is the presence of an intended message that motivates children to negotiate shared meanings and to co-construct knowledge.” I understood why Nicky had argued for the children who really wanted to launch this raft because if the rest of the Mōkihi Explorers shared the same passion, having listened deeply to their messages I thought Nicky saw the floating of the Mōkihi as an unavoidable necessity, even after so many months.

The team were now talking about planning a launch event, and I had become so affected by the Mōkihi Explorers zest that I needed to be there to see this happen. Due to weather the event was cancelled twice, and as we were in December at this stage, preschool was closed for over the summer Christmas period. But in January I got a call from Nicky “...we are launching the Mōkihi this Wednesday (9.2.2022), are you still keen to come?”.

When I arrived and parked on the banks of the Arrowtown River, a group of parents, children and their dogs were very carefully lifting the Mōkihi off a trailer, and a procession moved it towards the chosen spot. I could feel the excitement in the air and I felt emotional. This wonderful young teacher had listened to the children and the project seemed to be of

importance to wider family and friends as well. The Mōkihi was now looking very sturdy with a robust base made from the flax sticks that the children had prepared. It was laid by the water. A crowd began to gather as children waited by taking turns swinging on the rope swing which propelled them out over the river. People were connecting and chatting. Nicky and the children gathered around the Mōkihi, where they had a robust discussion about the fact that the children wanted to ride in it, but Nicky was saying, “*remember... we don't know whether it's going to float or sink!*” Although their plan was to watch from the bank and see what happened...their passion was very convincing...

The crowd had grown to about eighty people. Eventually Nicky shared a Māori blessing for the boat, on behalf of the local kaumātua/ Māori elder who wasn't able to make it. Then, two of the fathers lifted the Mōkihi into the river, which at its deepest part is up to their knees.

To everyone's delight the mokihi floats and the children were able to take turns as capable parents guided them a few metres along the river in front of the crowd, and the teachers were also standing in the water for safety. Children waited for a turn by their parents on the bank. I looked for Olly, knowing how much this moment meant to him and caught the joy on his face as he completed his turn and returned to his parents waiting for him on the bank.

### **6.8 Arrowtown Preschool's Contribution to Co-construction**

This could have been any inquiry project in many schools in A/NZ. But what we might learn from this story is about the teacher listening to the 100L of the super-diverse child. When learning is authentic, experiential and owned by the children, it stimulates passion and motivation. To be able to begin school life with a love of learning, and self agency is a huge advantage.

To know the feeling of community, of the wider family being considered and involved in the learning process and welcome to be present and involved in the education of their children, reinforces the value of education in their lives.

I was only part of a small snippet of time to observe Olly's languages, and so his teachers will have a greater sense than me. He seemed to have a strong sense of community, because he did things like making a paddle for all the children. He also went away and thought about the science of floating and sinking, and gathered sticks in his own time, and discussed the issues at school with his teachers. He kept persisting with measuring and cutting lengths of sticks, when he could have given in to being with the cute baby ducklings.

The Mōkihi project is an example of teachers collaborating with each other, with the children's families and with the children. By listening to the 100L as the project progressed they provided the opportunity for meaningful, relevant learning which was connected to the history of their community, and that of some of the families: regenerating history, memories, belonging and culture.

### **6.9 Pakuranga Baptist kindergarten: The Hundred Languages for Super-Diverse Immigrant Children**

#### **Place and Belonging**

We all have things that are personally pivotal in our lives; for Phoebe (PBK atelierista) her coming to New Zealand story is a pivotal story for her... a life changing story. For me, I went overseas for a long time, so coming back...*I think the coming back story probably influences me* because I came back to realise that all those things that I grew up with were unique to this place that had their roots in this place.

Knowing the land through my feet was one of those things that's become stronger and stronger for me, so I get out and I walk. And that's about developing ecological identity. I am part of this place.

For tangata whenua (the original inhabitants of A/NZ) they talk about having a place to stand. I think the Treaty gives people the right to come here to bring what they know and to build it into the lives of those around them. But our stories are already here. We welcome you to sit with us and be part of us. Don't try to overrun us: be part of us (Stephanie, 22.2.2022).

These are some words from my final interview with centre leader Stephanie in February, 2022. She is defining the power that place has on identity and belonging by expressing that when we step back and see the world through other perspectives, we have a greater understanding of what we have. I visualise the image of her words as sitting together around a campfire, a primal human outdoor activity, which is familiar to A/NZers. As a teacher it also resonates with me because when a group of children and their teacher(s) sit on the ground together in a circle there is a sense of equilibrium. Stephanie's comment is very pertinent to the pedagogical example which I will share because all of the children in Phoebe's group the day that I observe are immigrants to A/NZ, as are many of the children at PBK. The children introduce themselves to me at the start of the lesson: Charles is from Sri Lanka/Lankawa; Monty is from Canada, Hazel is from Poland and Hunter is from Uganda, but was adopted to A/NZ.

Their learning fits into the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki's bigger contextual learning area of Belonging/ Mana whenua (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. p.31). One of the goals of this project is for children to know that they have a place and that they can play a part in caring for it, which is why a further goal, previously mentioned *developing an ecological identity* completes the puzzle. Knowing one has a place to belong is of vital importance to all people. Immigrant children can develop a sense of belonging that may extend beyond or across national boundaries (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017 as cited in Li, 2021, p. 27). This requires a welcoming attitude from teachers in the form of love, comprehension and humour...these take the most time and capacity building, BUT we need to give these things importance! (Professor Sebastian Lipina, PhD Seminar 16.2.2022). This lesson is an example of this.

In this ethnographic account it was my role to emphasise for the reader the very important dynamics that were observed. This was a teacher who was dealing with a fairly complex version of A/NZ's current cultural/ demographic status in a way which honoured the super-diverse children within their local place. Phoebe looked for children's cultural threads (languages) and helped them to create connections which united them in memory (even though all their memories are different) and pulled these unique life experiences together in a synonymous association. In a way she was sending a message that each child's life experience in terms of moving countries was hugely significant and special ("*difference*" as *an asset*) and by helping them to share she was creating a sense of sameness, of shared humanity which seemed to bring a sense of togetherness and normality.

She did this by propelling their connection into a shared learning task which was linked to their wider weekly Outdoor Explorers project, and used the lesson to dialogue with the children around their similarities and differences (languages/ variables) in an act where they were learning more about themselves because it was in relation to the others, "I can discover this individuality because you exist"(Rinaldi, 2021, p. xxii). All the while the children were also learning the skills of the languages of art: Spatial awareness & placement, observing and decision making, proportion and attachment.

Meanwhile there was democratic participation, "What do you think Hazel?"...

In the ethnographic description of this chapter my aim is to try and show how Phoebe used these lessons within the bigger project (Belonging, Ecological Identity) in the learning situation to support this group of immigrant children, some who have been here for a long time, and others who have recently moved. There are many children in PBK who have immigrated to A/NZ and probably know about both the adventure and isolation that place and

belonging can bring. I noticed when I was here that the teachers listened closely and had a pragmatic kind of empathy which sent the message that they understood and they would support the children in this challenging space. Of equal importance to A/NZ I will contextualise Stephanie's knowledge of the Treaty alongside Phoebe's lessons, so that it is clear they fitted together.

In accentuating the clever strategies that Phoebe used to harness the cultural languages of the children in the group, she brought them together to effectively enjoy the evolutionary culture they now shared together. They were thinking about themselves in relation to each other and thinking about their places of origin in relation to this new place and also had fun crafting a place for their own shared imaginary character, who was also a newcomer coming to be amongst them and to join them in caring for their local environment.

This story from PBK I have entitled *The Nature Man* because Phoebe's lesson centres around their imaginative character, *The Nature Man*, which the children create together in her atelier. Stephanie had explained to me that the learning in the centre at the moment, including this *Nature Man* mini project fitted under the umbrella of a bigger learning project for PBK Auckland City Council's NETR Project (Natural Environment Targeted Rate), which is funding quite a lot of different projects in schools and early childhood centres. So at PBK they are interconnecting their learning into one environmental project which encompasses a collection of related projects, with the wider community.

They asked us if we would like to adopt a park...we came up with a plan that we wanted to plant around the Estuary. Because of our walking around the Estuary programme, Outdoor Explorers, we felt like we had a connection to that anyway. It had been a long held dream of the kindergarten to plant out there, the children have been talking about the birds and the creatures out there...insects that inhabit this place with us. So that's about biodiversity. How can we plant in a way that supports them? So we went around and we looked at the different trees that the birds like. So we looked at flax because the Tui feeds on the harakeke flowers. We looked at mānuka because the bees feed on the mānuka and kānuka. And then we looked at the other plants that have been brought here and how they... *like the moth plants which the butterflies love...* are actually dangerous; it's a milkweed kind of plant. The butterflies' proboscis goes down into the flower and the sap is so sticky that the butterflies can't get free.

Stephanie reinforced that PBK explored the stories around them through "walking the local land and listening to the stories that their environment is telling them." To support their

professional thinking the teachers used Wally Penetito's, Place Based Pedagogy (Penetito, 2014) and they were also part of a A/NZ wide Enviroschools programme. All of these elements combine to help them foster an ecological identity, "We believe that if people develop a connection to the whenua (land) they will care about it and look after it" (Stephanie).

We listen to trees and apples and the river and the wind [...]. Hearing pūrākau/ cultural stories of the plants of the trees of the people who were here, influences our lives. I think they're looking for what are the stories that are going to help us develop a sense of kaitiakitanga, that we're all in this together working, looking after this place.

### **Lesson 1**

This brings us to the series of three lessons which I observed Phoebe take in the atelier over the two days I was at PBK in February, 2022.

In order to support the idea of coming to feel belonging through knowing the local whenua/ land which the children have done during *Outdoor Explorers*, Phoebe began the first lesson by scaffolding the children into the present by bringing out a large map of the local area which she made with the children last year. Two of the children in today's group were part of last year's one. The map was on an approximately three metre length of white paper and I can see from having driven around here a little bit, that it was quite proportional. The children have all drawn the detailed images in black vivid. I thought to myself that this was a great way of fostering the development of a relationship with their new place/country.

