

Pedagogical Narrations:  
An Outline for a Guided Workshop

by

James McGran  
Diploma of Early Childhood Education, Centennial College, 2006  
BCYC, University of Victoria, 2013

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Pedagogical narrations hold a status of importance in the *Early Learning Framework* (2019), but there seems to be a different reality of pedagogical narrations in frontline early childhood education practice. This project is an attempt to help bridge theory with practice by offering early childhood educators a training resource that can be used either by the individual educator or with a group of educators. Based on the work done as an early childhood educator at Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, Pearkes Building, this training resource is grounded in professional experiences for other professional early childhood educators who wish to develop their practice of pedagogical narrations. Island Health served as a community partner for this project.

*Keywords:* pedagogical narrations, process, training resource, workshop

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To my children, Conor, Mira, Saya – it’s a strange world we live in, I know. My job is to play with children, which inherently means, I’m not always there to play with you. My educational path has led me to study children, while I should be spending more time being with you. You have given up so much without even knowing there was something to give up – you’ve just come to know that your dad *has homework to do*. I wonder what this experience will influence you to become, as I relish watching you grow into who you are.

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## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to all the professional early childhood educators who wish to go beyond.

This graduate degree is dedicated to my late grandfather, Patrick 'Nandad' McGran, who gave me a passion for learning and modelled appreciation and honour for hard work.

This graduate degree is also dedicated to my late father, Noel 'Dad' McGran, who encouraged me to continually search my own path while guiding me with inherited values.

## Introduction and Rationale

As a pedagogical practice imported from Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017), *pedagogical narration* is a process (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Atkinson & Biegun, 2017) that uses documentation to develop pedagogy and practice (Rinaldi, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015) and to make learning visible (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Synonymous with terms used in other jurisdictions, such as pedagogical documentation, learning stories, and action research, *pedagogical narration* is the term used in the province of British Columbia (B.C.) (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009) to describe the pedagogical practice of documenting and building curriculum from children's questions, learning, stories, and any other *ordinary moments* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019) in the child's day.

From being introduced in the provincial publication, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009), pedagogical narrations are now "central to the vision" (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 3) of the newest edition of the *Early Learning Framework*. With the level of importance that pedagogical narrations seem to have within the provincial framework, it would be prudent to also place the same level of importance on ensuring early childhood educators understand what a pedagogical narration is and how to implement this pedagogical tool in practice. Having a resource for professional development and training would benefit the practice and profession of early childhood educators in the province of B.C.

As a frontline early childhood educator, myself, I have experienced the daily ongoings of early childhood educational settings in Toronto, Ontario; Gifu, Japan; and Victoria, B.C. Since returning to Canada and working in Victoria, B.C., I have engaged in many pedagogical conversations with other frontline early childhood educators, especially regarding the topic of pedagogical narration. From my experiences and the conversations with other educators, it seems pedagogical narrations are hardly

being used by early childhood educators at all. And when they are being used, pedagogical narrations seem to lack a variety and depth of perspective with a presentation that reads like an opinion-based musing of a particularly vogue subject and not truly meant as a tool for children's immediate experiential learning. From the conversations with frontline early childhood educators about the subject, pedagogical narrations seem to be more of a source of distress contributing to a sense of failure or unworthiness than a method for liberating a curriculum or furthering children's experiences of a given subject. With early childhood educators struggling to implement the practice of pedagogical narration, a general confusion regarding the process, a possible misunderstanding regarding the purpose, and a general lack of initiative for implementing the practice, I hope a professional development resource will provide a pedagogical and experiential compass to equip other professional early childhood educators with enough knowledge and understanding to help them initiate their own process and practice of pedagogical narration.

## Literature Review

This section includes a review of the current and extant literature about *pedagogical narrations*, a term used in the context of early childhood education in the province of B.C., Canada. Pedagogical narrations were introduced to the early childhood field in B.C. in 2009 in the provincial publication, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice*. For the purposes of this literature review, what is considered *current*, includes materials that were published on this topic from 2009 forward. Literature prior to 2009 includes materials that describe the educational project of Reggio Emilia, as well as the philosophical and pedagogical influences that helped to shape the practice of pedagogical narration. The keywords used to conduct this review included: pedagogical narration, British Columbia, early childhood education, process, resources, purpose, use of, and benefits. The searches were conducted using the University of Victoria library's online search engine, Summon 2.0, and the Google Scholar database. Along with the library's search engine and the database, the reference lists of academic articles were also used to gather literature resources. Relevancy of literature was based on the title and, when available, the abstract of the source. Other sources came from the reference lists of the authors from B.C. Altogether, 28 sources were reviewed, including provincial government publications, chapters of edited books, articles that interpret research, articles that review and interpret theory, and articles that function as descriptive reports.

The literature review is organized thematically using a combination of predetermined and emergent themes. The first section, the *history and context of pedagogical narrations*, is a theme that emerged from the literature. Considering the chronological relevance of this theme to providing a background on this topic, the literature review opens with this section. Once the historical and contextual background is set, *what is a pedagogical narration/documentation?* is a predetermined theme used to demonstrate how the concept, *pedagogical narration*, is being defined in the literature.

The *purpose of pedagogical narrations* is an emergent theme that illustrates *why* pedagogical narrations are used in early learning settings, and this theme is divided into four subthemes: *pedagogical narration as an educational tool for learning and development*; *pedagogical narration as a means for communication*; *pedagogical narration for validation*; and, *pedagogical narration as a political tool*. The *process of doing pedagogical narrations* is a predetermined theme that examines an example of a process used in Reggio Emilia and a process as presented in the *Early Learning Framework* in B.C. And lastly, in order to determine what authors have stated, explicitly or implicitly, about the final theme, a review of the *resources needed to do pedagogical narrations* is a predetermined theme that was examined.

### **History and Context of Pedagogical Narrations**

The practice of pedagogical narrations has its roots in the pedagogical documentation practices of the pre-primary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017). To understand the advent of pedagogical narrations, it is important to consider the historical context that provoked the impetus to create an educational setting where pedagogy, psychology, and culture (Rinaldi, 2006) triangulated to serve the social and educational values needed to support this pedagogical practice. This next section will serve the function of providing that historical context.

The Second World War had just ended in Europe, and Northern Italy, where the city of Reggio Emilia is situated, was in the process of being liberated (Moss, 2016). The values of “solidarity, social justice, peace, [and] democracy” (Moss, 2016, p. 3) spearheaded social and political movements as a response to a society that had been suppressed for years by the fascist government of the dictator Benito Mussolini (Neville, 2014); a government that had also enlisted the country in World War Two, as a member of the Rome-Berlin Axis powers which included Germany, Italy, and later, Japan (Neville, 2014). With the defeat of the Axis and the fall of the Mussolini government, however, there grew a hope for

social renewal in Italy (Moss, 2016). As noted by Renzo Bonazzi, the mayor of Reggio Emilia from 1962 to 1976,

Mussolini and the fascists made us understand that obedient human beings are dangerous human beings. When we decided to build a new society after the war, we understood that we needed to have schools in which children dared to think for themselves, and where children got the conditions for becoming active and critical citizens (Bonazzi, n.d.; as cited in Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii).

With this sentiment in mind, and in the spirit of cooperation, active participation, and a hope for the future (Moss, 2016), the local community of Reggio Emilia “assum[ed] responsibility for the education of its young children” (Moss, 2016, p. 7) and started its first school. The school was open, not only to children and their families, but also to the “local communities and all citizens” (Moss, 2016, p. xiv). Further, it was recognized that schooling “is a system of relations and communications embedded in the wider social system” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114) and this recognition allowed the education to be relevant and “intensely local” (Moss, 2016, p. xxvi). Based on the vision of “democracy and equality” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii), characterised by “connections and relations” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. xi) with a belief in the values of “cooperation and solidarity” (Moss, 2016, p. xvii), the schools of Reggio Emilia offered an approach to education

based on adults listening rather than speaking, where doubt and amazement are welcome factors along with scientific inquiry and the deductive method of the detective. It is an approach in which the importance of the unexpected and the possible are recognized (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 115).

Loris Malaguzzi was “the guiding genius” (Gardner, 1998, p. xv) and inspired the pedagogy of the new public schools of Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2006). These schools offered an educational experience that

aimed to engage children, families, and the local community (Moss, 2016), and, as Malaguzzi, himself, stated, to “get out from under this big blanket of conformism and passivity, and re-discover the desire to think and plan and work together” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 42). With these values and a desire for action, Loris Malaguzzi guided the pedagogical experience of the schools in Reggio Emilia for the next three decades (Rinaldi, 2006), reminding many that “another world is possible” (Moss, 2016, p. xxvi).

Loris Malaguzzi, who worked closely with the professional educators (Moss, 2016), believed that education played an important role in creating a better world to live in (Moss, 2016) and followed a vision of building schools that were “value-based and relevant” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii). With an affinity for delving into new disciplines and models (Moss, 2016) coupled with a deep appreciation for uncertainty, wonder, and amazement of the unexpected (Moss, 2016), Loris Malaguzzi was able to “[see] the connectedness of everything” (Moss, 2016, p. xvi). This perspective and skillset combined to help Malaguzzi create a school designed to capitalize on children’s natural tendency to explore and question (Dahlberg, 2016), and to develop a practice of pedagogy that would come to be known around the world (Gardner, 1998). Malaguzzi ingrained two important habits in the pedagogical culture of the schools. The first was, “to document so as to be able to reflect, dialogue and make meaning; [the second], to conserve, so as to be able to go back and to re-cognise” (Moss, 2016, p. xx); that is, to have an aspect, or a moment, of the daily happenings/curriculum preserved through documentation for the learner and/or documenter to revisit that which was documented to be able to think about it, become aware of it, or know it again from a different perspective. These habits served to promote and strengthen the skills of observation, dialogue, communication, and joint problem-solving, which, in turn, formed the foundation for the pedagogical practice of documentation (Edwards et al., 1998).

### **What is Pedagogical Narration/Documentation?**

The purpose of this section is to review how pedagogical narration/documentation is defined in the literature. The analysis of the definitions that I undertook was primarily semantic and comparative. Though it may be noted, this section does not necessarily focus on whether a particular aspect (i.e., process) of pedagogical narration has been proven to work, or is grounded in empirical evidence.

*Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009), a document that supplements the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2008), introduces pedagogical narration to the field of early childhood education in B.C. as:

the process of observing, recording, and, individually and collectively, interpreting a series of related ordinary moments in your practice. The process should be ongoing, cyclical, and based on the art of critical reflection on the part of a community of learners (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13).

The most recent publication of the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) defines a pedagogical narration to be:

the process of noticing and collecting moments from daily practice and sharing these with colleagues, children, and families to make children's learning processes and inquiries, as well as educators' pedagogical choices, visible and open to interpretation and reflection (B.C. Ministry of Education, p. 3).

There are similarities in these two definitions, such as the components of the process and the use of term *moments* to describe what an educator is working with. Both definitions begin by stating that pedagogical narration is a process and suggest that those who engage in the narration process should: *observe, record, and interpret a series of related ordinary moments in your practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009); and, *notice, collect and share moments from daily practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). And, while both definitions appear to have similarity in their intention with also the requirement

for background knowledge to avert misinterpretation, there are also differences between the two definitions. The language used in both definitions contain subtle differences. The language in the 2009 version seems more clinical, active and in alignment with the language of developmental psychology. The language in the 2019 version seems more passive and without the language of developmental psychology. Both provincial publication versions of the definition of pedagogical narration, however, are similar in that they both use terms that are slightly ambiguous and may lead a critical reader to ask such questions as: Is *ordinariness* alone the underlying factor that would render *a series of moments* to be considered *related*? And, how would a *noticed moment* qualify to become important enough to *collect* and *share*?

The definition provided by the *Early Learning Framework* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019) expands on the definition offered by *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009), in that it speaks to who is involved in the process, as well as incorporating a few reasons for doing pedagogical narrations. While the 2009 version of the definition suggests that the interpretation stage of the process is *an individual* and *a collective* effort, the 2019 version clarifies that the interpretation of and reflection on the *noticed moments* should be done with *colleagues, children, and families*. The most recent definition provides a reason for doing pedagogical narration by suggesting that the purpose of this activity is “to make children’s learning processes and inquiries, as well as educators’ pedagogical choices, visible and open to interpretation and reflection” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 51).

Outside of these provincially-published works, the academic literature from authors based in, or connected to, B.C. also offers definitions of pedagogical narration/documentation. In chapter 7 of their seminal work, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation*, under the subtitle, *what is pedagogical documentation*, Dahlberg et al. (2007) describe pedagogical documentation as content within a process, and as the process itself. The content is defined as the “material which

records what the children are saying and doing, the work of the children, and how the pedagogue relates to the children and their work” (p. 144). This *content* can take the form of photographs, children’s artwork and creations, conversations and inquiries that have been recorded as text, audio or video (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Rinaldi, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Atkinson and Biegun, 2017; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019), and this content then informs the process.