At the beginning of the lesson Phoebe and the children spent a good fifteen minutes sitting on the floor together enjoying identifying their drawings on the map and remembering the places and things they have visited in Pakuranga, Auckland, their new home. Phoebe tapped into their new experiences of this place by listening to each child's cultural response through this shared reflective activity, while simultaneously shaping a new collaborative culture as they worked together democratically. Fortunately for me I was able to recognise many of these because I had been with them on *Outdoor Explorers*. On the map there are the many familiar places that they travelled when they were out on their *Outdoor Explorers* adventure. Together they each pointed out features which were meaningful to them: the bridge that they walked under, the sports field, the enormous tree with the house beside it where the kind old man lived, the secret place where they had morning tea if it rained, lots of flowers and trees, pukekos in the paddock opposite PBK. Rats!! The Tamaki River, and close to the river they have drawn a burrow with little crabs, which they said they sometimes looked for. There are the houses of the children who lived close to kindergarten

and there were lots of trees. The children were excited to identify people's houses so much so that those who didn't yet have a house on the map said, "where's *my* house" also supporting the sense of togetherness and of being in this place.

By linking their map with their adventures in the local outdoors Phoebe played with a shared language amongst the group; her message is 'we have this shared experience of immigrating here, even if we are all different; and we are all welcome.'

She was comfortable with fun; she was not telling the children to sit up and listen, there was giggling and chatter. They are up and down on their cushions, they move around the map, they stand up and walk and talk beside it as they were wondering, sharing and reflecting. It was high energy between pulling all these threads together, and not knowing how they would connect to the strategy she had prepared. She'd listened to them: she picked up on critical dialogue such as "we came from far away" and saved it to use in a later lesson. She knew what she was listening for: she was looking to build a bridge of understanding and welcome for these children who needed to feel welcome and like they belonged. Her pedagogy supported what Stephanie said about the Treaty: "the Treaty gives people the right to come here to bring what they know and to build it into the lives of those around them. We welcome you to sit with us and be part of us."

Near the end of the lesson Phoebe moved on by reminding the children about the *Nature Man* who is the imaginary character they created as a group the previous day. In the previous lesson they had collaborated to make up some fun ideas about him; things like: "... he wants to help them look after the kindergarten plants." She says to the children: "... someone told me he came from far away...he had to come on the plane to come to Auckland." She suggested that they put a house on the map beside the other houses, so the *Nature Man* had somewhere to live, and the children negotiated over where to put it.

As well as that, yesterday they all drew their own image of him, which Phoebe now shared back to them. Monty's *Nature Man* looked like a tree and Hunter was holding a very long squiggly hose for watering the plants. Phoebe's energy was infectious and she was bringing a sense of fun to this conceptual play, which helped the children to engage openly in the discussion about their drawings. Monty was completely enjoying the imaginary theatre but Hunter was more concerned about whether the *Nature Man* was real or not.

The use of the *Nature Man* reminded me of an article by Jan Hare. Jan wrote about the pedagogy of the trickster, a figure who appeared in many stories of different cultures which relied on summoning the imagination. The trickster was able to assume many forms, could

bridge stability with absurdity and expanded the limits of what was possible for the listeners (Li, et al., 2021, p. 36).

Phoebe told them that next lesson they were going to work together to make a shared *Nature Man*. She said: “It’s okay if some children think he’s real and some don’t”: it was just imaginary fun.

### **Conclusion**

Through a culture of friendship, fun and their shared language about their new place, the group was discovering togetherness and joy through this project. At the end of the lesson, Phoebe prepared the children to keep building on these concepts. She told them that they would be creating something together. It would encompass all of their perspectives, it was going to be a shared ‘Nature Man.’ The learning was specific to her group’s demographic and was an example of representing and connecting children’s cultures. Phoebe was influencing the shaping of the group culture as she led a positive, productive lesson with the children.

### **Lesson 2**

Phoebe’s proposal to the children was to collaborate on making a shared *Nature Man* on one big A2 piece of cardboard. Validating the questions the children had expressed previously, she said: “I know we are not sure if the Nature Man is real or not, but we all believe there is a Nature Man [it might be] in your imagination, or whatever is in your mind, or whatever is true to you”.

She showed the children her beautifully prepared woven baskets of mostly natural materials but also one of plastic flowers: “Do you think they are real or not real *just like the Nature Man?*” she provoked jokingly. They looked at the shapes of the leaves, and named the shape for the piece of wood they would use for the head: “It’s a circle” (in unison).

There was a lot of talk building the expectation of the ‘shared’ nature of the task, including ‘sharing’ the materials,

“I know they are for everybody” (Monty);

“I’m good at sharing with my sister”(Charles);

“I’m good at sharing” (Hunter).

They went over ideas of what material to use for what part of the Nature Man’s body and Phoebe role modelled the placement of pieces on the cardboard, indicated that there were choices to be made and she was not simply telling them what to do, that this was a negotiated task.

For me, this is an example of what Rincon-Gallardo talked about in the literature when he described ‘horizontal’ teaching approaches where power was shared, as opposed to

‘vertical’ or top down pedagogies where the teacher prescribed the way the outcome will look (Rincon- Gallardo, 2019, p. 11).

The children negotiate where to put the head, with each child having a say. Monty had the idea that they all agree with, he moved it down from the top saying: “We need to leave room for the hair.” It also reflected my three hopeful approaches, REI, CRP and DEM which all share the idea of RE's image of the competent child, who can negotiate different theories, ideas and perspectives as part of the group dynamic. The expectation is that the group can work together to figure things out.

Of course the teacher had overall responsibility for guiding the situation. Because Hazel had not spoken much but then suggested using pebbles for the eyes, Phoebe invited her to place them on Nature Man’s head, while the others watched on crouching around her, showing support for her decision. This is something which I identified as a need back in my 2019 class. It is a RE concept which takes the languages of children further, into the life skill of respectfully giving and receiving each other's messages: it is RE’s pedagogy of listening. It is also about equity, because sometimes we all need to support those who need an extra hand in some way.

They continued on and created the Nature Man together, which involved looking closely at some of the parts of their own bodies to get a sense of where things were positioned, such as the eyes and other finer details. Phoebe has a little A4 size mirror which made the children giggle as they all squeezed their faces into the mirror to enjoy what Phoebe called their “happy face”, and they checked to see whether they could see their teeth when they smiled. They all looked at each other as they smile...some people’s teeth showed when they smiled and some didn’t... “Feel your lips...do they go up or down when you smile?”. They found it interesting to compare. As they sat around the Nature Man poster working and negotiating over the construction of the face together, Phoebe took them deeper into their thoughts and imaginations by linking their happy faces with their happy times at Outdoor Explorers, and then to the *Nature Man’s* face and his imaginary feelings, “Why does the Nature Man feel happy in our estuary?”

Charles suggested, “because he likes our plants, and he likes us”.

There was further investigation into how to compose the Nature Man based on the shape of the children’s bodies. They were up and down, looking at each other and then back to the creation to add the parts: arms, feet, toes.

Hunter and Hazel who were standing next to each other and looking at the feet call out to Phoebe who was busy encouraging the other two as they put their feet on the nature man, saying, “look...not the same colour!”

Then they noticed the difference in size of their hands. There were lots of mathematical language entering the conversation...”our hands are similar”; “your hands are smaller than mine.” When Nature Man was completed they stood in a circle around him and each child was given a chance to add anything they thought they needed to add. Hazel added more fingers. Then they sat and drew their own Nature Man on paper, “I’m going to draw my grass is blue” (Charles). They were quiet for quite a few minutes, and their pictures had lots of detail.

Rameka's (2012) writing on culturally valid assessment suggests that the questions in *Te Whatu Pōkeka*, “*Kō wai koe? Nā wai Koe? I ahu mai koe I hea?* (Who are you? From whom are you? Where have you come from?) ” Ministry of Education, 2009, p.8), require teachers to know the child, their background, and their cultural heritage as a starting place to connect” past knowings to present learnings and to future understandings” (Rameka, 2012, p.37, as cited in Less & Ng, 2020, p.21).

### **Conclusion**

Phoebe was using the differences among the children to help them appreciate their own uniqueness. In the REA the group provided many opportunities to help them learn and grow. She was helping the children to connect with each other and develop a sense of friendship and belonging to PBK and their new country. She was creating a group culture where their past lives are talked about: she understood what they were going through and she helped them to see things that were the same about each other, through dialogue and the language of art.

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Main activity: discussion and reflection**

We believe, as Ann Pelo says, “that place is part of our identity: that place shapes our identity” (Pelo, 2009, p.30). We saw that as the children began to build relationships with the local maunga, their knowledge of who they are, and of their own identity in relation to those places began to grow (Lees & Ng, 2020).

The final lesson in this series involved Phoebe and the children sitting in a circle on the floor of her atelier. It was reflection time. They begin by talking about how the Nature Man came from far away. Then Phoebe made a connection with them saying that she noticed when they introduced themselves to me (the researcher) at the beginning of the lesson

yesterday, they mentioned that their families had come from far away. Hazel explained why her family came to A/NZ. For several minutes they discussed how they felt being here. They all agreed that their home countries were more fun, because of things like more interesting animals. Then Phoebe asked them what they liked about A/NZ and they began to share these: going to Panmure Mountain and Mt Wellington. Not lingering too long, Phoebe swung the reflection back to the Nature man and how we all look different, reminding them of their comparisons yesterday, and saying, “but it’s okay that we all have different things”, adding that it was interesting that “yesterday we each made one Nature Man picture together, and then we drew our own pictures...but they are all different! Telling them, “people have different perspectives.”

In concluding, Phoebe asked the children, “How did you feel when you worked with someone who’s different from you yesterday?” They used a little strategy that the children here were familiar with: “What was in your basket yesterday when you were working on the Nature Man?” They shared ideas: “love”; “gentle feet and gentle hands”; “team work”; “listening”; “kindness”...

It was time to go but as the other children got up to leave, Hazel said, “I want to stay.” It was obvious that she felt a connection to the conversation, and perhaps wanted to talk a little more. She sat on Phoebe’s knee and Phoebe told Hazel her own story of coming to A/NZ all those years ago.

I couldn’t speak to my teacher when I was scared of something. I stayed with friends who could speak the same language as me. It took a long time for me to settle. But A/NZ is my home now. Kindy (PBK) is part of my family, I am able to communicate.

She looks at Hazel, listening to her,

P: The whole group could understand you, Hazel. I can understand you Hazel - you speak very beautiful English. You speak beautiful English and all of us understand you. How do you feel when you hear that?

H: Good

P: Will you speak more?

H: Yeah

.... (pause)

P: Because we all understand and we want to know you’re alright.

P: Can I ask you one more thing?

H: Yeah

P: How do you feel when you are with the children at kindy?

H: Happy.

P: Do you find it easy to communicate with them?

H: Yes.

P: Do you have friends?

H: Yes.

P: Who are your friends?