Pedagogical narration as a process, as defined by Dahlberg et al. (2007) involves reflecting on the, previously outlined, *content* “in a very vigorous, methodical and democratic way” (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 145), although it is not stated what this means in a practical way. That is, no directions are given regarding how to process in this very vigorous, methodical, and democratic way. Presaging the wording in the definition from the provincial 2009 publication, Dahlberg et al. (2007) state the *reflection* stage of pedagogical narrations “will be done both by the pedagogue alone and by the pedagogue in relationship with others” (p. 145). The word, *others*, like the term, *a collective*, provides little in the way of a concrete definition or practical guidance to the professional early childhood educator. Then, as echoed in the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) that now defines who is involved - *colleagues, children and families* – Dahlberg et al. (2007) list who these *others* may be “—other pedagogues, [pedagogical facilitators], the children themselves, their parents, [and] politicians” (p. 145). The obvious difference between the lists of participants in these definitions is that Dahlberg et al. (2007) have *politicians* listed as a group meant to interact with pedagogical narrations. There is, however, no explanation for how an early childhood educator would go about involving a politician in the pedagogical narration process within this subsection of the book, nor in the example of a pedagogical documentation provided that immediately follows.

Also writing from a B.C. perspective, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) provide a more concise definition of pedagogical narration: “simply put, [pedagogical narration] is a way to make children’s learning visible as educators make decisions about curriculum development” (p. 114). Unlike the

provincial publications (2009, 2019) and Dahlberg et al. (2007), there is no mention of who is involved beyond the educator and, indirectly, the children. As well, there are also no clear markers of process as in the aforementioned definitions other than *making learning visible* and *making decisions about curriculum*. This definition of a pedagogical narration, however, very closely resembles the definition set forth by Rinaldi (2006), which reads: “Most simply expressed, pedagogical documentation is a process for making pedagogical (or other) work visible and subject to interpretation, dialogue, confrontation (argumentation) and understanding” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 12). Both definitions begin with the same notification of being expressed in *simplest* terms, and continue parallel to express pedagogical narration as being a process. After this, however, the definitions veer in their expression of purpose. While Rinaldi (2006) states the purpose of pedagogical documentation is to make (whatever) pedagogical work the focus of further exploration, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) concretely tie the pedagogical process back into *curriculum development*.

Each of these definitions outline a process for doing pedagogical narration/documentation. Overall, the descriptions of the process are very similar, with some definitions breaking the process up into three steps and other definitions expressing the process with one general step. What it is the educators are working with in the process of pedagogical narration/documentation is also very similar in each of the definitions provided, not only regarding content, but also in the ambiguity of the word chosen to describe the *what*. When describing *who* is involved in the process of pedagogical narration, only the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) and the second half of the definition provided by Dahlberg et al. (2007) provide a concrete list of who is expected to be participate in the process. The provincial publication that first introduces pedagogical narrations in 2009, uses terms that are so general that further explanation is needed, while Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) only lists the *educator* as the main participant and implies the child is also part of the process, albeit passively or indirectly. And the concise definition provided by Rinaldi (2006) does not reference who is involved in the process at all; reading

further into the text is required to know who is said to be involved. And finally, whereas *Understanding the Early Learning Framework* (2009) and Dahlberg et al. (2007) provide no connection to the goal of pedagogical narration within the definition they each provide, the three other literature sources directly or indirectly list the development of curriculum or children’s learning interests as the goal of pedagogical narration/documentation.

Having a comprehensible definition of pedagogical narration is important to providing professional early childhood educators with enough of a description to guide their work, but also with enough conceptual parameters to help avoid misinterpretation. The definitions of pedagogical narration reviewed each refer to a process and what the focus or material of the process is. Four of the definitions state who is involved in the process, and only three of the five definitions reviewed state the goal of pedagogical narration within the definition. Outside of the definition of pedagogical narration, another way to understand what pedagogical narration is to look at what authors describe as its purpose. Knowing the purpose of doing pedagogical narration may help provide direction to the professional early childhood educator.

### **The Purpose and Value of Pedagogical Narration**

For the practice of pedagogical narration to move from being imported from Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017) to becoming “central to the vision” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 3) of the newest edition of the *Early Learning Framework*, it can be argued that there must be some value in engaging in this pedagogical practice. Upon review of the literature, the *value* in engaging with pedagogical narration seems to be linked to the *purpose* for engaging in pedagogical narration.

The purpose for engaging in pedagogical narration is an important piece for professional early childhood educators to comprehend, as it provides educators with the added understanding of intent,

which may provide an educator with direction. With an understanding of purpose, educators may be able to engage more fully with this pedagogical tool and use it with more confidence. The next section will review what authors state is the purpose of pedagogical narration/documentation in the practice, or field, of early childhood education.

When reviewing the literature while considering the purpose of pedagogical narration, four major themes emerge: Pedagogical narration as an educational tool for learning and development; pedagogical narration as a tool for communication; pedagogical narration as a means for validation; and, pedagogical narration as a tool for political activism. If we heed Rinaldi's (2006) declaration that, "documentation is therefore first and foremost an educational tool" (p. 47), it might be prudent to start a review of the value of pedagogical documentation from the perspective that it is an educational tool for learning.

### **Pedagogical Narration as an Educational Tool for Learning and Development**

The first provincial government publication in B.C. to introduce and endorse the use of pedagogical narration is, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009). Within it, the purpose of pedagogical narration is outlined in a section entitled, *The "Why" of pedagogical narration*. It is stated that pedagogical narration "makes children's learning visible" (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13). Rationales for undertaking pedagogical narrations are also found in the latest version of the *Early Learning Framework* (2019), as well as in several other sources (Rinaldi, 2006; Berger, 2010; Hodgins, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). It is said that making children's learning visible is a step towards a goal "to improv[e] children's learning experiences" (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13) and "support the learning process" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 75), as this visibility allows us to witness a child's process of constructing knowledge in their search for understanding and meaning (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006).

In Reggio Emilia, once a curricular project has been decided upon, documentation of the process provides children and educators with an educational path that generatively becomes “concretely visible” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 47). The documentation then provides

“an opportunity for revisiting, reflecting, and interpreting. It provides occasion for self-organization and group organization of knowledge. Documentation supports the children’s memory, offering them the opportunity to retrace their own processes, to find confirmation or negation, and to self-correct. Documentation allows for children to make comparisons with others and hear comparisons by others. In a sense, it invites self-evaluation and group evaluation, conflict of ideas, and discussion” (Rinaldi, 1998, p.122).

According to the reviewed documents, for the child, the concrete, visual aspects (Rinaldi, 2006) of the documentation process provide a conceptual home base from which to revisit, reflect and interpret (Rinaldi, 1998). Not only does this “support the memory” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121), it is also the case that by being a valuable tool for recall (Rinaldi, 1998), documentations can play a concrete role in children’s searches for meaning (Rinaldi, 2006). By being visual and accessible, documentations support the increased possibility for reflection with oneself or with others (Rinaldi, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2007; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). The opportunity to dialogue with the group about the documentation can promote a child’s self-organization of knowledge, and, as Rinaldi (2006) believes, it is in the context of the group that the “individual child learns how to learn” (p. 51). By making and communicating choices, all those involved in the documentation process can receive feedback from the other participants (Rinaldi, 1998), and “express their differences and be receptive to the differences of others” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 51). Not only does this create an environment for learning about the particular subject or topic of the documentation, it also helps “to develop children’s natural sensitivity toward appreciating and developing the ideas of another, [and] sharing them together” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 90). It is thus suggested that from this perspective,

educators are able to see the child as a “competent individual with multiple potentials” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13) without imposing predetermined expectations or a checklist of outcomes (Dahlberg et al., 2007). As well, it is proposed that while pedagogical narration can facilitate children’s learning and early childhood educators’ deepened understanding of each child, it also provides a forum in which educators can reflect on their own approaches to education and their images of the child they hold to be true (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

For educators, the use of documentation in Reggio includes creating contexts for observing and listening to the children. Through experience, discussion and reflection, an educator can come to learn which documentation method works best for particular contexts, or which particular method of documentation best captures each child’s method of communicating or expressing themselves and their ideas. Once an educator has learned how to create the context in which to document the children’s experiences or continued inquiries, the educator must learn to examine, interpret and discuss the observations with colleagues and parents. This discussion allows for alternative perspectives to be presented, so that the educator gains a fuller understanding of how to proceed (Rinaldi, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). The process continues with the educators then predicting which materials, tools, opportunities and context will sustain the children’s interest and further learning from the perspective of the child (Rinaldi, 2006). As opposed to following a predetermined curriculum or set of outcomes, this way of building curriculum takes time and practice (Rinaldi, 2006; Atkinson, 2012). The educator needs to be “careful and effective while intervening” (Kantor and Whaley, 1998, p. 323) in the children’s learning trajectory to aid in supporting and sustaining the learning experience (Rinaldi, 2006) for all.

Viewed as another way of supporting the learning process of the educator, Rinaldi (2006), without providing a basis in research, believes the documentation process is an excellent method for the professional training of teachers. She suggests that documentation is a way to “preserve the most

interesting and advanced moments of teachers professional growth” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121) that can be used as a learning journal. Much like what documentation is intended to do for children, Rinaldi (1998) suggests that it also offers the educators an opportunity to revisit the events and processes of any of the projects that have transpired. Others believe that in using pedagogical narration, educators are able to re-examine and rethink the process and outcomes, and can therefore consider what they might do differently in future projects. For this learning to happen, however, educators must also be able to critically analyze (Dahlberg et al., 2007), collaborate (Atkinson and Biegun, 2017; Hewes et al., 2019) and self-reflect (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins et al., 2017). When the documentation process is done together with colleagues, it can also facilitate a discussion, exchange and comparison of ideas (Rinaldi, 2006), which may help to “create common meanings and values” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122) and a sense of collegiality (Rinaldi, 2006). Dahlberg et al. (2007) hope that, with a pedagogical practice that promotes reflection and democracy, the process will foster the construction of “counter-discourses” (p. 149) that will lead to a change in pedagogical practice in early childhood education. The authors, however, do not share what those discourses would be, or should be, countering, or what they believe is inadequate with the present approach to early childhood education that needs changing; nor do they base their claims on any form of research.

### **Pedagogical Narration as a Means for Communication**

According to Dahlberg et al. (2007), the pedagogical narration process provides a means for communication with children, educators, parents and, according to some, even members of the larger community, including politicians. Further to this, when following the process for doing pedagogical narrations as outlined by the two provincial publications, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009) and the *Early Learning Framework* (2019), educators are encouraged to communicate with others at a few points within the process of doing a pedagogical narration. Once the

initial observation and documentation have been conducted, educators are asked to use the documentation to communicate with themselves by reflecting on what has been documented with the purpose of trying to understand the observation at a deeper level (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Educators are then instructed to communicate these reflections with other educators and parents/caregivers for the purpose of broadening the educator's understanding of what may possibly be going on in the documented observation (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Atkinson and Biegun (2017) state that this level or type of communication is fostered by a "culture of dialogue" (p. 66); that is, an environment where educators are encouraged to openly communicate ideas, experiences, opinions, and reflections with colleagues to garner multiple perspectives on how the curriculum can be developed.

The documentation can also be used to communicate the children's ideas back to the children for the purpose of eliciting the children's reflections and responses; reflections and responses which can then be incorporated back into the curriculum planning (Rinaldi, 1998). This use of communication is illustrated in an example from the project entitled, *The Crowd*, within the seminal text, *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Rinaldi, 1998). As Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., (2015) point out, communication at this stage of the pedagogical narration process is meant to inform what next steps will need to be taken to continue the learning and to develop the curriculum.

The literature that is reviewed here appears to suggest that pedagogical narration offers a further, albeit subtle, step in the communication between educator and child. For example, educators who are responding to a child's interest by documenting, reflecting, and setting up other related activities or appropriate changes to the classroom environment, can also be said to be communicating to the child that they value what the child is interested in and will support their interests and queries (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; 2019).

When explicitly speaking about pedagogical narration's ability to foster communication, the authors in this review usually highlight pedagogical narration as a tool that is used to communicate the ongoings of the children's days to their parents and point out that, as they see it, pedagogical documentation communicates aspects of their children's experiences that are often "invisible" to parents (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). As well, these authors make the case that because documentation provides references to the process of a learning project and not just a final product (Rinaldi, 1998), parents are able to get a deeper understanding of the "how and why" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122) of what their children are doing. To help with parent engagement, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) state that educators should invite families into the pedagogical narration process so that educators can elicit thoughts and ideas from the families which can be included in the learning process. The assumption is that if parents are involved in the discussion and exchange that pedagogical documentation can offer, parents are able to become active participants in the process by providing another perspective or interpretation of what the child may be doing (Rinaldi, 2006; Atkinson, 2012). This then offers the educators an extra perspective with which can be used to deepen the curriculum (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015).