H: Margot and Kylie and George.

After Fanya left, Phoebe said to me:

When I heard her say she's got friends at kindy now I thought it is good news, maybe she has a sense of belonging in A/NZ and in this place, and getting more confidence to build relationships with other, same age children rather than just adults. She usually follows the teacher, 'helping the teacher' rather than finding something to do.

Sometimes she misses Mum. In the afternoon she will lie down inside and read a book, when all the children are outside.

Debbie: The teacher following her progress over time, might validate her by supporting her growth.

P: Listening is so important - that they feel like you are listening...seriously listening; remembering what they said yesterday...I write down what they say, too, sometimes.

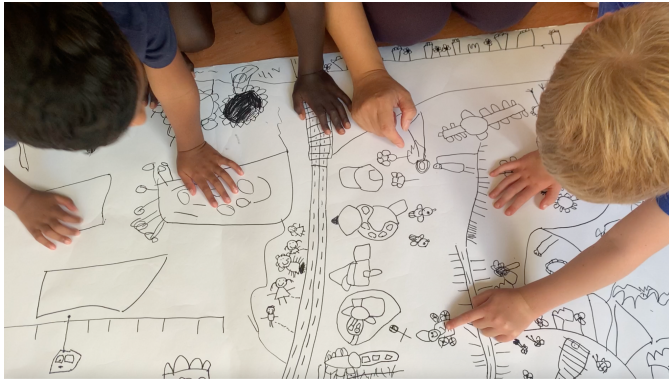
Debbie- Your empathy and validation of her comes from your own experience...so, from the heart...she listened to that too, and it probably helps her learning process and for her to feel stronger in herself.

P: Mmmmmmm

Debbie: She knows you're there for her and she knows you're noticing.

### **Conclusion**

Phoebe has gathered the super-diverse group together with a mindset of and welcome, and also empathy and understanding for what they've been through or the life adventure they are on, particularly coming to a new country. She was welcoming them to the A/NZ culture through supporting them to share their memories of their home culture, by making comparisons with each other and then linking these to their new home.



### **6.10 Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten's Contribution to Co-construction**

Pedagogies for the super-diverse exemplify participatory democracies which welcome migrants "to sit with us, be part of us and to share what is unique to them" (Stephanie, PBK, 22.2.2022).

The PBK teachers draw on the super-diverse migrant child's past and present life worlds, characteristic of CRPs. The idea of the Nature Man being a creative way to explore working together in a democratic way and to talk about the things that make us and our work the same and yet different built group belonging and identity. Providing the children with the opportunity to talk over their experiences of the past, but balance these with the new things they enjoyed in A/NZ was done in a supportive way. The message I felt that Phoebe was providing was, I notice you, hear you, I can empathise with you and care about you and how you are adjusting to the change of home. We want to learn more about you and support you to make friends here. From my experience of moving to Italy, in 2019, I also understand the significance of these messages for wellbeing, and I feel Phoebe handled them very carefully. As Phoebe said, "the kindy is my family now". My experience tells me that school is a secure place of belonging as well. Learning can progress when children are settled, because they feel listened to and a sense of belonging.

### **6.11 Chapter 6: Across Centre Contributions**

#### **Bear Park: The Tui Dragon Project**

#### **The Hundred Languages of the super-diverse child in the democratic group**

What can we learn from BP's in these lessons?

**REI/ DEM/CRP:** Professional Development which enables teachers to become researchers who are cultural learners of super-diverse children (meaning that they are open to multimodalities and interdisciplinarity) shapes their professionalism as inclusive team participants. The role of the atelierista can add to the impetus and momentum.

**REI:** The teacher is supporting the children to use the different languages and intelligences they bring to the classroom and encouraging them to construct knowledge together.

**DEM:** The teacher is always involved in a process in which she or he is part of the context. They have to relate all the decisions to the kind of citizenship they support (Gothson, p. 24).

**CRP:** It is important to understand what shapes children's identities and constructs and also to examine our own because together these meet in the learning environment and result in causes and effects in learning potential.

### **Arrowtown Preschool - The Mokihi Project**

#### **Arrowtown preschool supporting the Hundred Languages of the super-diverse Māori child.**

What can we learn from BP's in these lessons?

**REI/ DEM/CRP:** REI Teachers who welcome the life-worlds and alternative ontological and epistemological perspectives of super-diverse children because they understand that no human being or cultural construct is homogeneous are in a position to use difference as an asset in shaping the learning trajectory in a positive, productive and humanistic way. In this kind of environment the learning is inclusive and adds value to all super-diverse children.

**REI:** By listening to the 100L of the super-diverse child the teachers collaborated to provide multimodal learning opportunities. These were authentic. They were set in the community and contained a living connection to the children's indigenous culture. Learning through culture, not about culture.

**DEM:** The teacher had a strong relationship with the family of the super-diverse child. The family had a voice in the shaping of the child's education.

**CRP:** The teachers' understood their part in shaping the super-diverse child's identity, and how the learning experiences they were providing in this environment were important resulting in the positive effect of learning potential. Regeneration.

### **Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten- Place and Belonging**

#### **PBK supporting the Hundred Languages of the super-diverse immigrant child**

What can we learn from BP's in these lessons?

**REI/ DEM/CRP:** Teachers who use their own life experiences, particularly those which have shaped them through the challenges of change and difference, can use the empathy, understanding and skills they have developed to support children to explore their own life challenges, in the learning environment.

**REI:** The learning experience opened the opportunity for dialogue about their life experiences in terms of their past and present homes. The conversation was also balanced with lighter topics.

**DEM:** The art project about an imaginary character who also comes to live at Pakuranga provided a learning experience where the super-diverse immigrant children could work together on one project, while also exploring their similarities and differences.

**CRP:** The teachers used pedagogies of connection and belonging with the super-diverse migrant children. She encouraged relationships between everyone involved. She listened to the children in a welcoming way.

### **6.12 Possibilities of Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse ECE Contexts**

The following are the webs co-constructed by the ethnographic threads, from each ECE in chapter 6. The synthesis originated with deduction from the characteristics of the three hopeful approaches, because the teachers used the three hopeful approaches and their shared indicator, ‘difference as an asset’ in the pedagogical projects. Within these the presence of the following characteristics indicated that they were supportive of super-diverse children.

1. Awareness that the educational environment is shaping identity and social construct.
2. Critical thinking, especially activist orientation.
3. Reverence and responsibility for bicultural practice.
4. Participatory democracies where everyone is welcome.
5. Difference was seen as an asset in the learning setting.

These are discussed as co-constructed findings in chapter 8.

## Chapter 7

### The Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation

#### 7.1 Vertovec's Model, 'The Social Organisation of Difference'

#### The Model Shows How the REI Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation Supports the Super-Diverse Child

Vertovec's social organisation of difference (SOD) model (2021) can be used to explore the influence of CR, REI pedagogy.

What the researcher would like to understand is more about the way that the teacher adapts pedagogy and affects learning for super-diverse children in the A/NZ ECE.

The focus in Chapter 7 is on the REI POL & D supporting the super-diverse child. Because the REA involves a close relationship with the child in their learning it gives us the chance to funnel the research to a more close up perspective and identify the ethnographic threads which contribute to 'what affects what?' (Vertovec, 2021). In other words how the teachers' use of POL & D works to shape learning in a positive way (Vertovec, 2021, p.4); or what are the webs which can help teachers support super-diverse children's learning? I am coming from the perspective that all children are super-diverse, but again specifically looking out for those who might be more isolated.

Using Vertovec's social organisation of difference model (Vertovec, 2021) we can analyse interactions between the child, the teacher and CR REI POL & D, to look at how pedagogy supports the child. The model brings an awareness of how when all of the components come together, they shape each other.

In this model 'configurations' (Vertovec, 2021, p. 4) are social constructs, such as schools or pedagogies (an organisational arrangement). "Representations are social categories, such as how a group is categorised. In this case 'teacher' is the representation. 'Encounters' are specific social interactions. In the case of super-diversity we can use the model to look at how social actions work generatively to shape trajectory, or *what affects what* (Vertovec, 2021, p. 4), for example, the dynamics of power balance and bridging cultural processes (Vertovec, 2021, p. 13).

In this case we can observe how the super-diverse child experiences an encounter, and how the choice of pedagogy by the teacher affects the child's learning experiences. The teacher can choose to utilise representations for good, by using their position to improve social dynamics (Vertovec, 2021, p.13). This could support the development of positive relationships in classroom interactions.

## 7.2 Reggio Emilia's Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation

At the heart of the REA is a culture of listening (Rinaldi, 2006). Listening is the crux of the 'ethical encounter with the Other' (Bauman, 1995) implying a major responsibility for schools, teachers and parents (Dalberg & Moss 1999). Teachers and children in the Reggio classroom make listening visible through the practice of pedagogical documentation (Giudici, et al 2001). This gives a deeper sense of what is taking place in the processes and mental paths of learning (Vecchi, 2010; Rinaldi, 2010).

The teacher's role is to facilitate this culture of listening through children's curiosities, theories, research, problem solving and negotiations. Learning "relations are the place where thought grows and advances in a context of diversity rather than one of homogeneity because in situations of conflicting interpretations, the need to listen and to negotiate your own point of view is the catalyst for the fundamental process of metacognition (knowledge of knowledge) providing an opportunity for re-knowing your knowledge in a different light-enriched by the new and different opinions offered by others" (Rinaldi, 2010).

Teachers know how to listen to children. They allow them to take initiative and simultaneously guide them in productive ways. The learning experiences that Reggio Inspired teachers orchestrate are based on a reciprocal relationship, which is child originated and teacher framed. As Carla Rinaldi, 2006 depicted, it is much like, "finding one's way by using a compass rather than taking a train". Professor Rinaldi says that Reggio's principle of documentation is 'visible listening' where 'listening means welcoming uncertainty and living in the zone of proximal development' (Rinaldi 2006).

In chapter 7 the research moved to the final phase by listening to the teaching/learning relationships with super-diverse children with a micro focus on how the actions of the POL & D supported super-diverse children.

The REA POL listened for the 100L that super-diverse children brought to the learning environment. Teachers saw themselves as researchers of children (Celada & Hobba, REANZ workshop, Melbourne, October, 2022). They provided learning environments which welcomed super-diverse children's multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006); they were interdisciplinary, not siloed (Ada) and provided opportunities for choice agency and freedom within multimodal literacies.

### 7.3 Arrowtown- The REI Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation

#### Supporting the Super-Diverse Child

Nature runs in the veins of many A/NZers. For many children in A/NZ, the outdoors is a familiar learning environment used in education (Maley-Shaw, 2012; Claire Warden, 2010; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In the indigenous culture of Māori, it has special significance, e.g. “*The water is me.*” In Aboriginal culture, everything has a spirit. In RE the environment is considered, ‘the third teacher.’ Environmental design is orchestrated by teachers, in order to support learning by engaging the senses and aesthetics, imagination and creativity.

Nature Explorers is a traditional Thursday afternoon opportunity for the four year olds at Arrowtown Preschool to learn in the outdoors.

In an empowering environment, children have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and , increasingly, to make decisions and judgements on matters that relate to them. Play and playfulness are valued and kaiako/teacher-initiated experiences are inviting and enjoyable (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 18).

It is here that the research moved into more of a close up focus looking at how the POL & D supports the super-diverse child in A/NZ ECEs.

Early in the summer of 2021 just prior to Christmas, on my second field trip to Arrowtown I joined the group of 12 four year old children, two of their teachers, Nicky and Florence and one of the children’s fathers, on their Nature Explorers programme. We headed along the well trodden path beside the Arrow River to a clearing in the bush. The grass was lush, the leaves of the trees provided the option of a cool respite and the subtle sound of the river could be heard travelling gently nearby with crickets singing.

The children knew the routine, and there was always a safety check and lunch together first. The clearing for the base the group set up borders the walking path, and for the first while the children flowed between activities within the clearing area. A democratic classroom was culturally responsive by providing multi-modal opportunities for the different languages and intelligences of the children to develop (Morrison et al., 2019; Gothson, 2016).

Olly’s father set up the slack line, where children queued to await their turn, and they could be heard encouraging each other to make it from one end to the other. There was tentativeness on the slackline, but also there was upside down prowess. Democratic educational settings were inclusive of the wider family network, including children’s families

and even experts from the community who could come in from the outside and support the learning (Gothson, 2016).

Some children picked buttercups about which Florence shared a funny tale. Fun and humour were very important ingredients (Rinaldi & Gardner, 2001). Two children were sitting in the grass painting with watercolours while others decided to build a hut from fallen branches, and worked together to stand it like a tepee; outdoor environments enable group collaboration on authentic activities (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Two of the girls were whittling sticks. Learning in nature could provide opportunities to experience the traditional outdoor activities of the culture.

After a while, Nicky and a small group headed back along the path and down to an area of shallow water and a little stream. On the way a patch of wild lupins caught the eye of some children. They were allowed to pick these because they were wild and plentiful. Running their hands from the bottom to the top of the flower heads in quick movements delighted them because it caused the tiny, waxy flower heads to woosh into the air in what the children called, “fire works”.

### **7.3.1 A Close up Example of the Pedagogy of Listening in Action**

Sienna and Rio decided to use these little pink and purple flowers off the lupin heads to decorate what they call, “a fairy house”. Sienna was collecting sticks for Rio who was crouched low to the silty ground, damming a slow running ten centimetre wide stretch of water which flowed out of the stream towards the river in a narrow channel. She was experimenting with how many sticks were needed to bridge and stem the flow of the water, while also trying to understand how she could use the little sand bank to securely anchor each end of the bunch of sticks into the silty ground to hold the dam in relation to the force of the water. The two girls were chatting as they worked on their task. The outdoors provided opportunities for children’s theory building which was what the children were doing now. Rio has arranged the lupin flowers in a cascade of pink and purple on top of where the sticks were lodged into the sand. The outdoor environment was providing her with opportunities to harness the power of aesthetics and creativity. Teacher Nicky was close by as the girls processed their thinking, her presence seemed to show that she was interested in their discoveries. Her responses to their theorising showed that she supported them to keep searching for insight to their questions and theories. She believed they had agency (competent children).

While I stayed near the girls making the fairy bridge, Nicky went with another group of four children over near the edge of the river to look for a good place to launch their

mōkihi, at its inaugural floating which would be held at a community event next week. Florence and the other children arrived, and after studying the flow of the small stream they flicked their lupin heads onto it, and watched as they floated away on top of the water. “For children empathy with surrounding is a kind of natural bridge to a relationship with the environment, and thus an indispensable basis for relations with others” (Vecchi, 2010, p.116).

I noted how relevant the floating was to the other floating experiments I had seen the children working on in previous observations at their centre this week, and how these activities at this site linked to their big community event next week, where the class was to attempt to float the mōkihi in the Arrowtown River.

To be able to transfer ideas from one learning situation and apply them in another is a high level skill showing adaptability/ flexibility of thinking (Fullan, 2017; Beghetto, 2016), something which is very much required in the world today.

Our hope is that a sensitive approach to our surroundings can constitute a positive element for participation and conscious solidarity with others and with that which surrounds us, an indispensable attitude for the future of democracy and humanity. (Vecchi et al., 2008, p.11; Edwards, et al., p. 340).

Quality design means quality learning (Cagliari et al., 2016). The human race and the environment exist together symbiotically on the planet, reliant upon each other for continued existence.

Giving children opportunities to listen to and come to know and understand the environment, its rhythms and languages, builds an affinity with it which develops into care and respect. In the era of climate change which continues to be influenced by neoliberalism teachers might harness the environment to build an alternative pathway. “Reggio provokes us to choose between societies oriented toward the individual in competition and societies based on the individual constructed with others, who seeks out others...[A] political and economic choice that can influence the entire educational system but also the social system (page 101)”(Rinaldi, p. xxii).



### **7.5 Arrowtown's contribution to the construction**

The social organisation of difference mechanism at play in the Arrowtown examples shows that the REI teacher who was using the REI POL & D (configuration) is shaping the nature of the child's development through the encounter where they project a belief in the super-diverse group of children as self-agent and competent. As an example, the teacher/super-diverse child interactions involve the REI teacher as a researcher of children's interests and intelligences. The teachers are near the children as they collaborate and theorise. They support the children to carry out experiments such as floating and the damming of water flow. Their presence is encouraging but not dominating and they use techniques such as rhetorical questions to support thinking.

This example from Arrowtown's Nature Explorers programme also teaches us that the natural environment provides an engaging, authentic and powerful environment for learning. It has bigger picture implications, as well. Being in close proximity with the outdoors enhances children's connection with the natural world. This is important to develop a sense of place and belonging for the super-diverse child and it also has implications for the future of the planet. Both are living, breathing organisms which require care and respect. They are mutually interdependent. The earth will benefit from teachers providing children with the opportunity to listen, promoting future well-being for both. Being in nature's presence teaches children how to look after it, but also to develop the skills of imagination, creativity, celebrating the extraordinary in the ordinary, and transference of practical and conceptual ideas.

### **7.4 PBK: The REI Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation**

#### **Supporting the Super-Diverse Child**

##### **A CR REI listening environment, supporting the super-diversity of Tongan child, 'Joe'**

The NZ ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki, is an inclusive curriculum which means that it is the teachers' responsibility to remove physical, social or conceptual barriers to participation and learning, by adapting the environment or teaching approaches (Te Whāriki, p. 13). It states, "Teaching inclusively means that kaiako/teachers will work together with families, whanau and community to identify and dismantle such barriers." Culturally responsive

teaching responds to children in the super-diverse classroom by creating a learning environment which connects to the life worlds of the children.

Reggio Inspired teachers understand that their image of the child, shapes that child's being. They believe that the child has a right to be nurtured and to blossom in a quality learning environment, and they use the RE POL with an open researching attitude so they can tap into the child's needs, interests and aspirations to provide a culturally responsive environment by harnessing an inclusive, holistic, post colonial approach (Ritchie, 2016).

Joe was a two year old Tongan boy at PBK. He had a warm presence and eyes which seemed to take everything in. Being young, he was reasonably new to PBK but like his peers, his potential for time here had been dramatically reduced due to Covid19 lockdowns. He seemed happy to be here, and I knew the feeling, as lack of Covid restrictions had finally enabled me to be in his kindergarten for the first time in May, 2021.

On the first day I was at PBK Joe caught my eye because he was from the Pasifika community and it was important that I understood how this group of teachers provided CRP to support him in his learning because, although Te Whāriki states,

Today New Zealand children are growing up in a diverse society that comprises people from a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities. Te Whāriki supports children from all backgrounds to grow up strong in identity, language and culture. In this context, Te Whāriki specifically acknowledges the educational aspirations of Pasifika peoples, who derive their identities for the Pacific Island nations with which New Zealand has strong historic and present day connections (Te Whāriki, 2017, p. 7).

Our education system is still trying to work out how to meet the needs of Māori and Pasifika children (Te Whāriki, p. 9; May & Carr, 2015, p. 316; May, 2004).

I noticed that Joe was demonstrating what Stephanie had previously described in our second Zoom. He was very engaged with observing, listening and watching, but not getting involved with active 'doing' so much in the programme. However, the teachers and I noticed at community music singing time that Joe was completely engaged with watching his peers drumming and waving their hand held ribbon rainbow dancing streamers, and at the end of the day when Sarah sang an action song with the class Joe once again was watching and listening intently to her and the other children, but not joining in, in the traditional sense. In Vea Vecchi's book *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia* she talked about this idea, that just because children aren't active doesn't mean they're not engaged (Vecchi, 2010). When I commented to Stephanie about Joe's obvious interest in music and that I thought that it would be great if he might join in more actively, Stephanie understood my teacher perspective but

she told me of a similar experience where she learnt to look at this situation from an alternative perspective, “the children were building in the fale (Samoan house with a thatched roof) and you could see kind of swinging on the pole listening, but not necessarily building himself.” She explains that she too used to worry about this,

Sometimes we'd feel like people weren't engaged. We *knew* they were engaged, but we didn't have the language to explain how we knew they were engaged. And ERO would come and they'd say, this child's just standing watching, she's not engaged.

But Margaret Carr wrote some exemplars for learning stories where she talked about observing and listening as strategies for learning, and I suddenly went, okay, well, that's the language we need to use for them, because they are engaged! So, now we have a slightly different view of what engagement is than a lot of places. If children are hanging around on the periphery listening and copying some of the ideas we assume that they are engaged. They just keep a different style of engagement. Because we've got a lot of speakers of other languages, sometimes engagement is about listening closely to what others are doing and watching. So we talk about looking, observing and listening as strategies for learning; we consider them (the children) to be part of a project, even if they're not drawing something or building something. You can see them, they hang around the edges.

CRPs take into account the world views of the children. It is a challenge for teachers when children like Joe are obviously very interested in the learning going on around them, yet their quiet nature makes it difficult to get to know them better and provide quality learning environments that they have a right to.