Some authors believe that pedagogical narrations can be used as a means to communicate with the greater community, including politicians (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Rinaldi (1998) indicates that sharing a pedagogical documentation with the children, other educators, the parents, and the community is "an essential element" (p. 118) of the documentation process and goes on to characterize this as a "true act of democracy" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 44). Now, although she does not provide her definition of *democracy* or what would raise an *act of democracy* to become a *true* act of democracy, we do need to consider that Rinaldi's views are influenced by historical context and how the schools in Reggio Emilia came to be. While Dahlberg (2016) tells us the work done by Malaguzzi may indeed have intrigued politicians enough to support and get involved with the schools in Reggio Emilia, the statement that reflecting on the

pedagogical work in the schools will be done by the pedagogue with politicians (Dahlberg et al., 2007) may be out of touch with the reality of the professional early childhood educator's limitations to practice.

### **Pedagogical Narration for Validation**

Several of the reviewed materials noted that the field of early childhood education is seeking, or in need of, validation and that the use of pedagogical narrations can help achieve this validation (Rinaldi, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Berger, 2017). These authors, unfortunately, do not provide any criteria for what qualifies a field as being validated, or, conversely, the measures or conditions that would render a field invalidated. The authors, as well, do not cite any research that supports the claim that pedagogical narrations, in fact, have the ability to validate the field of early childhood education. And so, without criteria, a definition or evidence based in research, a reader could be led to think these authors are writing idealistically with the hope that their published ideas will provoke the actualization of those ideas.

One of the claims made is that the field of early childhood education can be validated by pedagogical narrations becoming visible to others and entering the public discourse (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., (2015) state that by informing the public dialogue concerning the field of early childhood education, pedagogical narrations will demonstrate the value and meaning of the work of early childhood educators (Rinaldi, 2006). In keeping with Rinaldi's (1998) idea that pedagogical narrations have the ability to "to share meanings" (p. 114), Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) state that pedagogical narrations, as collections of stories that provide various perspectives into the world of childhood, can widen our understanding of "what early childhood education is and can be" (p. 135) and with that can also counter the perceived discourse that early childhood educators are "simply observers

and guides, caretakers and technicians,” (p. 135), or “glorified baby-sitter[s],” as noted by Victoria News (2007) and Moloney (2019).

As Rinaldi (1998) also suggests, that when pedagogical documentations are displayed in public places, and members of the community are invited to view, question, or comment on the pedagogical documentation, early learning centers are then able to make this “culture of childhood visible to the society as a whole, in order to provoke exchange and discussion” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). Additionally, in elaborating on this notion in later work, Rinaldi (2006) posits that sharing pedagogical documentations, not only with the children, other educators, and the parents, but with the greater community, is an essential component of, what she calls, a “true act of democracy” (p. 44), and that in becoming sites for such acts, the greater community is provided with concrete examples of how early learning centers are a “teaching place” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 118) that supports education far beyond early childhood.

### **Pedagogical Narration as a Political Tool**

Outside of inviting politicians into the pedagogical narration process or celebrating the pedagogical tool’s inherent democratic style, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) speak to enlisting pedagogical narration as a political tool. The authors interpret early childhood educational practice “as always embedded in political, social, cultural, and economic contexts” (p. 130). Additionally, the authors state that critical reflection is “grounded in political intent” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 129), although they do not share how they reached this conclusion. As *reflecting* is a step in the process of pedagogical narration as outlined in *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009) and *The Early Learning Framework* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019), it seems the authors are expecting early childhood educators to understand the use of pedagogical narration, if only in part, to be a tool “to mobilize sociopolitical change” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 134). And even if accompanied with Atkinson’s (2012) accordant statement that

pedagogical narrations can “be a tool for activism” (p. 7), none of the authors provide any research-based evidence for how the connection between pedagogical narrations or reflecting in the pedagogical narration process and mobilizing sociopolitical change or any form of activism has been made or should be conducted.

While the purpose of pedagogical narration in the literature is described as an educational tool for learning and development, as a tool for communication, as a means for validation, and as a tool for political activism, the literature does not divulge whether these themes or perspectives were developed emergently from frontline practice, or whether these ideas have been developed from iterations or interpretations of other, former pieces of writing; some of which are grounded in a very different historical context. To get a fuller understanding of the purpose of pedagogical narration, it would be valuable to incorporate the professional educator’s perspective, and to also do so over time and within context. Were local politicians interested in the novel approach to children’s education in post-World War 2, post-Fascist Italy? Do early childhood educator’s working in British Columbia today take their pedagogical narrations to their local constituency’s member of parliament to ask for an opinion, or with an expectation that some type of societal change will happen?

### **The Benefits of Pedagogical Narration**

While information in the previous section, *The Purpose and Value of Pedagogical Narration*, could be interpreted as being some of the benefits of pedagogical narration, it does make sense to dedicate a section to list the benefits of pedagogical narration, as stated in the literature. Authors within the literature do explicitly discuss benefits of this type of pedagogical practice usually in tandem with the child(ren), the educators, the parents, and sometimes even in regards to the greater community.

### **The Child**

Pedagogical narrations support the learning process (Rinaldi, 2005) and are a way to “share the ways children learn” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 90). For the child, the concrete visual (Rinaldi, 2005) of the documentation provides a conceptual home base from which to revisit, reflect and interpret (Rinaldi, 1998). Not only does this “support the memory” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121) by being a valuable tool for recalling (Rinaldi, 1998), but the documentations can play a concrete role in the children’s search for meaning (Rinaldi, 2005). By being visual and accessible, the possibility for reflection (Rinaldi, 2005) with oneself or with others increases. The opportunity to dialogue about the pedagogical documentation can promote a child’s self-organization of knowledge (Rinaldi, 2005). And it is “in a group context” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 51) that the “individual child learns how to learn” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 51). By making and communicating choices, one is able to “receive feedback from others” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 118), “express their differences and be receptive to the differences of others” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 51). Not only does this create an environment for learning about the subject of the documentation, but it also helps “to develop children’s natural sensitivity toward appreciating and developing the ideas of another, [and] sharing them together” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 90), which are valuable skills for the child to learn and practice.

### **Educators**

Along with supporting the learning process of the educator (Rinaldi, 2005), Rinaldi (1998) believes that documentation is the “place for true professional training of teachers” (p. 122; Rinaldi, 2005). Documentation is a way to “preserve the most interesting and advanced moments of teachers professional growth” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121). Much like what it does for the children, pedagogical documentation offers the educators an opportunity to revisit the events and processes taken during a project (Rinaldi, 1998). When done with colleagues, the “exchange, comparison of ideas, discussion and collegiality” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 43) may help to “create common meanings and values” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122) and then lead educators to “generate hypotheses and interpretations of theories that can modify [their] initial, more general theories” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121). This process of documenting, exchange and

reflecting allows an educator “to be careful and effective while intervening (Kantor & Whaley, 1998, p. 323) in the children’s learning trajectory, and can then aid in scaffolding and sustaining the learning experience (Rinaldi, 2005) for all.

### **Parents**

For parents, pedagogical documentation provides an opportunity to see aspects of their child that are often “invisible” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). Because the documentation provides reference to the process and not just a final product (Rinaldi, 1998), parents are able to get a deeper understanding of the “how and why” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122) of what their child is doing. This understanding, in turn, “fosters growth in each parent’s awareness of his or her own role and identity” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 44), and offers parents the opportunity to discuss and exchange with other parents (Rinaldi, 2005).

### **Community**

When considering the community within and beyond the child care center, the value of pedagogical documentation comes from the culture of research it creates (Rinaldi, 2005), the forum “to share meanings” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114), and also for members to “feel a sense of belonging” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114). This not only applies to the children, educators and parents, but extends to creating knowledge “for researchers and scholars” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). Being not in isolation from society, the child care center “has both the right and the duty to make this culture of childhood visible to the society as a whole, in order to provoke exchange and discussion” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122), and in doing so, everyone becomes conscious of the child care center as a “teaching place” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 118). The adults “nurture situations that stimulate this kind of learning process, where conflict and negotiation appear as the driving forces for growth” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 118), and the “progettazione allows for this social constructivist process to develop” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 118). “Opposition, negotiation, listening to the

other's point of view and deciding whether or not to adopt it" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 115) are all skills that reflect the fundamental value of democracy in this style of education (Moss, 2016) for the community.

### **The Process of Pedagogical Narration**

Along with the definition and purpose for using this pedagogical tool, some of the literature also provides a process for doing pedagogical narrations. In British Columbia, this information is succinctly outlined in the two provincial publications: *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009), and the *Early Learning Framework* (2019). Other literature from a British Columbian perspective offers glimpses into the process, or focuses on a part, or parts, of the process. The literature that discusses pedagogical documentation from a Reggio Emilia perspective does not provide a point form detail of the process like the provincial publication from B.C. For this reason, an example of a project provided in *The Hundred Languages of Children* (1998) will be analysed to garner a process that was used for doing pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia.

*Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009) outlines six steps to the process of doing pedagogical narrations, including: 1) observing and recording *ordinary moments*; 2) reflecting on the observation; 3) sharing the observation/reflection with others; 4) collectively building new meanings from the observation/reflection to make children's learning visible; 5) linking practice to the Early Learning Framework; and 6) incorporating what has been learned into the planning process (BC Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 14).

The process outlined in the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) is similar to that of its predecessor of 2009, albeit with language that has changed slightly. Some of the changes that have occurred necessitating this change in language include:

- The intended age range of the children that educators are working with. The previous framework was designed for children birth to age five, while the new framework has been designed for children birth to eight years of age. With this change, there is also an intentional connection to B.C.'s new primary school curriculum and core competencies;
- A desire to reconcile with Indigenous people and a resistance to perpetuate colonization;
- A vision that learning is a holistic process.

With these changes, new language and concepts were needed to reflect and support these changes (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019). Educators are now encouraged to collect *traces* of practice, where a trace is, “a moment that draws interest” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 54). These *traces* can be artifacts such as materials created by children, written notes or observations, photos, audio or video clips and journals or digital data that are collected. These traces are then reflected on, made visible by sharing, used as the basis for collaborative dialogue, linked to the Early Learning Framework, and finally, employed to make further pedagogical choices (p. 54-59).

Atkinson (2012) shares how her documentations began simply with photographs, and progressed to include narrations. She states the simplest form of a pedagogical narration can be photographs, videos or transcriptions of children’s play that can become a part of a process that an educator can use to provide meaningful early learning experiences for children (Atkinson, 2012). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) believe that the initial *trace*, or moment that draws an interest, is “always only a beginning point” (p. 124) in the pedagogical documentation process. By revisiting documentations, educators can also help fashion memories with “new interpretations and reconstructions of what happened in the past” (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 150). Going through the process of pedagogical narration allows an educator to visualize the complexity of children’s play and work (Atkinson and Biegun, 2017), and can provide

educators with an opportunity to reflect on the development of the processes in which children come to understand the world (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

Hodgins et al. (2017) remind us that pedagogical narration is *not* a practice for documenting children's lived experiences from a singular perspective, but a process that encourages us to enact the "dialogical and multi-vocality underpinnings" (p. 195) of this pedagogical tool. Atkinson and Biegun (2017) appreciate this dialogic quality of pedagogical narration, as they express recognition that "conversations and collaboration started to happen" (Atkinson and Biegun, 2017, p. 66) once the educators embarked on the process of implementing pedagogical narrations in the childcare centre. Through dialogue, "multiple perspectives can be introduced, discussed and confronted" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 146), and sharing these stories can create "new knowledges for actualizing new material realities" (Hodgins et al., 2017, p.195). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) state that this construction of knowledge results from a process of reflecting, continuously, critically, and "in relation to social, political, and other systemic and discursive conditions (p. 124). It is these processes and/or outcomes of the process of pedagogical narration that have influenced what practitioners and academics in B.C. believe the purpose of pedagogical narration to be.

In the Reggio Emilia early childhood educational settings, using what may be a "contextual curriculum" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 160), documentation is closely linked with planning and project design (Rinaldi, 1998) and "becomes the heart of each specific project" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). Although Malaguzzi asked the educators in Reggio Emilia "to start from the children" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 41), earlier work by Rinaldi (1998) explains that projects can begin from a suggestion, idea or question from a child, an educator, a parent, or from an unexpected event. Rinaldi (1998) further suggests that educators document "what the children say and do, as well as what they do not say and do not do" and that educators need to "allow enough time for the thinking and actions of children to develop" (p. 123). Rinaldi (2006) also points out that the "emergent elements perceived by the documenter" (p. 54) should

also be included and that in engaging in this way, educators also “foster productive conflict by challenging the responses of one or several children” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 119). Malaguzzi (2016) adds that as [educators] engage in the development of their pedagogical narrations, [they] need to be to be “open to the prospect of change” (p. 217).

To understand the process of pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, an analysis of an example of a project from *The Hundred Languages of Children* is offered here. The project entitled, “The Crowd” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 123), focused on a way for each child to save mementos of their experiences while on summer break. So that the children could carry out this project, it was agreed that each child would take home a compartmentalized box in which they would save small artifacts. The teachers planned to use the artifacts to help elicit stories from each child about their summer break. When the children returned from the break, educators continued the project by asking the children open-ended questions about their summer experiences. In one boy’s response, the word *crowd* caught the attention of the educators, who then asked the other children what the word *crowd* meant to them. The children provided unique and descriptive ideas about the word while the educators documented their answers. The children were then asked to draw a visual representation of their answers, in which the educators noticed a discrepancy. The level of the children’s verbal descriptions and the level of their visual representations did not match. The project was “put on hold for a couple of days” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 124) while the teachers discussed with each other how to continue.

The project resumed by having the children listen to their previous comments while simultaneously viewing their drawings. The children could see the discrepancies between their own comments and the pictures they drew. Second drawings were created and these turned out to be more elaborate and have more detail, as children noticed that previous “statements did not match [the] drawing[s]” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 124). This exercise also influenced the children to expand on their verbal stories with a “further growth” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 124) in vocabulary. Some of the children also

recognized they were unable to draw images that reflected their verbal stories, and there became “a unanimous desire expressed by the children to learn more about how to draw people from rear and profile” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 124). The educators had the children draw one of the children from one of four different vantage points – front, back, left, and right – and the children experienced the concept of point of view (Rinaldi, 1998).

The educators then brought the children to the center of town where they “observed and photographed people coming and going” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 124); where they also mingled with *the crowd*. A few days later, the slides from their outing were projected on a wall in the classroom, and the children enjoyed moving with and through the projection of *the crowd*. More drawings followed, with the children also cutting out the figures in their drawings to create a collage with their earlier drawings. The children also engaged in puppet play, shadow play and dramatic play with the cut-out figures. The project concluded with the children overlaying their cut-outs in a box to collectively create their own *crowd* (Rinaldi, 1998).

From this example of a project done at a school in Reggio Emilia, we can see that the process of pedagogical documentation is carried out throughout the entire project, from the project’s inception to its conclusion. The act of documentation and the use of that documentation seem to be present at each stage, or junction, of the project. Documentation was used to first capture the moment that became the idea for the project and was then used to revisit the moment, reflect on the moment, and juxtapose the moment, (which is now the moment of the past), with the new moment in the present. The discrepancies or incongruities between the past and present are thus exposed, and this exposure provokes further questions and explorations – which are documented, used to revisit, reflect upon, juxtapose – and continue to lead to the next steps in the exploration and development of meaning or understanding. This process of documentation seems to represent the “spiraling...way of thinking and proceeding [that] is characteristic of Reggio educators (Edwards, 1998, p. 183).

One of the differences between the process of pedagogical narrations, as defined by the B.C. government publications, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009) and the *Early Learning Framework* (2019), with the process of pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, as exemplified by the project, *The Crowd*, is that, while they both start the process with the act of documenting and reflecting on an occurrence, an inquiry, or a moment within a day, the Reggio approach seems to be driven by the purpose of the learning project. In Reggio, projects are that which “constitute the principal road-map for starting out on deeper exploration, greater knowledge and further projects” (Malaguzzi, 2016, p. 229). In their explanation of process, the pedagogical publications from B.C. use the language, “incorporate[e] what has been learned into the planning process” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 14), and to “make pedagogical choices” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 59) to express what an educator might do in the pedagogical narration process. The latter publication, *The Early Learning Framework* (2019), states in another section that “children learn by doing when they are engaged in projects and inquiries that extend their interests” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 65). The prominent message regarding the purpose of the process of pedagogical narration, however, still seems to be as a tool used for “recalling, analyzing and reflecting on our practice” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 22); that is, the pedagogical narration process, as expressed in the literature from B.C., is focused on the educator and the educator’s reflection on their own practice.

While it seems the process for doing pedagogical narration is partly determined by the context an educator finds themselves in, it may be helpful to have a professional educator’s perspective to garner a fuller understanding of what process(es) are used, or needed, for doing pedagogical narrations in an early childhood education setting. Do early childhood educators in B.C. follow the process for doing pedagogical narrations as outlined in the *Early Learning Framework*? Have educators drawn on any of the literature from Reggio Emilia to inform their own practice? Or, have the day-to-day operations,

ongoings, or duties, of an early childhood education setting influenced the process(es) that educators take for doing pedagogical narrations in any way?

### **The Resources Needed for Pedagogical Narration**

Even while knowing what a pedagogical narration is and the historical context this pedagogical practice comes from, understanding the purpose for doing pedagogical narration and what process(es) can be taken to achieve active participation in the pedagogical practice, there is still a practical question to ask: What resources are needed to allow a professional early childhood educator to practice pedagogical narrations in an early childhood education setting?

When reviewing the literature from B.C. and the literature that focuses on the Reggio Emilia experience, one sees that the resources needed to do pedagogical narrations are not always described explicitly or in connection with pedagogical documentation exclusively. While not emphasizing the need for monetary resources, Rinaldi (2006) does admit that for the pedagogical focus of the schools in Reggio Emilia to work, there needs to be “courageous investment by municipalities in services for early childhood” (p. 79), to which Moss (2006) adds that this investment should come from an “efficient, honest and progressive local government” (p. xv). The resources needed to carry out this pedagogical practice are, however, at times, implicitly stated, and can, for example, refer to something intangible, such as the philosophical mindset of an educator (Rinaldi, 1998). There are also examples of resources that are not overtly stated but are, rather, inferred. For example, if “pedagogical narration is recording through photos, video, or transcription the ordinary moments of children’s play” (Atkinson, 2012, p. 3), it could be inferred that educators would need to have access to writing utensils, paper, an audio recorder, a camera (still and/or video), the resources needed to develop the film, or, in the more likely situation of the present day, a computer for downloading, organizing, and storing the photographs from the digital device. The educator might need video-editing software, a means to add subtitles or create transcripts,

and a medium for sharing the video, such as a screen or projector. If the photos and videos are being shared, either physically or digitally, “for parents to see that part of the life of their child” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122), further resources would be needed. If being shared physically, a printer, ink refills, and paper would be needed. If being shared digitally, an electronic mail account, a blog or other social media platform would be needed. There would also need to be an electric current running for most of these resources to work. As part of the process of pedagogical narration in B.C., educators are asked to link their narration to the *Early Learning Framework* (BC Ministry of Education, 2019; Atkinson, 2012). This would imply that educators have a physical, hard copy of the framework (and the financial resources to purchase one) or access to the Internet and the Adobe software to open the file. The educator could print their own copy of the framework, but a printer would be needed, or the educator could download and keep a digital copy of the framework, which would require a computer.

Along with these physical resources, there are intangibles that can be viewed as resources needed for being able to incorporate the practice of pedagogical narration. One of the fundamental contributors to the educational experience of Reggio is the educator, and although not outrightly spoken of as a resource, an educator with a particular skillset and approach is obviously valued and needed. Being able to change and grow with the children is “very important” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 125), and be an educator whose education is “broad-based and range[s] over many areas of knowledge” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 55). Having a multidisciplinary background, the understanding of how to research, a sense of curiosity (Rinaldi, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015) and “extensive experience in documentary reading and writing” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 53) are skills, experiences and characteristics of an educator that are needed resources. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) state that the practice of pedagogical narrations requires an active and engaged early childhood educator. Moss (2016) states the type of education being done in Reggio Emilia needs a “strong commitment to democracy as a fundamental value and practice” (p. xiv).

In an educational system where “individual ownership is lower in the priority of values” (Nimmo, 1998, p. 299) and where children “learn best through communication, conflict, and coercion” (Edwards, 1998, p. 198), the skill of facilitating these types of group social interactions is important. What seems to be an important aspect of the educational experience of Reggio Emilia and the culture of project-based education is the ability to work in a group (Rinaldi, 2006). Families and their willingness to participate are “an integral part of the educational experience” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 118) and should be considered a resource. For families to consider participation, educators’ need to have an ability to facilitate the “construction of ethical relationships” (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 142) with both family and colleagues, and the ability to do so may also be considered a resource. Atkinson (2012) contends that a pedagogical narration is not an individual endeavour, but something that “must be shared, discussed, [and] reflected upon with colleagues, with children and/or parents” (p.4). Within the relationships amongst educators and families, a “culture of dialogue” (Atkinson and Biegun, 2017, p. 66) can help to facilitate the use of family and colleagues as a resource and is also an important resource in an educator’s skillset.

And lastly, time is an obvious need and resource (Atkinson, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015): the time to plan (Rinaldi, 1998); the time to build relationships (Rinaldi, 1998); the time for “constantly examining our understandings, knowledge, and intuitions, and sharing and comparing them with those of our colleagues” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 55); the time to engage in the crucial practice of critical reflection (Atkinson, 2012) even when there are “moments of uncertainty” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 52); the time to allow for and understand a process that is “not predictable or linear” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 52); the time to “be patient” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 52) in “an already busy day” Atkinson, 2012, p. 5) to “take small steps” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 52) to locate and practice one’s own process for doing pedagogical narrations (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019); and the time to reflect on and evaluate aspects of the physical environment, the schedule, and the

educator's approach to being with children (Atkinson, 2012) when pedagogical narrations are not happening as one would hope.

As in all other sections of this review, the literature that describes, explicitly or implicitly, the resources needed to do pedagogical narration in an early childhood education setting seems to come from authors who stand beyond the frontline. There does not seem to be any information coming directly from the frontline educators who are expected to put pedagogical narration into practice, and therefore, it is difficult to know what resources are used or may be needed.

### **Summary of Literature**

The practice of pedagogical narrations has its roots in the pedagogical documentation practices of the pre-primary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017). As Moss (2016) points out, the process of being liberated after the Second World War provoked the local community of Reggio Emilia to “assume responsibility for the education of its young children” (p. 7) by acting on the values of “solidarity, social justice, peace, [and] democracy” (p. 3) and building a school for their children. Loris Malaguzzi, who was “the guiding genius of Reggio” (Gardner, 1998, p. xv), instilled habits that would serve to promote particular skills, which, in turn, would form the foundation for the pedagogical practice of documentation (Edwards et al., 1998); a pedagogical practice that has become a focus of the Early Learning Framework (2019) in B.C.; a pedagogical practice that professional early childhood educators are encouraged to use in their daily practice.

While definitions of pedagogical documentation/narration vary slightly in wording and nuance, all definitions describe a process that is to be taken along with which element of practice educators are working with. Most definitions describe who is involved in the process (Dahlberg et al., 2007; BC Ministry of Education, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; BC Ministry of Education, 2019), and some of the definitions also describe a goal for doing pedagogical narration (Rinaldi, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al.,

2015; BC Ministry of Education, 2019). Along with a definition of pedagogical narration, educators may also gain an understanding of what a pedagogical narration is by its purpose (Rinaldi, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006; BC Ministry of Education, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; BC Ministry of Education, 2019).

The literature describes the purpose(s) for doing pedagogical narration as: an educational tool for learning and development (Rinaldi, 1998; 2006; Dahlberg & Moss, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2007; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; Berger, 2010; Atkinson, 2012; Hodgins, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019), a tool for communication (Rinaldi, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2007; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Atkinson and Biegun, 2017; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019), a means for validating the field of early childhood education (Rinaldi, 1998; 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Berger, 2017), and as a tool for political activism (Atkinson, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). This literature is, however, presented without details of what, if any, research took place and offers no details of the methodologies that gave rise to the claims that the authors make. It also seems that this information is presented without the perspective or assent from frontline early childhood educators and therefore seems to suggest that early childhood educators are only expected to fulfill the ideas set forth in the literature.

The authors of the literature believe pedagogical narrations provide benefits to the child(ren), the educators, the families, and the greater community. Many of these benefits are reflections of the different perspectives of the same thing: the visualization, and thus, the concretization, of the learning process of documentation. This visual allows for children, educators, families, and, when applicable, the greater community to see where the project began, how the project/learning continued and in what direction, and what new ideas and expressions of knowledge were stated, challenged, or gained. The documentation provides a record of questions and pedagogical choices that allow everyone the opportunity to reflect and learn from the reflections.

The literature also provides descriptions of a process for doing pedagogical narration. The most recent process for doing pedagogical narrations offered by the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) includes: collecting *traces* of practice, reflecting on the traces, making the traces visible, inviting collaborative dialogue, linking to the Early Learning Framework, and engaging in making further pedagogical choices (p. 54-59). Interestingly, the process for doing pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia is not described in the literature as a particular step-by-step process the way it is presented in the *Early Learning Framework* (2019). Rather, I created it by analyzing the project entitled, *The Crowd*, which I found in *The Hundred Languages of Children* (1998). This raises the questions: Is the pre-set process presented by the *Early Learning Framework* (2019) the only process used by early childhood educators in British Columbia? Are there other processes, or pathways, that can be taken to achieve the practice of pedagogical narration?

To engage in pedagogical narrations, as Rinaldi (2006), Atkinson (2012), and Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) show, there are particular resources that are needed. Some of those resources may seem obvious, for example, a camera, a computer, and time; but whether authors are writing explicitly or implicitly about the resources needed to perform pedagogical narrations, they do not describe how any conclusions were made about the need for resources. As well, if the authors of early childhood education literature in British Columbia are not working on, or connected to, the frontline, we have to then wonder where their ideas are coming from. Without the frontline early childhood educator's perspective, it is difficult to know what resources are being used or needed to perform pedagogical narrations in an early childhood education setting.