We tend not to talk about which are the children that are the protagonists, because children swing in and out of projects, depending on which they are actually interested in. When we start counting moth plant pods, I'm pretty sure that all the children who like numbers will come and be involved. Some are more interested when the number comes up. Sometimes you can hook them in through their interests and they'll stay for the deeper work of the project. (Stephanie, May 2021).

The teachers suspected that Joe was very interested in music, because of his enthusiastic attitude, but wondered how they might adapt their pedagogy to make learning more inclusive for him, so they decided to try and catch his mother when she came to pick him up after kindergarten and tell her they had noticed that he seemed to be showing a strong interest in music.

The following day, Sarah reported back to the other teachers and myself that Joe's mother says music was Joe's language! She had given Sarah a CD of Tongan music to share with the children. The teachers set up the fale in the playground with the instruments that the children had previously made out of natural materials, including some drums made out of tree stumps, which the children could beat to the rhythm of the music with sticks.

We were all amazed by the way the music Joe knew suddenly brought his whole being to life, and while several children and teachers, Sarah and Georgina were all banging instruments to the rhythm and dancing to Joe's Tongan music, he joined in with a jumping dance, thumping the sides of his thighs in time with the music and as he moved closely to each child his happy face was spreading infectious joy for this music. He was so happy to share music from his culture with his friends. It was a moment of great happiness for everyone involved. We felt this may be a key to helping Joe engage more at kindergarten. The teachers have added another musical language to the variety they already provided.

By involving Joe's lifeworld into the kindergarten, the teachers were instigating what Malaguzzi talks about, a feeling of belonging, where his interests sparked greater effort. The challenge lay in teachers handling graduated trials and efforts delicately and with dignity and to develop an environment which inspired children with their great potential (Cagliari et al, 2016, p. 77/ 317).

“Reggio took inspiration from Piaget, the aim of teaching is to provide the conditions for learning” (Rinaldi, 2021, p. xviii). In education in A/NZ we had already learned that we need to differentiate learning for different needs through work such as such the learning powers of Guy Claxton and the Multiple Intelligences of Howard Gardner, for example, but we need to value and provide a more differentiated or multi worldview perspective approach in pedagogy, if we are to provide quality education in a super-diverse classroom. “The physical space can be defined as a language, which speaks according to precise cultural conceptions and deep biological roots [...] it is therefore a constituent element in the formation of thought” (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 53).

### **7.5 PBK's Contribution to co-construction**

Pedagogies for the super-diverse children need to take into account broader world views, such as that which Stephanie discovered at PBK. She was open to the alternative ontological and epistemological perspective of Joe's culture and put time into researching to develop her own understanding. This is an example of the POL & D in action as well. Teachers collaborating with indigenous and other ways of knowing and being, as opposed to

just the dominant neoliberal, white world view supports connection and collaboration across super-diverse cultures.

The social organisation of difference mechanism at play in the PBK example shows that the REI teachers used the REI POL & D (configuration) to shape the nature of the super-diverse Tongan child's learning through an encounter with his mother which opens up opportunities for Joe's special language of music to be part of his school day and to be shared with his friends and teachers. We witnessed how it enabled another way of participating in music at school, one where he could lead.

### **7.6 BP: The REI Pedagogy of Listening and Documentation**

#### **Teachers supporting super-diverse children to participate in a group after isolation during Covid19**

On my second visit to BP in Feb 2022, I joined teachers Sally and Ada in a lesson which I have chosen to share in order to describe an example of how REI teachers harness the PDL & D in the environment to support the coming together of a group of super-diverse children. Admittedly, the group is very small and it is supported by both a teacher and an atelierista, but I believe it is a good opportunity to magnify the origins of REI democratic group building through the PDL & D.

Malaguzzi talked about "the nido" as *terrain*, i.e. "a community authority" able to be an open field for welcoming children and families and where material and immaterial problems are open for reflection and discussion (Cagliari, 2016, p. 318). Readers could use the dynamics of what happens here, not to focus on the logistics in terms of group size etc, but as a magnified version of how teachers might consciously navigate their way through the kaleidoscope of decisions by listening to the children's super-diversity and arranging the group composition to develop a democratic group.

The essence of what drives democracy in the REA is the value of the group with the knowledge that one affects or shapes the other. It is why learning *with* the other, *the group*, or in a broader sense, within relationships, serves as the key vehicle for learning in RE inspired ECE's. With this knowledge the democratic element functions by upholding *inclusivity, equity and freedom, where no one participant dominates, oppresses or marginalises another*. It is a deliberate choice to 'construct together', an alternative to the neo liberal 'competitive' philosophy of learning (Rinaldi, 2021 Gothson, 2016).

Reggio provokes us to choose between societies oriented toward the individual in competition and societies based on the individual constructed with others, who seeks

out others [...] a political and economic choice that can influence the entire educational system but also the social system (Rinaldi, 2021, p. xxii/p.101).

At Bear Park, the current learning goal of teacher Sally was supported by atelierista Ada. The teachers had identified a need, which had transpired as a result of Covid19 lockdowns due to the children having spent long chunks of time away from preschool. They noticed that after the disruption of several Covid lockdowns, that the children needed to relearn to notice, engage with and relate to each other in learning groups, the skills required for the functioning of their participatory democracy. So the teachers decided to set up a learning experience “around a shared experience with something tangible,” (Ada) which was autumn leaves.

At this point I need to mention that it was a conscious choice by the wider team of Tui teachers to have only four group members for this series of lessons because they were interested in how the numbers of children in the group and the character of each, affected their interaction. The group included Albie, a special rights boy who benefitted from plenty of movement and space.

The teachers decided together that the large space of the performing arts room would be more supportive for group building, than the smaller atelier space, particularly for special needs boy Albie who needed room to move. REI teachers carefully considered the structuring of both the lesson and the learning in order to be CR to the super-diverse child.

It is in this spirit that we should view RE ‘environment as the third teacher’. Vea Vecchi says that she “wishes people understood that RE’s focus on the environment is about professional competency and a culture of inhabiting places, and not about luxury.” It is about designing the architecture of places, in order to enable flexibility of thought and of pedagogy (Vecchi, 2010, p. 95/ 97).

During the first lesson there were autumn leaves spread invitingly over the floor with which the children played. An OHP projected a reflection of the room over the whole of one wall, and this let the children see both the leaves and their body shapes enlarged and projected as they moved around and interacted with each other and the leaves. An oblong box of approximately 90 cm long was in the room, and this provided an opportunity for an alternative form of movement. After a while Ada also added the option of A3 pieces of card. The children collected leaves on their pieces of card and for the first time they began to work as a group, as they all spent about ten minutes busily dropping them into the box. I observed Ada the atelierista watching intently to see how the children would engage with the props she had prepared, and although she stood back letting them engage most of the time, she

unobtrusively joined in on the play when it seemed she could help facilitate their connections. At one point Albie was pushing the box around the room amongst the leaves and she joined him replicating his actions (with a mirror card) which helped him to move his focus from himself to noticing another person. She told me later that this was the skill of mimicking which helped build these kinds of connections.

On the back side of the card was a silver coating which acted like a mirror. Albie discovered himself in the mirror, and after acknowledging that Albie could see his own reflection, Ada orientated him to see the group in the background of his mirror as he was looking into it at his own image, saying, “can you see your friends in there?” Again, the teacher was noticing the child and finding ways to support him with the group's goal.

After about twenty minutes Sally set up one corner of the room with pieces of white A4 paper and grey pencils inviting the children to choose a leaf to draw. They all gravitated to this area and began sketching. Albie, who was quite happy in his own company, eventually moved from looking in his mirror and joined in with the rest of the group. The group had come together to sit in the same area and draw. The teachers prompted closer interaction between group members by talking about the children's drawings and making suggestions such as, “hold it up to the light” and, “beautiful line work...I can see a little curve there”, “what colour leaf are you drawing”, and “ah, I see you are colouring yours in.” The commenting encouraged them to look at each other's work.

Albie's attention was easily captured by other things, but with encouragement he began drawing, holding three pencils in one hand. Sally had to support Robyn to ask him to share one with her. As he began handing a pencil to Robyn, Patti also offered Robyn a pencil and Sally was able to highlight their sharing behaviour, “oh you are so kind to share your pencil”. Again, the teacher's comment drew the group together in a positive way. This served as a moment which facilitates positive group interaction. It was another example of the social organisation of difference in action, similar to the example of Arrowtown at the start of chapter 7.

The children drew and discussed their pictures with each other, and I thought to myself that somehow Albie's action of holding three pencils seemed to represent his feeling of being included in this learning group. While he was looking around and studying the others' leaf drawings, Sally once again drew the group's attention to each other saying, “you guys are inspiring each other so much, it's amazing”. The teachers took turns at working with different group members and/or supporting Albie to join the drawing. Ada noticed the lines Albie's pencil collection had incidentally made on his paper and her encouragement inspired

him to deliberately add some more to it. For a short while all of the children were drawing together, momentarily creating a calm shared group dynamic.

Later that day, Sally and Ada reflected on the lesson, and prepared for the next day, together in the atelier. Their conversation exemplified how they have both been listening to the children. It also demonstrated the value of collaborative teaching which is part of the REI professional structure, because they can learn from and support each other's different perspectives.

Ada said to Sally, “really, you have a very diverse group”.

Sally replied, “yes, and I am always trying to cater for each one”.

Ada, “exactly, and not just individual characters, but also individual interests - one doesn't want to play with the leaves and two really love them...”

Sally, “what I want to foster is that they pay more attention to what they and the others are doing, so they can draw on each other's strengths...”

Ada, “Yes, it's more about the children finding themselves within each other's different drawings ...finding a strategy where they each can adapt to the different scenarios, than about the subjectivity of , ‘I'm drawing a leaf’”.

Together the two teachers discussed the nature of the group: connectors, collaborators, compassion, empathy...levels of independence and confidence, and also how it worked nicely for some children, that they could also connect in their home language (Chinese). “Ashleigh is a bystander who doesn't know how to join in...and who doesn't like anything really tactile...she doesn't want to walk on the leaf, because she doesn't really like the texture” (Sally).

Ada, “But yesterday she had her feet in the leaves, and even when we were drawing, she was still playing in the leaves”.

Angie was gentle, “she really looks at the details and tries to draw them” (Sally).

“I noticed she was really drawing the serrations on the outside, so each leaf looked so different; the idea of being diverse is actually reflected in the group doesn't it?” (Ada).

Sally shared, “Albie was actually being very purposeful with the colours he got the yellow, because he was looking at the yellow leaves.”

Ada adds, “He also arranged the jars of colours like the rainbow”(Ada).

“Having the opportunity to express himself by visual representation is very powerful for him” (Sally).

They decided that the next day they would adapt the learning opportunity for the children to come together as a group in a new way, by providing a small round table where

the children could sit and draw their leaves. This also provided an alternative level to experience their drawing on. The RE literature explained the care RE teachers take with preparing the environment to support the children,

What determines the quality of a project is its capacity to transmit and support a certain image of the child, a child who has a 100L and the right to an environment that is rich, multifaceted, complex, well tended, beautiful” (Michele Zini, in Vecchi, p. 97; Rinaldi, 2006 p. 83 ), with the possibility of the terrain (including the design of furnishings, furniture and buildings) being an adaptable as part of this psyche, “*building a school of thought*” (Rinaldi, in Vecchi, p. 98). A place of “horizontal...” where all participants can manage this together, as opposed to a frame of domination. It all contributes towards the culture of childhood (Cagliari, p. 380/ 381).

The following day, the children entered the performing arts room to find what Ada had set up for them. The little table had a few clear glass jars of coloured pencils on top. Each jar was arranged with several pencils of the same colour. There was also room for a board on the table. This displayed a collection of leaves in graduated colours and shapes for the children to look at or draw. There were a few leaves scattered around the floor, but not as many as yesterday.

Ada had also arranged a collection of leaves on top of the OHP which Albie found he could move around with his hands at the same time he was visualising them enlarged on the wall. This really large image and the moment where he was looking at himself in the mirror had prompted Albie to get excited about seeing his reflection. He had made another connection outside of himself which then inspired him to begin enjoying running past the wall looking at his moving reflection. The leaves on the OHP were also enlarged, as were those of the other children when they moved in front of the screen. All of a sudden it was quite exciting as he was so happy to be noticing all of the movement, on a large scale. Albie’s energy got the other children enjoying the moment as well. As educators we were all intrigued by the way this alternate way of arranging for the goal of the lesson to be met, had worked as we watched them watching each other as giant reflections on the performing arts wall. During these activities the children were aware of each other's presence at the different activities but the teachers’ facilitation helped to draw the children’s attention toward each other, opening their awareness.



### 7.7 BP's Contribution to co-construction

The social organisation of difference mechanism at play in the BP's example showed that the REI teacher who was using the REI POL & D (configuration) was shaping the nature of the child's development through the encounter where they projected a belief in the super-diverse group of children as self-agent and competent.

As an example, the teacher/super-diverse child interactions involved the REI teacher as a researcher of children's interests and intelligences. The teachers were quite unobtrusive in the space, allowing the children the freedom to experiment and explore with the props and each other, but they moved in and out of the group, using techniques such as mimicking, or sitting at floor level, as acts of support as opposed to dominating the experience. They had set up the situation for the children to make the discoveries themselves. The space, the group members and the props (leaves, pencils, OHP, box and mirrors) were all pedagogical configurations which have contributed to the interactions that shape the growth of the group who had the opportunity to explore themselves in relation to the other. This was a close up micro-account of the teachers (representations) who had the responsibility of shaping the image of the child (encounters) through their learning experience about interacting in a group. This BP example made the POL & D visible. Once again this was a REI structural choice made in support of the super-diverse learner.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions and Implications

#### 8.1 Shaping the becoming of the Reggio-Inspired Teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand

The following elements helped to shape the becoming of the teacher and research as part of the professional development.

***Becoming Reggio Emilia Inspired.*** A teacher who is inspired by the REA is said to be ‘becoming’ REA inspired (REI), which means they acknowledge that they are always in the process of growing in relation to its principles and values. The teachers who took part in this research were REI practitioners prior to me meeting them. I too was a REI primary teacher. In this project we were becoming REI together, about the subject of the super-diverse child. As a researcher who was supporting the shaping of becoming, but also becoming REI myself meant that we learned from each other. The ethnographic methods enabled this to happen.

***Socio-Cultural Underpinnings.*** The framework Aotearoa New Zealand (A/NZ) early childhood education works within is the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum (NZ ECE) or Te Whāriki (TW). This research fits within the TW framework. The NZ ECE is socio-culturally based like the Reggio Emilia approach (REA). They both support relationship based pedagogy (May & Carr, 2015, p. 318). The teachers and I had an understanding that the REA should always be adapted to suit the context. This knowledge supported our conversations about adapting pedagogy to suit the children in their centres.

***Context.*** Te Whāriki is an uniquely New Zealand bicultural Curriculum, developed in a partnership between both parties to one of the documents which make up New Zealand’s constitution, the Treaty of Waitangi (May and Carr, 2015, p. 316). TW formed the shaping of our becoming REI teachers in this research, because of its commitment to provide quality education for all children, and our search to adapt pedagogy in order to help make this happen.

***Time.*** Time together was another element which supported our becoming REI. Both conversations via Zoom and onsite visits allowed us to get to know each other and develop trust. This helped our becoming REI when we eventually became more focused on reflective discussions where we were faced with thinking about our own social construct as teachers and what this contributes to the learning relationship.

***Theory - Practice.*** The professional development based on literature relevant to the study including super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007), culturally responsive pedagogies (CRPs) (Morrison et al., 2019), the REA and the REA’s principle of democracy (DEM) (Gothson,

2016). The literature was then complemented by the Reggio Emilia Inspired teachers' practical knowledge, their centre's particular Reggio Emilia Inspiration and their daily teaching experiences, which included professional collaboration. Through ethnographic research the theory-practice combination shaped our becoming.

How do teachers embed Reggio Emilia inspired approaches in A/NZ super-diverse preschools?

“How teachers and parents in an ECE in a super-diverse early childhood programme conceptualise and implement REA.”

## **8.2 Possibilities of Embedding Reggio Emilia Inspired Approaches in the NZ Super-diverse Educational Context**

The possibility of embedding REI approaches in A/NZ super-diverse preschools began its search with the idea that the REA *is* CRP because it is relationship based, it listens to the child and it seeks to both access and nurture the child's unique humanity. Through its system of principles and values teachers have the freedom to shape the educational environment in a way which supports the children in their care. This includes the democratic classroom (DEM), (Gothson, 2016).

The choice to use CRP in this research was due to the importance of the need to provide strong support for children from cultural constructs who are isolated, marginalised or oppressed, specifically in the A/NZ context, the super-diverse child and the super-diverse Māori child. CRPs “actively value and mobilise as resources the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship.” The characteristics of CRP's provide REI educators with an extra tool kit to use as a guide and also to reflect on their practice. Part of our becoming REI in this project was to embed RE pedagogies as CR in the super-diverse classroom.

The research findings are presented as REI projects because this was the frame that the learning was set in when undertaking the empirical research. Each centre's projects were authentic in that they were meaningful to the learners. Project based pedagogies are a feature of the REA and they are also a widely used approach in A/NZ educational pedagogy. They are also an approach that I have had a lot of experience with in my primary school teacher role and I recognize their value.

**The main findings were presented in their project(s) from across chapters 5, 6 and 7.**

In chapter 5 readers were introduced in a macro-account which highlighted each centre's particular REI inspiration in relation to the principle of the environment as the third teacher. Each centre had adapted pedagogy in relation to the learners in their context. Arrowtown Preschool's (A) inspiration was the natural environment and I was able to understand how pedagogy was inclusive of super-diverse learners through the bicultural curriculum. Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten's (PBK) inspiration was the CRP environment, where they were nurturing the learning of super-diverse kiwi/immigrant children. Bear Park's (BP) inspiration was the democratic environment in support of super-diverse Chinese/Kiwi children.

In chapter 6 the projects from each centre which had started in chapter 5, moved through to their conclusions. But the focus of this finding was to move in a little closer and take a look at each centre's REI inspiration in relation to the principle of the 100L within the bigger authentic, contextual project. I wanted to understand how using the children's uniqueness (difference or subjectivity) from an assets based perspective could be an adaptation used by the teachers as a positive conduit for group culture building, thereby increasing the individual super-diverse learners' support and feeling of inclusivity in the learning environment. This is characteristic of all the hopeful coding tools: REA, DEM and CRPs.

In Chapter 7's findings the focus became a more detailed picture of the way that RE's pedagogy of listening was CR to the super-diverse learner. These lessons gave us the opportunity to understand how the way the teacher chose to teach can shape the learning in a positive way for the super-diverse learner. The examples helped us to understand some of the key elements which supported learning for the super-diverse child.

### **8.3 Co-constructed Findings From Chapter 5**

**Possibilities of Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse ECE Contexts. The following are the webs co-constructed by the ethnographic threads, from each ECE in Chapter 5.**

The presence of the following descriptors within pedagogies makes them possibilities for REI adaptation and therefore supportive for the super-diverse child and super-diverse Māori child in A/NZ. The synthesis originated with deduction from the three hopeful approaches.

#### **Negotiation of difference from assets perspective**

Super-diverse children in the REI classroom were supported in their individuality, subjectivity and difference and their similarities from an assets perspective. Each respective centre reflected the image of the child as competent. For Arrowtown this was in the outdoors, as they supported the children's negotiation of boundaries. Pakuranga listened to the cultures and intelligences that the children brought to learning and for Bear Park in the group lesson which deliberately required the children to theorise, share and make plans for the same art project (Rinaldi, 2021, p.143; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 184; Gothson, 2006; Morrison et al., 2019, p.18).

### **The teachers used the pedagogy of listening and documentation (POL & D) to support the shaping of the identity of the competent child**

Arrowtown was using the outdoor environment to support new and existing families. They were growing children's awareness of being guardians of the local community. Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten was helping the children connect their past identities to their new ones. Bear Park was using the children's decision making processes within the group to support super-diverse children to have a voice (Cagliari et al., p.369; Indications, 2010, p. 10; Rinaldi, 2021, p. 89).

### **Critical thinking, especially 'activist' orientation.**

The pedagogy of each centre was deliberately connecting the children's learning to their real lives. Arrowtown children were engaging in the local community in purposeful ways. Pakuranga were making sense of their previous and new lives to understand both their physical place (new home) and also to develop a sense of belonging (psychological space). Bear Park were engaged in the practical negotiations of creating a purposeful shared project, requiring the contributions of each child (Morrison et al., 2019).