## Method

This project began as a research thesis with the question: What are early childhood educators' experiences of using pedagogical narration(s) in an early childhood education setting? The purpose of this exploratory study was to inquire into the early childhood educators' perspectives on their own experience(s) with using pedagogical narrations in their place of work. There was always a nagging thought pulling me back from feeling good about what I was doing, however. The field of early childhood education does not need another thesis or dissertation. The field of early childhood education needs some practical help, especially when the literature, both gray and academic, have led the field into a conundrum. How have pedagogical narrations become that important in the literature when hardly any frontline early childhood educators are employing them? How did the theorists and academic writers in our field keep walking in a direction whilst forgetting to check in with the educators on the frontline who are expected to do the work? How, when not many, if any, of us experienced being the recipient learners of pedagogical narrations are we expected to be the ones implementing them into our practice with little-to-no guidance; guidance that may be based solely on a theoretical understanding with little-to-no practical knowhow? And these were the thoughts I wrestled with that led me to contact my supervisor and request a meeting to talk about the switchover to a project with a new question: How could I help early childhood educators understand and incorporate pedagogical narrations into their own practice?

Having already completed my literature review, I understood what the literature presented. I had experience using documentation in an international kindergarten in Japan, but having an experience as a professional early childhood educator in B.C. would be valuable to my perspective as a graduate student and as an early childhood educator. Serendipitously, a position as a preschool teacher at the Queen Alexandra Children's Hospital became available, and I was asked by the senior educator to join the new team. Thinking the opportunity would provide me a place to develop my practice I applied for and got

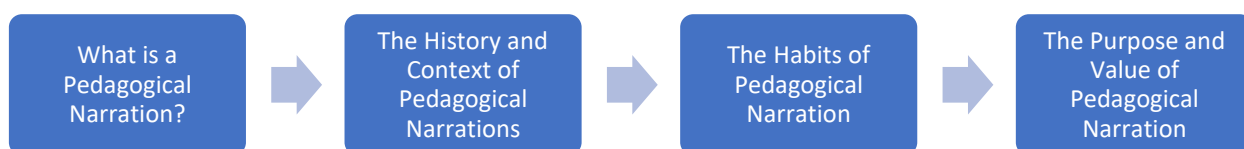
the position. The work for this project was done in the preschool room in the Pearkes Building of Queen Alexandra Center for Children's Health (Q.A.). Traditionally, a program with a high number of children with designated needs, in recent years the preschool program at Q.A. have become more inclusive of the immediate community. The ratio of educators to children in preschool is 1:10. With two children in the program requiring one-on-one support, there were three educators working with ten children.

Before the beginning of the school year, there were various meetings I was required to attend, and one of those meetings was with Heidi van den Berg, Coordinator of the Supported Child Development Program for Island Health. During a break at the meeting, we talked about my graduate degree. I had described the process up until that point, that I had recently switched from a thesis to a project and my intention to create a workshop to help early childhood educators understand and be able to use pedagogical narrations. Being connected to many early childhood education settings in her role, Heidi confirmed my suspicion – that hardly anyone was doing pedagogical narrations and that educators were stressed about not understanding how to use the pedagogical tool. She saw a great benefit in offering early childhood educators a training workshop and suggested it could be held at the Pearkes Building at Queen Alexandra of Island Health. With a continued conversation, Heidi agreed to provide guidance, offer feedback, and join my project committee by representing the community partner.

Being one of two new preschool teachers in a new preschool year required time to get to know the children and families, to create a classroom culture, and to compromise and balance pedagogical approaches and expectations. At that time, I did not realize I was already in the process and that with each month passing I was getting closer to reaching my goal of producing a pedagogical narration. It was not until the fifth month, January, where I felt I had created something that reached the status of *pedagogical narration*. And as I began documenting the process of doing that single narration, I realized that the prior months had all been part of the process. That lived experience is, in my opinion, vital to the creation of a workshop, as it has provided me with the experience and perspective of the

professional educator in a program where *not much* was going on pedagogically. By beginning my journey of doing pedagogical narration as a professional early childhood educator at a typical starting point and working through to the point of being able to do pedagogical narrations in a preschool program, I have gained a perspective that is vital to creating a workshop that will help other educators along their journey, not only of doing a pedagogical narration, but of getting the classroom culture to the point of being able to do a pedagogical narration.

As I began documenting my own pedagogical work as a preschool teacher, I began to see how I could present my journey as the workshop. Once that idea came to me, it became a fluid process of using my own documented work and then asking questions about it – questions that could be asked to other educators to also help them reflect, first on my work, and then on their own work. I was satisfied with what I had produced and thought I had finished. The next month's pedagogical narration, however, had been done a little differently and had incorporated a visit and a learning workshop from a community resource. Having different aspects of what a pedagogical narration can be, I decided it would be important to also include this pedagogical narration in the workshop to provide another example.



Using some of the component of my literature review, I strategically divided the workshop into four parts that build on one another. I start the workshop with the definition of a pedagogical narration, to define what it is the workshop is about. Asking participants to create a mind map of what they already know about pedagogical narrations allows them to begin to document their own journey of learning. Much like how pedagogical narrations are used in an early learning setting, by creating a visual documentation of ideas, thoughts, etc., the participant will be able to go back and revisit and revise where necessary. This will provide the learner with a task that represents their new understanding,

learning, and growth. After being exposed to some of the definitions of pedagogical narrations in the literature and an opportunity to have a discussion with fellow participants, the learner will create a working draft of pedagogical narration that will be the first step in the learning journey.

The next part is entitled, the history and context of pedagogical narration. This section is meant to provide the participant with some background information of where this pedagogical practice came from and the context that provoked this practice into being. Knowing that early childhood education programs in colleges seem to overlook this history, the purpose of this section is to give historical depth to an educator's understanding of the pedagogical tools they are being asked to use. With this historical understanding, I hope educators will come to feel more confident in their practice by being able to think about and discuss the history of this tool. In the best-case scenario, an educator would refer to the references at the end of the reading and initiate their own journey through the literature.

Part three of the workshop introduces pedagogical narration through the perspective of habits. By breaking down the practice of pedagogical narration into smaller habits, I hope to demonstrate to early childhood educators that, when something seems insurmountable, breaking it into smaller parts can help one achieve small successes. Based on my experiences of working in early childhood education for the past fifteen-plus years, I decided to use digital photography and transcriptions of children's talk as the two of the most useful methods of documenting. I provide lists of ways to approach photography as a habit to adopt, a practice in composition and the technical skills needed to develop photography as a practice.

The last part of the workshop begins with a list of the major themes I drew from the literature concerning the purpose and value of doing pedagogical narration. I continue the outline of the workshop by discussing ways to conserve the pedagogical narrations and provide concrete visual examples of how I displayed my pedagogical narrations on documentation boards and the process I went through to do so.

Asking the participants to read the writeup of each pedagogical narration, I provide the participants with questions about each pedagogical narration for the purpose of reflecting on the narration, how I approached a particular topic, and how they might approach the same topic. I also break the writeups into their components so that participants are given a framework to use in their own practice.

The whole way through the workshop, I provide the participants with photos from my own journey of doing pedagogical narrations. This journey outlines my story and highlights the fact that pedagogical narrations do not *just happen*. There is a process of many processes that all must come together before any good pedagogical work and its documentation can be done. Using questions that link back to the components of a pedagogical narration, I ask the participants to reflect on my work so that they can begin to reflect on their own work. Believing that the facilitator of a workshop should have direct experience with the content, I structured the workshop to highlight the experiential path I took to implement the practice of pedagogical narrations into the preschool setting. As theory-based writings about pedagogical narrations dominate the literature, I wanted to offer a workshop that focuses on process. Providing participants an account of the process I took to implement pedagogical narrations into an early childhood education setting may allow them to *jump on* at any point of the process. Having an experiential connection with the content would allow me to extrapolate to answer any questions, make any clarifications, or offer lived experience-grounded interpretations of my own work to support the understanding of a would-be participant of the workshop. As an early childhood educator, myself, I also hope to instill a sense of *I can do this too* in a would-be participant.

Recognizing that participants of the workshop would all have different levels of understanding and experience with the subject, I developed the workshop to set the tone that participants will have different levels of pre-knowledge; that that is expected and accepted. As well, so that I am not presenting myself as the *expert* facilitator, there are even questions embedded into the workshop where participants are able to offer their thoughts on my process and offer ideas for alternative ways of

approaching or extending the pedagogical narration. This was done for two reasons – to present myself as an early childhood educator and not an expert of anything. And, if I am not presented as *the expert*, I hope this would foster the idea that every early childhood educator, or teams of early childhood educators, can, and will, approach every pedagogical narration in a different way; that that is normal, expected, and should be seen as a benefit and celebrated.

To support as wide-ranging of a learning audience as possible, I considered the need to have a balance of visuals, information reduced to point form, opportunities to reflect, ask questions, and engage in group dialogue. I also include one reading to round out the workshop. The greatest strength of the workshop, I believe, are the photographs within the workshop. Not only do the photographs offer a visual of a, so-to-speak, *final product*, but they are also documentation of the process that offers a glimpse into my own process of trying to *figure it out*. Not only does this provide a path for educators to see themselves on, but it reminds everyone that none of us are experts; that, if we approach our own process as a journey that we may come to appreciate the process of learning anything.

### **Role and Engagement with Project Sponsor**

Heidi van den Berg acted as the community member and mentor for this project. When Heidi agreed to join the project as the community member, I shared a rough draft of the initial outline for the workshop with her. Heidi voiced her agreement with the planned content, and we agreed that, when I had something more to show her, we would schedule a meeting to review the work. As an early childhood educator herself with much experience creating and delivering workshops to the ECE community, Heidi would be able to offer invaluable feedback on the project and advice for reaching the ECE community.

After completing the first pedagogical narration and using the process of its creation as the backbone of the workshop, I created the initial version of the workshop as a Word document. In consultation with Heidi, I realized it was more pertinent to create the workshop in the format in

which the content would be delivered. And so, using the information from the Word document, I created a PowerPoint presentation version of the workshop, leaving the Word document as my source of notes, or script, for the presentation.

Once I had created a PowerPoint slideshow for the workshop, I sent it to Heidi for feedback. I wanted to know if the information presented in the workshop would be understood. Heidi checked the full document and, in conversation, prompted me to think about my intended audience – early childhood educators who may or may not have much experience with academic language and who might do well with more visuals in the presentation.

With the consideration of using more visuals on the slides, less written information, and adding a stylistic component to the slides (for example, adding a background or changing the font), I re-designed the slideshow to help an audience remain attentive while supplying only pertinent and digestible amounts of information with more plain language. With a final check, Heidi agreed that this version would be appropriate for an ECE audience.

## **Timeline of Project**

### **From Thesis to Project**

- August of 2022 – I request a meeting with Dr. Kakuru, my supervisor, to discuss switching from a thesis to a project.

### **Connection to Island Health and Community Partner**

- August of 2022 – I am hired by Island Health to become one of the preschool teachers in their program in the Pearkes Building at the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health.
- September of 2022 – I meet Heidi van den Berg at a meeting before the beginning of the preschool year, and, within a discussion of early childhood education, we talk about the disconnect between the theory and practice of pedagogical narrations, and my quest to create a

workshop to help educators understand and incorporate pedagogical narrations into their practice.

- September of 2022 – Heidi van den Berg agrees to join the project as the community member.

### **Pre-project Phase**

- September of 2022 – The preschool year begins.
- December of 2022 – December's *Giving* project is an attempt to create a visual documentation of each daily act of giving; a list the children had created as a group. It becomes a stepping stone to getting into the habit of documenting each day.

### **First Pedagogical Narration**

- January of 2023 – The project, *The Dollhouse*, begins, and with it, the beginning of the first pedagogical narration of the school year. This project offers an opportunity to also use transcribing children's talk as a way of documenting.
- February of 2023 – *The Dollhouse* documentation is moved from the classroom monthly documentation board to a documentation board in the hallway. This provides me with an opportunity to arrange the documentation into a coherent story with both photos and write-up.

### **Creating the Project**

- February of 2023 – I reflect on the process of *The Dollhouse* project and extract the components of the project and process to use for the workshop.
- February of 2023 – The project, *What is Garbage?*, begins as an emergent project while at Finnerty Cove.
- February of 2023 – A representative from the Capital Region District's (CRD) Education and Outreach Team is contacted. A date is set for the CRD to come to the centre to give a learning workshop.

- March of 2023 – *What is Garbage?* is moved from the classroom monthly documentation board to another documentation board in the hallway.
- March of 2023 – The components of the process and project from *What is Garbage?* is incorporated into the workshop file.
- March of 2023 – I share the first draft of the workshop with Heidi van den Berg, and she offers some advice; namely, to think about who the actual workshop will take place and how I would present the information (i.e. PowerPoint slideshow).
- March of 2023 – I create a PowerPoint slideshow for the workshop.
- April of 2023 – I receive and incorporate feedback from Heidi about the slideshow.