### **Reverence and responsibility for bicultural practice.**

The bicultural identity of the Arrowtown preschool experience was melded respectfully into the learning, language and singing, and the opportunity in the outdoor environment to enjoy these things. Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten had a sense of 'welcome to our bicultural place' as discussed with the teachers, and this was obvious in the choice of pedagogical approach. The Bear Park teacher carried a perspective whereby each child was encouraged to have a voice. She describes this in chapter 6. This was a deliberate intention because of her own personal experience with not feeling like she had the right to a voice as a Māori child who was alienated from her culture. But then this was flipped for her at university. Her experience deliberately feeds into the way she encourages all group members

to have their say (Te Whāriki, 2017; Rinaldi, 2021, p.122; Morrison et al., 2019; Gardner and Rinaldi, 2001, p. 45/46).

**Participatory democracies where migrant children "sit with us, be part of us and share what is unique to them" (Stephanie).**

The environment provided a sense of welcome at Arrowtown, where the teachers listened carefully to the children and encouraged them to develop their voice and agency. Existing children welcome new children. Pakuranga Baptist kindergarten has been involved in research on this topic and has written a paper (Lees & Ng, 2020). They have a strong understanding of the complexity of a culturally super-diverse classroom and community. Both Stephanie and Phoebe bring world-views related to immigrants moving to our bicultural A/NZ society, and therefore their practices are open to the Te Whāriki's intention to be inclusive of all cultures (Te Whāriki, 2017; Gothson, 2016; Gardner and Rinaldi, 2001; Indications, 2010, p. 10; Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 159).

**8.4 Co-constructed Findings From Chapter 6**

**Possibilities of Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse ECE Contexts.**

**The following are the webs co-constructed by the ethnographic threads, from each ECE in chapter 6.**

The presence of the following descriptors within pedagogies makes them possibilities for REI adaptation and therefore supportive for the super-diverse child and super-diverse Māori child in A/NZ. The synthesis originated with deduction from the three hopeful approaches.

**Awareness that the educational environment is shaping identity and social construct.**

It is important that teachers understand what shapes the identities and constructs of super-diverse children and also to be aware of their own because together these meet in the learning environment which has a 'cause and effect' relationship on the child's learning and potential. In other words, "teachers have to relate all the decisions to the kind of citizenship they support" (Gothson, 2016).

In each centre the teachers had an awareness of their part in shaping the super-diverse child's identity. This was partly because of their own life experiences which they brought to the learning relationship, and also it was part of the professional development conversations which the super-diversity research involved. The learning experiences opened the opportunity for dialogue about children's languages and life experiences in terms of their past and present homes. The teaching teams collaborated on the development of the learning experiences as

they progressed with an awareness of the super-diversity of the children they were providing for in their particular context.

The inclusion of families in the educational trajectory for some was an important part of the process, both in terms of regenerating marginalised, indigenous culture and with an awareness of shaping new super-diverse cultures, in teacher/child learning relationships, group relationships, the family and in Arrowtown's case, the community (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 318; Edwards et al., 2012, p. 339; Indications, 2010, p. 13; Rinaldi, 2021, p. 52/53; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 82; Wattchow & Brown, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Morrison et al., 2019).

### **Critical thinking, especially activist orientation.**

By listening to the 100L of the super-diverse child the teachers collaborated to provide multimodal learning opportunities. These were authentic in that they were related to the life worlds of the learners, and offered opportunities for the super-diverse children to posit themselves in the past, present and future. Teachers were all supporting the children to use the different languages and intelligences they brought to the classroom and encouraged them to construct knowledge with their peers (as opposed to knowledge transmission). The art project about an imaginary character who also came to live at Pakuranga provided a learning experience where the super-diverse immigrant children could work together on one project, while also exploring their similarities and differences.

The projects of the centres all connected to the children's families in some way. Either through conversation; during the Covid19 period at BP it was through digital platforms. Arrowtown and PBK were involved in projects outside the centre with wider community networks. Each centre had a level of engagement with super-diverse children's families regarding cultural identity. This included both the creation of new super-diverse cultures and the regeneration of indigenous culture (Cagliari et al, 2016, p. 392; Edwards et al., 2012, p.375; Rinaldi, 2021, p.177/17; Morrison et al., 2019).

### **Reverence and responsibility for bicultural practice.**

Te Whāriki facilitates reverence for bicultural A/NZ. At PBK they are informed by the bicultural worldview of walking in two worlds, but also by the super-diverse demographic. They have a strong sense of the balance of how these perspectives can live together respectfully. The teachers encouraged the children to speak their first languages and English, and employed teachers who could provide learning in various languages, giving super-diverse children the chance for learning in the languages with which they were most familiar. Sometimes the teacher structured learning groups with children who all spoke the same language and at other times they deliberately involved children of different languages.

REI teachers seek to identify super-diverse children's unique languages and they aim to build on these through the group learning experiences, including materials, where they encourage children to construct knowledge together (as opposed to knowledge transmission).

The teachers understood their part in shaping the super-diverse child's identity, and how the learning experiences they were providing in this environment were important, resulting in the positive effect of learning potential. This included regeneration and the shaping of new culture. Each centre maintained a strong connection to bicultural A/NZ, but this was identified in quite different ways (Te Whāriki, 2017; Rigney and Kelly, 2023).

### **Participatory democracies where everyone is welcome.**

The families of super-diverse children were closely connected to the centres through their relationships with the teachers. This enabled teachers to understand the children on a deeper level. The families had a voice in the shaping of the child's education.

Teachers used their authentic project based learning contexts for super-diverse children to follow their interests, participate in the wider community and to have learning conversations which were inclusive and welcoming. They openly faced topics such as exploring super-diverse children's similarities and differences. REI teachers became very much aware of the impact of their own life experience on what they contribute to the politics of the learning relationship (Rinaldi and Gardner, 2001, p. 45; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 140/175).

## **8.5 Co-constructed Findings From Chapter 7**

### **Possibilities of Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse ECE Contexts.**

**The following are the webs co-constructed by the ethnographic threads, from each ECE in Chapter 7.**

The presence of the following descriptors within pedagogies makes them possibilities for REI adaptation and therefore supportive for the super-diverse child and super-diverse Māori child in A/NZ. The synthesis originated with deduction from the three hopeful approaches.

### **REI Pedagogy: The Environment as the Third Teacher**

Reggio Emilia pedagogy is a bridge. It must be specifically contextualised and adapted in order to be open to support the super-diverse. The REI pedagogical environment as the third teacher, or the environment harnessed by REI teachers across the centres provided the following insights.

The examples of learning in the outdoors shared in Arrowtown's Nature Explorers and PBK's Outdoor Explorers programmes taught us that the natural environment provided

an engaging, authentic and powerful environment for learning. Moving out of the centre/school into the local and natural environment provided more opportunities to connect super-diverse children's families/whānau and the wider community into their education. It gave parents and experts such as elders the opportunity to take the lead in learning where they were experts. Such opportunities were enabled by teachers who were open researchers of the children's lives and who therefore welcomed the development of close relationships with the parents in order to strengthen opportunities for the children's learning.

Pedagogies for super-diverse children took into account new and existing, broader world views which the families and children brought to the classroom. Stephanie's team lived this experience daily at PBK. They were open to the alternative ontological and epistemological perspective of Joe's culture and put time into researching with his family to develop their own understanding. They welcomed what the family offered the learning situation. Stephanie also researched to grow her own deeper understanding of how Joe appeared to be engaged in the classroom. Respecting the cultural repertoires and intelligences of the children was about opportunities to learn through these cultures, not just about them.

Pedagogies for the super-diverse leverage knowledge from that which is already existing to build new knowledge in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; p.6 Rincon- Gallardo, 2019). This approach deliberately contests deficit assumptions about super-diverse children.

We learned that taking learning outside the classroom, particularly into nature also had bigger picture implications. Being in close proximity with the outdoors enhanced children's connection with the natural world. It provided a strong opportunity for teachers to listen to and nurture the wellbeing of the children and their families. In this research it was vitally important in fostering a sense of place and belonging for the super-diverse child. Teachers such as Phoebe balanced this beautifully as she provided space for PBK's immigrant children to dialogue and reflect on their past and present, all the while establishing roots to the now, in their new place and with their new friends, inside the Kindergarten family and community. Addressing well-being first established a better platform for engaging in learning (Professor Sebastian Lipina, PhD Seminar 16.2. 2022).

Ada explained that learning in relation with nature had a deeper level of implication. Learning with nature gave the children a chance to develop a reverence for it and an affinity to it. Izzy described the sense of kaitiakitanga/ guardianship the Arrowtown children developed due to the decision by their community to maintain the older children's learning context away from the site of the local school and closer to the natural environment. We all

knew that the future of the planet needs human beings with these values. Decisions like this made a political statement about the deeper values of the community, and as we witnessed, they certainly harnessed it in a way which both nurtured the children's learning, well-being, regeneration of culture while also contributing to Te Whāriki's goals and that of the Ministry of Education, in terms of Māori children and newcomers to the community.

The learning which was based on the environment as the third teacher in this research also included opportunities to participate as a unique super-diverse child in a democratic setting. Ruby, Margot, Sally and Ada's BP team gave us a close up view of the teachers and atelierista's skilful navigation of weaving together the webs of the children's 100L in a 'horizontal' way. This approach was opposite to the 'teacher filling up the child with knowledge' type pedagogy. The voice of the child guided the learning pathway of the group. Each member contributed to the decision making process because the teachers listened to the children. This REI approach answered the question which humanistic educators ask: 'Who's to say what knowledge counts as valid and valuable'? The teachers had the courage to be vulnerable about their own practice and were open to sharing this so as to listen more closely to each other, to step into unknown, messy, fluid spaces, to work on the 'edge' where their practice is creating as well as informing the research - all seemed to be capabilities that were in common across the teachers.

The outdoor and nature based learning experiences shared by the centres also gave us insight into how teachers can set up the learning situation for the children to make the discoveries themselves. This included the space, the group members and the props. Examples such as the leaves in the performing arts room at BP, the slack-line and floating sticks and lupin dam at Arrowtown and the weekly community singing at PBK were all configurations (Vertovec's social constructs) which contributed to the interactions that shaped the growth of the individual and the group who had the opportunity to explore themselves in relation to the other, including the environment.

Pedagogies for the super-diverse involve learning experiences which are meaningful and authentic. They harness REI approaches such as 100L and Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. The co-constructed knowledge built by the research team offered insight which suggested that a pedagogical approach to the epistemology of knowledge in the A/NZ ECE context contributed to the following general summary.

REI CR DEM pedagogies which are contextualised to the setting can engage the child, their family/whānau and the community in a holistic pedagogical approach. Teachers can harness the environment in a way which opens access to many unique voices and

perspectives. They work with children and groups in a democratic way, offering the freedom of choice and voice. This creates an environment which nurtures wellbeing, welcome and belonging for the super-diverse child. It supports them to be, “super, super, super diverse” (Carla Rinaldi, personal communication, 2020).

## **8.6 Co-constructed Findings From Chapter 7**

### **Possibilities of Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse ECE Contexts**

#### **REI Relationships. The Pedagogy of Listening and documentation.**

The REI teacher of the super-diverse child progresses learning by role modelling and crafting the bridging of individual and group differences, within democratic, socially just and positive pedagogies.

The REI teacher who pays close attention by using the REI POL & D configuration is shaping the nature of the child’s development through an encounter where they project a belief in the super-diverse group of children as self-agent and competent. This is the REI principle of the image of the competent child in action.

The competent super-diverse child has a right to equitable access to CR pedagogy and the REI teacher is very much a direct route to this possibility. As we witnessed, the REI teacher enables agency for the child in their learning. This is because as an ‘open researcher’ the REI teacher understands that there are many rich truths to people’s life worlds and not simply one dominant mono, white world version. In the super-diverse era the possibilities are fluid, meaning that the opportunity for exciting, creative learning pathways offers much hope for inclusion. This is exciting for all those children who have recently had their own cultures, experiences and ways of knowing and being marginalised and oppressed, where they have been asked to leave who they really are outside the classroom door, isolated.

In the co-constructed pedagogical examples provided by the centres in the research, the teacher/super-diverse child interactions involved the REI teacher deliberately seeking to uncover and understand and expand on the children’s interests and intelligences. However, the REI teachers were also reasonably unobtrusive in this space, allowing democratic space and freedom for the children to experiment and explore, to be self-agent.

We observed how teachers provided strategies such as props and scaffolded group dynamics and techniques employing horizontal pedagogies. Techniques such as mimicking, or sitting at floor level, were very much acts which demonstrated support as opposed to being ones where teachers dominated the experience. The collaborative damming of water engineered by the creation of a ‘fairy bridge’ and observed supportively, yet unobtrusively,

by kaiako/ teacher Nicky was another example (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 410; Edwards et al., 2012, p.234; Rinaldi, 2006, p. 112/113).

**Family and community relationships** are also at the heart of possibilities for adapting pedagogy for the super-diverse classroom. In order to do this the teacher validated the children by first listening to them. REI teachers like Phoebe at PBK were genuinely curious about her super-diverse children's life experiences, interests and knowledge, demonstrating this through her generous, compassionate and empathetic attitude.

This was sometimes able to be enhanced by connecting with the learners' family/whānau members so that they could build a more holistic understanding of their life-worlds. We witnessed how this changed the whole trajectory of the learning process at Arrowtown Preschool. Here REI teachers used the REI POL & D configuration to shape the nature of the Mōkihi project as a direct result of Nicky's close, deliberately intentional identity-shaping relationship with the families of super-diverse Māori children. The vulnerability of saying that she was on a similar journey herself was an encounter which directly affected the kaiako/whānau relationship.

Additionally, this vulnerability was in evidence with her collegial relationship with her peers, Izzy, Frankie, Rebecca and Florence, whereby they were able to sustain a critical, yet pivotal conversation about how to move forward with the learning project. This was carried out in a way that was very respectful of each teacher's views, but which ultimately came back to what was important to the super-diverse learners. It seemed to be very reflective of the relationships which went on behind the scenes in REI centres as I witnessed teams both problem solving together but also caring for each other in the process. This configuration is very distant from the single teacher in a single cell who is removed from professional support, including possibilities to get alternative views on things. But I do know from experience, observations and challenges in ethnographic research that it requires all participants to welcome vulnerability, fun, trust, mistakes and openness to others. This takes effort, time and reflective teachers who are comfortable with change. It is not easy. Rather it reflects the idea in the African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child", within this professional village.

### **8.7 Co-constructed Findings: Challenges**

#### **Challenges to Adapting REI Approaches in A/NZ Super-Diverse Educational Context**

The research also provides insight into challenges for adaptation of REI pedagogies in A/NZ super-diverse educational contexts.

Using Vertovec's social organisation of difference model (Vertovec, 2021) we know the politics of the teacher are pivotal in determining how the choice of pedagogy and their image of the child in the classroom are able to progress children's learning positively and by association societies' rights to access to freedom and democracy (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 5; Rinaldi, 2021, p. xx). In the era of the super-diverse child who brings new complexities, identities, social-constructs and cultures, teachers could perhaps see themselves as cultural ethnographers of children who, through the politics of the pedagogies they choose, provide access to learning relationships based on democracy and freedom.

The research context is A/NZ where the literature and our Ministry of Education identifies challenges for teachers which are the result of unresolved systemic inequities. These are representations which sit in the background and contest our nation's access to democracy (Ritchie, 2012).

Fortunately the rise of super-diversity increases the challenge to the non-negotiable one world view; and the teachers in this research demonstrate that a pluralistic worldview or in RE terms, the 100L, needn't be a deficit in society. "Teachers do the work of the nation" (Rigney, 2022, personal communication). Vertovec's social organisation of difference model helps to show that teachers hold the power to influence education in alternate directions. The way they disseminate power shapes the nation. The responsibility is privileged. Many people who have been through the education system are acutely aware of this. The teacher has ultimate responsibility for guiding the learning process and group decision making regarding next steps. How they choose to do so is political (Cagliari et al., 2016).

The teachers in this study reflected on how their own early educational experiences affected and shaped the responsibility with which they now view their work as a teacher within the learning relationship. They provided insight which showed they were open to a broader world view of the children in their care. In the super-diverse environment they have reported, even after the research was finished, that understanding the child as super-diverse provided a fascinating lens to think about complexity in education. They reinforced the understanding that a significant part of the teaching/ learning process involved their own reflection which included checking that the ontological, epistemological and axiological pedagogical philosophies *that they are using* align with ideas of democracy, equity, social justice and freedom.

The research finds that within the free space of A/NZs Te Whāriki curriculum, REI pedagogy provides options for ways to confront systemic injustice because teachers have the opportunity to make a choice to use pedagogy based on freedom and democracy.

The following key considerations and angles of influence sit behind the more nuanced findings which have just been shared in chapter 8, as revealed by the ethnographic methodology.

REI teachers in this research were pivotal in developing an environment which is responsive to the super-diverse child. Reggio Emilia Inspired pedagogy is a bridge which can support the goals of Te Whāriki in its quest to be culturally responsive to the super-diverse child. Awareness that one's image, and rights of the child are a reflection of one's own social construct, which has also been shaped by super-diverse life experiences, ontologies, epistemologies and axiology is key. Professional development and family and community opportunities, which provide trusted group dynamics for teachers/people to explore understandings and subjectivities can develop an openness to transformative dialogue and meaningful engagement in learning.

Finally, to conclude, a big part of progressing an assets based perspective in the classroom is RE's pedagogy of listening. How we listen to each other's super-diversity shapes trajectories.

I remember the moment in my 2019 class when a subgroup of the children turned to face each other, of their own accord and initiated a conversation where each felt safe enough to share their own personal, and unique perspective. There are children who arrive in the classroom knowing how this is done, because their families have supported them to grow this capacity. But for the many who don't, they have the right to the opportunity to experience and practise the openness of listening to others ideas and ways of being, so that they can ultimately support each other to build knowledge and understanding together. Skills the world needs, now. Rights that the super-diverse child needs now.

The final ethnographic account I will share is a small snippet where Atelierista Ada is working with her ECE children to develop this skill of listening through music.

They were in the performing arts room at BP. Initially a group lesson involved the children making and listening to the sounds made on their own homemade stringed instruments. At the end of the lesson Ada produced a guitar and a harp. Two of the boys from the group chose to have a turn. One sat before the guitar which lay on the ground in front of him. The other was behind the harp, which was being propped up by Ada. They each practised plucking the strings and listening to the sounds they made. Eventually they each became aware of the sound made by the other. Ada was listening too; she suggested that they try and find the same sound on their different instruments. Eventually they found a meeting place. It was fascinating to watch because although the experience was about listening, first

to the music produced by self, and then to that of the Other. It also seemed to open up, more broadly, to be about the nuances of sound and musical languages. At a deeper level it represented interdisciplinarity as sound, music, the physical experience and learning in relation with another, came together.

In my mind I saw this as a metaphor for one listening to the Other in a completely open way; they had to be present in the moment. They had to block other judgements and assumptions, and attune to the plucking of one sound. The super-diverse children had alternate turns at plucking strings. While they did this they looked at each other and at Ada, seeming to be searching for a meeting point. I thought that the metaphor seemed to express the opportunity REI teachers use with the pedagogy of listening. Not just listening to self, but also listening to the Other; hearing the uniqueness of each super-diverse child, but also reaching a point through cultural responsiveness and democracy where a connection is made.

### **8.8 Reflection**

After sharing the possibilities and challenges of adapting REA pedagogies to be culturally responsive in support of children in A/NZ super-diverse ECEs I would like to conclude with a small reflection.

The super-diverse child matters. Every child matters. All children are super-diverse. The super-diverse children in the Reggio Inspired ECE settings in this research enjoyed profoundly rich and supportive learning experiences. Harold Gothson regularly reminded me, “try and use your critical eye,” others can learn from this significant challenge that teachers face. I could see the challenges, but the way that REI ECE teachers handled them, not least because they were productively functioning teams seemed to make it so much easier. I was very fortunate to observe super-diverse children being treated like they matter as human beings, and that the learning they experience was carefully crafted to support them in many fun, playful, engaging and thoughtful ways.

Although this research is based in early childhood education, the ideas of contextualised, culturally responsive, authentic, democratic and multimodal REI learning opportunities which centre the child as agents at the heart of their own meaning making and learning processes- including coming to know and respect who they are as people and as learners in relation to the other, is the kind of educational situation which could be contextualised into any setting, including family and community. This is because the idea comes back to relationships/ whanaungatanga.

Our children deserve the best and we must guard against teaching which eats away at children's rights to be listened to. It is profoundly important that we gather those who have (and remain) isolated up into educational hands and together lift them up. It is the right of all super-diverse children to have quality education. We must hold onto the notion that investment through experience and relationship is the most powerful investment and very distant from the trappings of neoliberalism. Teachers, as cultural ethnographers, do the work of the nation. I have witnessed that the Reggio Emilia Inspired teachers in this research, in Aotearoa/New Zealand support each other to do this- they co construct together. A post-colonial education looks different. Difference is an asset. How we look is what we see.

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