#### **Completion of the Project**

- May of 2023 – I present the first final draft to my supervisor, Dr. Kakuru. Upon approval, Dr. Kakuru suggests beginning the process of completing the project and setting a date for an oral defense.

## Product

The following intellectual *product* was created for the frontline early childhood educator with little-to-no experience of using pedagogical narrations in a workplace setting who seeks to know more about pedagogical narrations. This workshop will work well with educators who do well learning from examples, although I hope an educator with any level of experience would be able to learn something to develop their own process, understanding and use of pedagogical narrations. This *product* was completed while working in the role of a frontline early childhood educator. Although not the original intention, the opportunity to work as an early childhood educator presented itself and became serendipitous in its outcome, as it provided an opportunity to experience the processes within the process. Beginning at the start of a new program with new educators, new expectations, and new expectations, I was able to take a journey and map the process to reach the point where pedagogical narrations could take place. This process is also mapped out in photographs and offered as an opportunity for the reader to reflect upon. I hope this workshop will be provided for educators who work at a setting that does not cover the cost of professional development. This workshop will provide an early childhood educator with 10 hours of professional development over the course of two, 5-hour, Saturday sessions or four, 2.5-hour evening sessions. In this workshop, an early childhood educator will learn: how pedagogical narration is defined in the literature to then create your own working definition of pedagogical narration; some of history and context from where the practice of pedagogical narration comes from to give you a deeper understanding; some of the habits you can practice to help incorporate pedagogical narrations into your daily practice; how this pedagogical tool can be used to create curriculum in your class.

(All photographs have been digitally smudged to keep confidentiality intact.)

## **Introduction**

My hope is that this training guide will provide you with experience, skills, and knowledge along with opportunities for practice, reflection, analysis, and personalization to help you develop your practice of pedagogical narration. The process of this training will begin with some basic steps and, with the encouragement of some readings and reflections, will continue to add layers of depth to grow your process of doing pedagogical narrations. To grow in any way means we need to move beyond our immediate comfort zone. Some of the activities may seem tedious or trivial, but I assure you, there is a purpose. And I think if you allow yourself to be moved beyond your comfort zone, you will look back and see that you have grown, in this case, your ability to utilize pedagogical narration as a tool in early childhood education settings.

I will be providing examples from my own practice that will function as a roadmap of the steps I took to reach the tier of pedagogical narration. With each of the steps, I will provide a brief analysis with my own reflections. I would encourage you to also do an analysis of the examples provided while thinking about and making connections to your own practice. Learning is a process, and I hope my process will help you find your own. I would also add that you are going to see things in my work that you do not agree with, that will not work for you, or that may be philosophically, practically or culturally different from how you practice and/or envision your practice. My intention for creating this training guide is not a demand that you practice the way I do. My hope is that you find your own practice and pass on your experience to the next educator. Exposure to multiple and varied perspectives will, I believe, strengthen and widen our own perspective. Enjoy the journey...



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**Activity – Analysis:** *Looking at Figure 1 on the previous page, how is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be added, or taken away, to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration? Record the main points of your analysis.*

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## Part 1 – What is a Pedagogical Narration?

The best place to start this journey is probably by defining what it is we are talking about. And so, I will ask – what is a pedagogical narration.

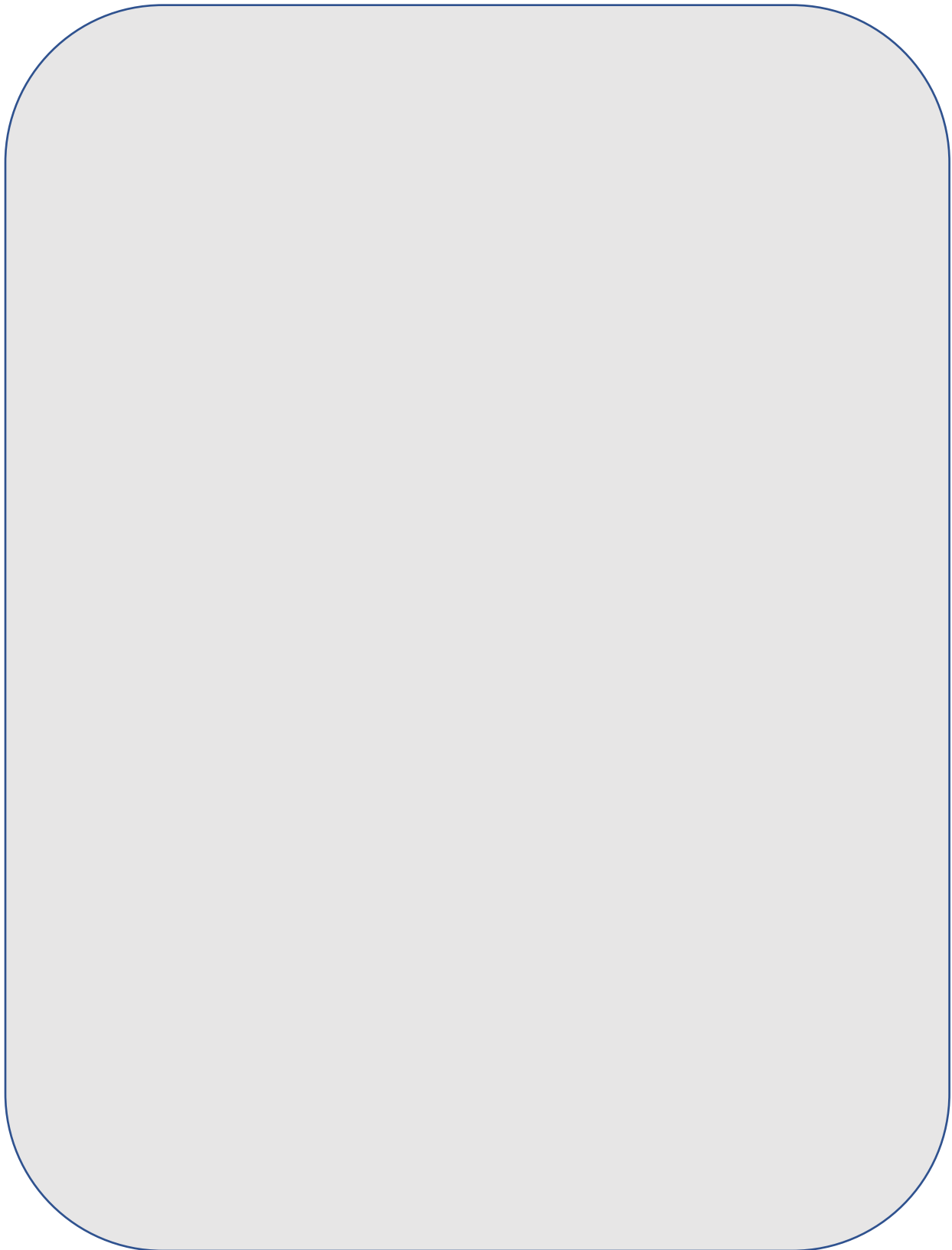
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*Activity – Mind Map: Without referring to the Early Learning Framework or any other sources, take a few moments to write, from your present understanding, your interpretation of what a pedagogical narration is.*

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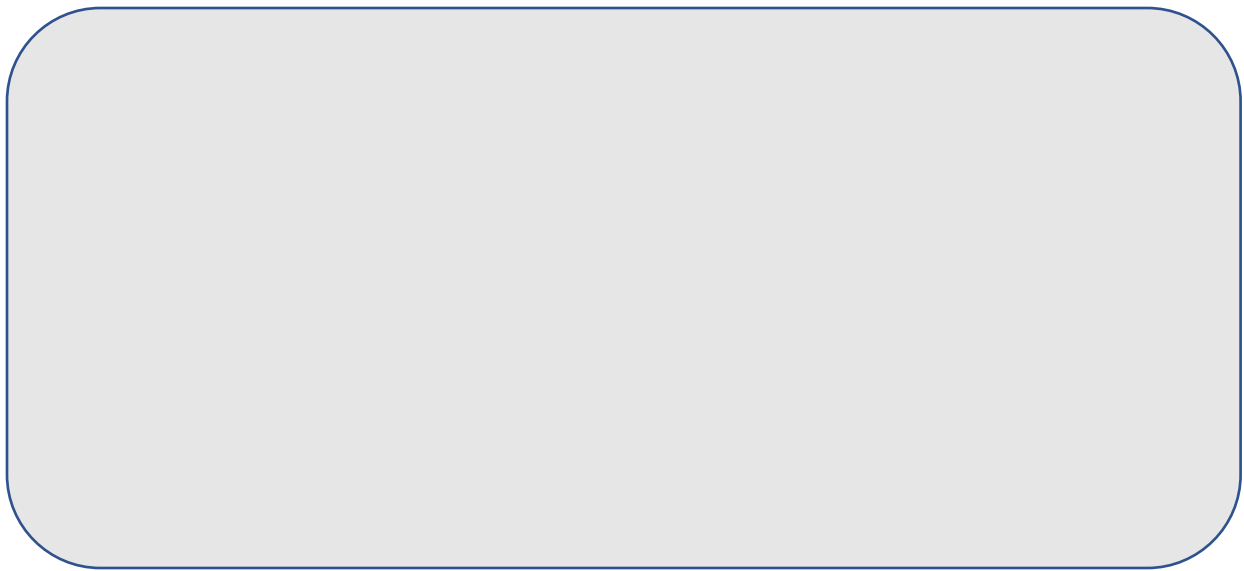
You can approach this activity from various entry points, depending on your prior knowledge, your experience with pedagogical narration, the questions you have about pedagogical narration, or even your emotional response to the subject. The purpose of this activity is to create a starting point – your own starting point – to give you a basis to work from. Except if you decide to do this activity/workshop with other educators, there is no reason for anyone to know what you have written, what you think, or how you feel about pedagogical narrations. There is no *correct* answer, and I would like to inform you that this activity, and the activities that follow, have been created to support your personal journey of learning and growth. The space below is provided for you to create your mind map.

***Mind Map – What is a Pedagogical Narration?***



Next, collect some of the ideas from your mind map and create a rough draft of your own working definition of *pedagogical narration*. Again, do not let the idea of right or wrong impede your process. The hope is that, as you move through the activities and the readings, your initial ideas will be challenged, modified, augmented, and, subsequently, changed. Change and growth will be our purpose.

***First Draft of a Definition of Pedagogical Narration***



Now, let's take a look at how pedagogical narration is defined in some of the literature.

The **Early Learning Framework (2019)** defines pedagogical narration as:

the process of noticing and collecting moments from daily practice and sharing these with colleagues, children, and families to make children's learning processes and inquiries, as well as educators' pedagogical choices, visible and open to interpretation and reflection (B.C. Ministry of Education, p. 3).

The provincial publication, **Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice (2009)** defines pedagogical narration as:

the process of observing, recording, and, individually and collectively, interpreting a series of related ordinary moments in your practice. The process should be ongoing, cyclical and based on the art of critical reflection on the part of a community of learners (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13).

**Dahlberg et al. (2007)** describe pedagogical documentation as content within a process, and as the process itself. The content is defined as the “material which records what the children are saying and doing, the work of the children, and how the pedagogue relates to the children and their work” (p. 144). This *content* can take the form of the photographs, children’s artwork and creations, conversations and inquiries that have been recorded as text, audio or video.

**Rinaldi (2006)**, defines as: “Most simply expressed, pedagogical documentation is a process for making pedagogical (or other) work visible and subject to interpretation, dialogue, confrontation (argumentation) and understanding” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 12).

Echoing Rinaldi (2006), **Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015)** also provide a concise definition of pedagogical narration: “simply put, [pedagogical narration] is a way to make children’s learning visible as educators make decisions about curriculum development” (p. 114).

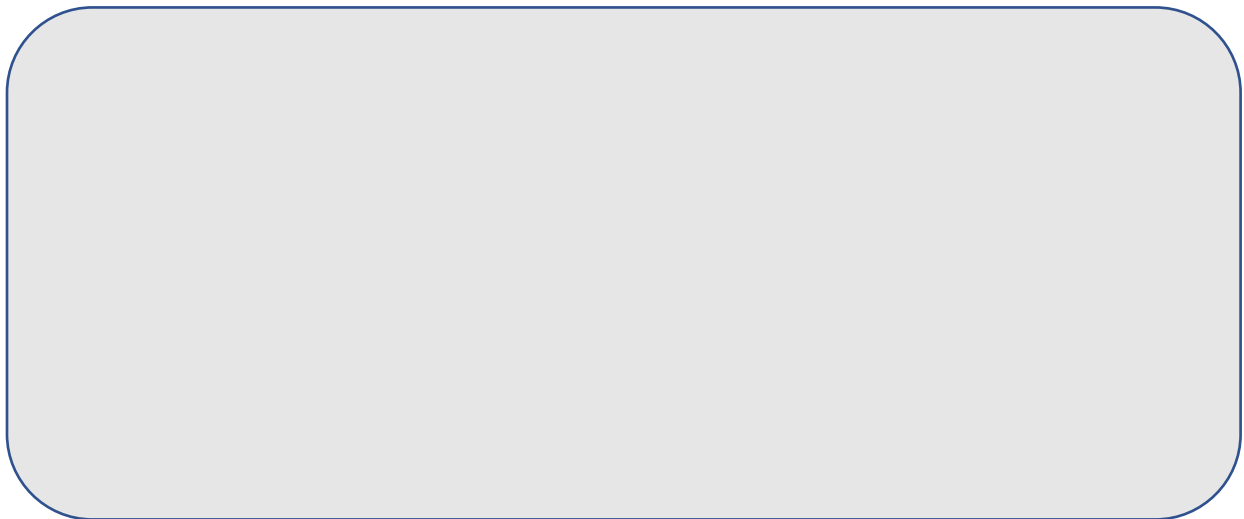
Whether in a group or on your own, read through and think about the different definitions of pedagogical narration. How are the definitions similar? How do they differ? What components of a definition of pedagogical narration do you think are necessary for your own practice? Are there definitions or components of definitions similar to your rough draft? What was different?

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**Activity – Synthesis:** Using the examples of definitions from the literature along with your first draft, re-create your own working definition of pedagogical narration. This may be done individually or in a group.

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### **Second Draft of a Definition of Pedagogical Narration**



Now that you have a working definition of pedagogical narration, let us enrich our understanding of this pedagogical tool by looking at some of the history and context of where pedagogical narrations came from.

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## Part 2 – History and Context of Pedagogical Narration

The purpose of this section is to provide you with some background information regarding the history and context of where the practice of pedagogical narration came from and to deepen their understanding and practice.

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*Activity – Reading: While reading through this next section, make note of anything you found interesting, anything that was new to you, or anything you questioned or would like to know more about.*

*Question: What values or principles were endorsed by the Reggio Emilia educational project and how were these values or principles expressed? What do you value in/for early childhood education? And how are your values actuated?*

*If this is being done as a group activity, use your notes to initiate a discussion about what you have written.*

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The practice of pedagogical narrations has its roots in the pedagogical documentation practices of the pre-primary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017). To understand the advent of pedagogical narrations, it is important to consider the historical context that provoked the impetus to create an educational setting where pedagogy, psychology, and culture (Rinaldi, 2006) triangulated to serve the social and educational values needed to support this pedagogical practice. This next section will serve the function of providing that historical context.

The Second World War had just ended in Europe, and Northern Italy, where the city of Reggio Emilia is situated, was in the process of being liberated (Moss, 2016). The values of “solidarity, social justice, peace, [and] democracy” (Moss, 2016, p. 3) spearheaded social and political movements as a response to a society that had been suppressed for years by the fascist government of the dictator Benito Mussolini (Neville, 2014); a government that had also enlisted the country in World War Two, as a member of the Rome-Berlin Axis powers which included Germany, Italy, and later, Japan (Neville, 2014). With the defeat of the Axis and the fall of the Mussolini government, however, there grew a hope for social renewal in Italy (Moss, 2016). As noted by Renzo Bonazzi, the mayor of Reggio Emilia from 1962 to 1976,

Mussolini and the fascists made us understand that obedient human beings are dangerous human beings. When we decided to build a new society after the war, we understood that we needed to have schools in which children dared to think for themselves, and where children got the conditions for becoming active and critical citizens (Bonazzi, n.d.; as cited in Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii).

With this sentiment in mind, and in the spirit of cooperation, active participation, and a hope for the future (Moss, 2016), the local community of Reggio Emilia “assum[ed] responsibility for the education of its young children” (Moss, 2016, p. 7) and started its first school. The school was open, not only to children and their families, but also to the “local communities and all citizens” (Moss, 2016, p. xiv). Further, it was recognized that schooling “is a system of relations and communications embedded in the wider social system” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114) and this recognition allowed the education to be relevant and “intensely local” (Moss, 2016, p. xxvi). Based on the vision of “democracy and equality” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii), characterised by “connections and relations” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. xi) with a belief in the values of “cooperation and solidarity” (Moss, 2016, p. xvii), the schools of Reggio Emilia offered an approach to education

based on adults listening rather than speaking, where doubt and amazement are welcome factors along with scientific inquiry and the deductive method of the detective. It is an approach in which the importance of the unexpected and the possible are recognized (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 115).

Loris Malaguzzi was “the guiding genius” (Gardner, 1998, p. xv) and inspired the pedagogy of the new public schools of Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2006). These schools offered an educational experience that aimed to engage children, families, and the local community (Moss, 2016), and, as Malaguzzi, himself, stated, to “get out from under this big blanket of conformism and passivity, and re-discover the desire to think and plan and work together” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 42). With these values and a desire for action, Loris Malaguzzi guided the pedagogical experience of the schools in Reggio Emilia for the next three decades (Rinaldi, 2006), reminding many that “another world is possible” (Moss, 2016, p. xxvi).

Loris Malaguzzi, who worked closely with the frontline educators (Moss, 2016), believed that education played an important role in creating a better world to live in (Moss, 2016) and followed a vision of building schools that were “value-based and relevant” (Dahlberg, 2016, p. viii). With an affinity for delving into new disciplines and models (Moss, 2016) coupled with a deep appreciation for uncertainty, wonder, and amazement of the unexpected (Moss, 2016), Loris Malaguzzi was able to “[see] the connectedness of everything” (Moss, 2016, p. xvi). This perspective and skillset combined to help Malaguzzi create a school designed to capitalize on children’s natural tendency to explore and question (Dahlberg, 2016), and to develop a practice of pedagogy that would come to be known around the world (Gardner, 1998). Malaguzzi ingrained two important habits in the pedagogical culture of the schools. The first was, “to document so as to be able to reflect, dialogue and make meaning; [the second], to conserve, so as to be able to go back and to re-cognise” (Moss, 2016, p. xx); that is, to have an aspect, or a moment, of the daily happenings/curriculum preserved through documentation for the learner and/or documenter to revisit that which was documented to be able to think about it, become aware of it, or

know it again from a different perspective. These habits served to promote and strengthen the skills of observation, dialogue, communication, and joint problem-solving, which, in turn, formed the foundation for the pedagogical practice of documentation (Edwards et al., 1998).

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**Activity – Analysis:** *Looking at Figure 2 on the previous page, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous ‘Analysis’ activity.*

*How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration?*

*Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1? Record the main points of your analysis.*

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### Part 3 – The Habits of Pedagogical Narration

#### ***Malaguzzi's Habits***

As we learned from the reading, the political situation and consequence of the Second World War became the impetus for demanding a change in Italy. Some citizens realized that changing the way children were educated might help to produce citizens who could think for themselves and act upon their values. Within the pedagogical approach of the schools in Reggio Emilia, Loris Malaguzzi promoted two habits that came to be the basis of the practice of documentation, what has been termed *pedagogical narration* in British Columbia. The two habits promoted by Loris Malaguzzi's pedagogical approach were:

- a. **to document** – in a variety of ways for the purpose of reflection, dialoguing, and meaning-making
- b. **to conserve** – retaining the documentation for the purpose of revisiting and reflecting upon

#### ***To Document***

Let's take some time to focus on documenting. If we consider the various ways to document we could probably come up with a list, such as: photography, video recording, audio recording, transcriptions of conversations, children's writings, drawings, or creations. To be practiced in all methods of documentation would allow us, as educators, to utilize the method that could provide the most telling perspective of the story that is being documented. Further, if we consider our actions alone as a form of education, to utilize various methods of documentation would be modeling an approach to living, working, or being that is varied, multi-perspective, and deliberate. For the purposes of this learning experience, however, let's focus on two methods of documenting: the use of digital photography and transcriptions of children's talk.

### ***Photography as a Method for Documenting***

Photos are a very nice complement to transcriptions, as they can provide a visual context to what was said. Photos can also be used as the source of transcriptions, as educators can transcribe what the children say as they look at the photos. Photos can help for a variety of reasons, and so we look at getting into the habit of using photography as another method for documenting.

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*An Important Consideration: This section was created with the assumption that you will follow the policies for photographing children specific to the centre you work in. If there is any conflict between this activity and those policies, please adhere to the policies of your centre.*

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So, you have a digital camera, a memory card, and a computer. You know how to charge the camera's battery, and you also know how to connect the camera to computer. Now, there are a few habits that may help you to utilize the camera to document throughout the day. This is not an exhaustive list, so please feel free to modify the list as it pertains to your particular situation/setting. These actions may seem trivial or mundane when you read through the list, but I would like you to move beyond just understanding by reading. The purpose of this is to get to the point of understanding by deliberately doing. As a frontline early childhood educator, I understand what little time there is in a day – and we will discuss time in a later section – but for now, please do your best to make these become habits.

**Preparation** – Decide on a place in your room where the camera can be kept safe, visible and accessible. Do you use multiple rooms or spaces, such as an outdoor space where the camera will need to be moved to during the day, depending on the flow of your program? On your own or with your team, think about and discuss where in the room(s)/space(s) the camera can be kept so that it is accessible.

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***Activity:** After deciding on a designated place(s) in your room where the camera can be kept safe and accessible, at the beginning of the day as part of the setup routine, put the camera in its designated place. Starting at **Day 1**, put a mark on each day you remember to put the camera in its designated place. Circle any days that you forgot to put the camera out.*

---

### CAMERA'S DESIGNATED SPOT LOG

Day_1	Day_2	Day_3	Day_4	Day_5	Day_6	Day_7
Day_8	Day_9	Day_10	Day_11	Day_12	Day_13	Day_14
Day_15	Day_16	Day_17	Day_18	Day_19	Day_20	Day_21

Congratulations! You are on your way to developing the habits needed to make pedagogical narration a part of your practice. The camera is now accessible to all the educators (and in some programs, accessible to the children, as well), and you are ready to take the next step – **taking photographs!**

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***Hint:** Even if you missed a day or two here or there, you have put yourself on your way to forming the habit of having the camera readily available for you to take the next, more important, step: **taking photographs.***

---

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***Reiterating an Important Consideration:*** *This section was created with the assumption that you will follow the policies for photographing children specific to the centre you work in. If there is any conflict between this learning resource and those policies, please adhere to the policies of your centre.*

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*Before taking any photographs, however, the first question always is: Do you have written consent from parents, or caregivers, to photograph every child? Consent to photograph is usually a question, or section, on the intake form, and you will need to make sure you have permission to photograph before doing so.*

*Also be aware that your centre may have a policy regarding developing/printing photos, which may prohibit you from using an outside source for developing. Inquire before doing so.*

### ***Digital Photography***

You are most likely using a digital camera, which allows you to take photos, re-take photos, delete photos, save photos, repeatedly. Photography, like pedagogical narration, is an art form. (I would say pedagogical narration is a compound art form, however, meaning that it is comprised of a more than one different art forms – photography being one of them). Even when there is natural talent present, the way to develop an art form is by practicing. But practicing the same thing over and over will only allow you to develop an art form to a point. To continue to develop an art form, it is wise to practice aspects, perspectives, and skills associated with the art form that are new to you.

As this is not a course in photography; that the skills involved will develop over time; and that each person will develop their own personal preference and creative outlook, I will only offer a list of possibilities that you can personalize by experimenting with, practicing and developing. There is also a

World Wide Web of resources that can help you guide your interests and expand your understanding of photography.

### ***Perspectives in Composition***

- Play with the position of the subject in the frame. If you always center the subject, try taking photographs with the subject in other areas of the frame.
- Take photos from bird's eye view, or from the ground-up
- Play with colour, shape, lighting, patterns, etc.
- Take before-and-after photos
- Experiment with taking photos through glass, or reflected in a mirror
- Try setting the timer on the camera to take random photos

### ***Skills in Hardware or Software (subject to funding and availability)***

- Try taking a series of photos using the different settings on your camera
- If your camera allows you to use interchangeable lenses, try a different lens
- Use a tripod and/or a remote trigger
- Try using cameras the children can wear
- Drones have become popular for getting aerial views
- Modify or enhance photos with software

### ***Getting children involved***

One technique for adding the children's perspective is to get them involved in the documentation process, and digital photography is a great method to do so. Having a simple digital camera and providing opportunities for the children to take pictures is a great way to empower children, model the promotion of alternate perspectives, send the message that children can take ownership over

their own learning or interests, let them know their opinions matter, and give them opportunities to practice the social skills of compromising and turn-taking. Every educator and every early learning setting will have different rules for using the camera, and it is recommended these rules be created and discussed beforehand.

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**Activity – Analysis:** *Looking at Figure 3 & 4 on the next two pages, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous ‘Analysis’ activity.*

*How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration?*

*Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 through Figure 4? Record the main points of your analysis.*

---





### ***Transcriptions as a Method for Documenting***

Transcribing children's talk – their statements, their questions, their conversations, their verbalized ideas, etc., is a very easy method for capturing sources of ideas and thoughts that can be interpreted and built upon/from. You can start by keeping a clipboard with a blank piece of paper. As you are with the children, they will naturally say things that will make you smile, make you wonder, impress you, shock you, cause you to recognize they are in need of an answer to something, that they are unsure of something, that they are trying to understand something.

- Use your writing utensil and blank piece of paper to write down what was said.
- Put it in quotation marks.
- Add the name(s) of who said what.
- Add words that describe *how* something was said.
- Add a note of why it captured your attention, or what it caused you to think – does it relate to anything else that has been going on or being talked about? What type of play might connect to what you have transcribed?
- Add the date to your transcription or any other pertinent contextual information.

### ***Some Things to Consider***

- It may not be necessary to transcribe entire conversations. In fact, you may find that transcribing one line is all that was necessary to become the basis for making connections or further exploration.
- Not all conversations are limited to one moment. The thoughts and ideas of a particular subject or theme may be expressed by the children over the course of a few days to a few weeks. For this reason, transcriptions can be ongoing. Listing the names of who said what and the date/context of what was said will help you organize the next steps in the process.

- To help organize the transcriptions, you may want to consider coding each transcription by theme or idea.
- If you wish to transcribe longer conversations, or if you are also a part of the conversation, you may want to consider audio recording the conversations to give you the freedom to stay within the experience of conversing while also documenting.

#### Part 4 – The Purpose and Value of Pedagogical Narration

For the practice of pedagogical narration to be imported from Reggio Emilia, Italy (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Hodgins, 2012; Kocher, 2017) to become 1) a topic of learning and reflection for participants in the Investigating Quality (IQ) Early Learning Environments Project (Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2009), 2) enter the early childhood education lexicon in British Columbia through the provincial publication, *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009), and 3) move on to become “central to the vision” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 3) of the newest edition of the *Early Learning Framework*, there must be some value in engaging in this pedagogical practice. Upon review of the literature, the *value* in engaging with pedagogical narration seems to be linked to the *purpose* for engaging in pedagogical narration.

The purpose for engaging in pedagogical narration is an important piece for frontline early childhood educators to comprehend, as it provides educators with the added understanding of intent, which may provide an educator with direction. With an understanding of purpose, educators may be able to engage more fully with this pedagogical tool and use it with confidence. When reviewing the literature while considering the purpose of pedagogical narration, four major themes emerge:

- Pedagogical narration as an educational tool for building curriculum, learning and development
- Pedagogical narration as a tool for communication
- Pedagogical narration as a means for validation
- Pedagogical narration as a tool for political activism.

Heeding Rinaldi's (2006) declaration that, “documentation is therefore first and foremost an educational tool” (p. 47), it may be prudent to begin our practice of pedagogical narration with the purpose, or intent, of using it as an educational tool for curriculum-building, learning and development.

It also seems that if educators are using pedagogical narration, *first and foremost*, as a tool for building curriculum, learning and development, the other purposes outlined in the literature would naturally come to be. Pedagogical narrations would, of course, be being used to communicate with the children, families, and educators the learning experiences, questions, comments, thoughts, and the pedagogical direction of the experience(s). With more experience doing pedagogical narration, I believe educators will also naturally begin to develop preferences for how to communicate.

Regarding using pedagogical narration as a means for validation, before we begin theorizing about how the use of pedagogical narration will validate the field of early childhood education, a large percentage of educators would need to be using it to become an example for validation of our field. For that reason, it seems prudent to think of validation in terms of the individual. If you, as an educator, are using pedagogical narration in your practice for the purpose of being an educational tool for learning and development, the satisfaction you receive from doing purposeful pedagogical work will, I believe, naturally provide you, the educator, with a sense of validation. When enough individual educators are using pedagogical narration in their practice, validation of our field will naturally follow.

Likewise, using pedagogical narration as a tool for political activism may seem like a valiant and philanthropic pursuit or endeavour, but again, I think, at this point, we need to bring our focus back to growing our practice of pedagogical narration as an educational tool for curriculum-building, learning and development, balancing our perspective with the child's perspective. When most of the early childhood educators in the province are regularly and sufficiently using pedagogical narration, then we will have some firepower for launching ourselves into the political sphere. (I'm *not* saying don't get political. What I am saying, however, is *don't allow politics to cloud your judgement – let it come naturally and in the meantime develop your pedagogical work*. When early childhood educators stand up to ask for wages that better reflect the importance and complexity of our practice, including receiving paid planning time, recognition of level of education, and full benefits, let's have pedagogical narration

on our side to strengthen our argument to receive what we will deserve. But let's deserve it before we demand it. And so, let's focus our attention on using pedagogical narration as an educational tool for building curriculum, learning and development.

---

**Activity – Analysis:** *Looking at Figure 5 on the next page, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous 'Analysis' activity.*

*How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration?*

*Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 now to Figure 5? Record the main points of your analysis.*

---

January

27

# This month...

## The Dollhouse

"Maybe we should put it here, because purple and pink are my favorite colours."

"Where should this go? Right here?"

"Good place."

"Where does this go?"  
"In the living room, of course."

"This is what stops the cracks."

"Now my dryer has energy."

"If rain goes in here, it sucks up the water and brings it back into the atmosphere."

"When a person comes here, she'll bump her head."

"When there's a ghost inside the house, that's when the lights blink."

"Once the new batteries were in the house, switching on and off the lights became an attraction. We wondered if playing with a switch board would further develop understanding of how light switches work."

"If you leave that on, it's a waste of energy."

"These are to keep my power supply safe from the rain."

"What would happen if the rain touches the power supply?"

"The batteries are still not dead. I'm going to turn these lights off so we don't waste energy."



### ***To Conserve***

Circling back to the History and Context of Pedagogical Narration, the other habit of Malaguzzi's that helped to provide a basis for the practice of pedagogical documentation was to conserve; that is, to retain the documentation for the purpose of revisiting and reflecting upon. As there are various ways to document, there are, as well, various ways to conserve documentation. In the settings I have practiced as an early childhood educator, I have used individual portfolios, whole classroom portfolios, digital video and/or photo collage saved to disk, a password-protected social media forum for parents, and presentations. My favorite medium for conserving documentation is very simple, however: cork display boards. Not to say that any one project ever truly ends, there does come a point that feels like a finale. Figure 5 from the previous page is an example of a display board that has a project in the process. Although this board has a title, it isn't clear where things began and where they led. This, for me, is still in the ongoing/development stage, even though there is a writeup hanging in a folder. I will move what is on this board to another board where I will be more conscious of how everything is displayed; the next step in conserving this documentation.







# The Dollhouse

There is a lot of information about the dollhouse in the notes. The notes are organized into sections. The first section is about the history of the dollhouse. The second section is about the construction of the dollhouse. The third section is about the interior of the dollhouse. The fourth section is about the exterior of the dollhouse. The fifth section is about the accessories of the dollhouse. The sixth section is about the care of the dollhouse. The seventh section is about the display of the dollhouse. The eighth section is about the value of the dollhouse. The ninth section is about the collection of dollhouses. The tenth section is about the future of the dollhouse.

The dollhouse is a miniature model of a house. It is usually made of wood or plastic. It is often used as a toy for children. It can also be used as a decorative item. The dollhouse is a popular hobby for many people. There are many different styles of dollhouses. Some are very simple and some are very elaborate. The dollhouse is a great way to learn about architecture and interior design. It is also a great way to exercise your creativity. The dollhouse is a fun and interesting hobby for people of all ages.

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The Dollhouse began as an emergent project at the beginning of the new calendar year, 2023. Looking to add something new into the classroom, we decided to try the wooden dollhouse that, up until this point, had seemed like a permanent structure of the hallway just outside the storage room door. Roughly 1.25m high (almost 2m with the stand it sits atop), 1.25m long and 80 cm wide, Kaylee and I planned our path before moving it into the Cottonwood room. Made of solid wood and standing majestic, the dollhouse became the centerpiece of the classroom.

We placed the three trays of wooden furniture, household accessories and people

- at the base of the dollhouse and watched as the children began filling the rooms with furniture and stories.



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**Activity – Analysis:** *Looking at Figure 6 through 10 on the previous pages, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous ‘Analysis’ activity.*

*How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration?*

*Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 now to Figure 10? Record the main points of your analysis.*

**Question:** *Now at this stage of developing a pedagogical narration, what is next to do? How can this be developed even further to achieve the level of practice that we would want to achieve as a field of educators in the province of British Columbia?*

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### ***The Writeup***

The reason it is important to document along the way – to take photographs or to transcribe the children’s comments, questions, etc. – is because all those pieces of documentation are going to be put together now to write the story – the narration.

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***Activity – Reading and Analysis:*** *Read through the writeup for The Dollhouse and ask yourself these questions:*

*Was the story easy to follow?*

*What helped you to understand the decisions that were made to move the experience in the direction that it went?*

*At any of the junction points, what other direction(s) do you think the story could have gone?*

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The news spread quickly that the switches had a more concrete function, and every child was drawn to the dollhouse to take a turn *switching on*, and *switching off* the lights.

Switching on and off the lights was, of course, something quite novel, but was there something more? Were the children simply participating in cause-and-effect? Were the children enamored by having control over cause-and-effect? Were they wondering how the switches and the *energy source* were linked to the production of light? Or was this just simply a novel toy?

The lights did initiate another type of conversation though:

*"I'm going to turn these lights off so we don't waste energy."*

*"If you leave that on, it's a waste of energy."*

The language of *wasting energy*, *not wasting energy*, or conserving energy found its way into our daily conversations wherever appropriate.

*Energy, Conservation, and Sustainability learning resources for all age groups can be found on BC Hydro's webpage: <https://schools.bchydro.com/activities>*

I wondered if the children had questions, or could be prompted to generate questions, by using a circuit board. Borrowed from a child's family, we began building some very basic, single-function circuits. We progressed to circuits with more pieces and multiple functions. The spinning fan, the different lights, and the sounds from the electronic keyboard were all very captivating, but no one ever gave any indication of questioning or wondering why things worked when the circuit was connected but did not work when the circuit had been broken. Being the first time most of the children had interacted with a circuit board, it seems very plausible that experiencing the circuit board kept them focused in the moment; that being able to formulate questions requires having an experience as well as having time to reflect on that experience. Further experiences with the circuit board may provoke future questions.

Thinking about the social development of the group, we wanted to generate opportunities for the children to plan together, actively listen to each other, discuss ideas, and compromise, as these are all very important skills for being in, and navigating through, society. Originally planned to be a multi-stage project, the time logistics prompted us to *just start*. Beginning with two children, we explained the goal of the activity – starting with a blank dollhouse, discuss and plan the design of the entire house with a friend. The only rule: every part of the design must be discussed and agreed upon. Hint: Clear communication will help your team succeed.

Open-ended questions like - *What room is this? What do you need for this room?* - prompted discussion between the children and got them working together. We also sat very close to the children working on the project, not only document what was going on, but to aid in the conversation at those times.

A third, then fourth, child joined and the discussion got bigger and the planning became more complex. By the end, I had witnessed some very good communication between the children, and the house had furniture, an active fireplace, a bedroom (that was also an office), and a place for the dryer to be plugged in.

This type of small group activity is something we would like to continue and expand upon, as the social development of children is a very important component of being in a society.

### ***Discussion***

The writeup is an opportunity to tell the story of what happened during the project or experience. The educator can provide the audience with an account of the initial question, observation, or interest, etc., that initiated the project, or experiential journey. Just like stories in popular culture, the educator is can use literary devices

What was the initial question/motif/conflict, and what did that lead to? What was the setting? Did the setting change and at what point? At each junction of the learning journey, what questions were asked? What comments were made? What connections were being forming, or needing to be formed?

Analyzing the writeup from *The Dollhouse*, we can sift out some of the potential components of this telling of the story, or narration, of what occurred pedagogically, that is, the practice or method(s) used for teaching – the pedagogical narration. The components are listed in point form and should not be considered an exhaustive list or in an order that needs to followed exactly.

- There is a title
- The opening paragraph introduces the narration/the setting/the material
- There is a descriptive account of what transpired
- Quotation marks and italics stylize and define quotes of what the children said
- There is a description of the process and how the experience unfolded
- A description of how the experience was continued, or scaffolded
- A description of what the experience(s) generated for the children and the educators
- Asking a variety of questions to locate the potential underlying point of interest of the experience with the intention of cultivating that interest with more experiences

- Testing hypothesis with an account of the next steps taken in the experience/process
- A record of any branches, or derivations, of the topic of interest or experience
- A description of the reasoning of why educators took a particular curricular path



**Activity – Reading and Reflection:** From the ‘February’ monthly documentation board, a pedagogical narration was created and transferred to a documentation board in the hallway, as seen in the next photograph.

Read the next example of the pedagogical narration, ‘What is Garbage?’ and create a list of anything you notice, question, or appreciate.



## What is Garbage?

The water was calm, so we decided to go crabbing. Using sardines as bait, we threw the crab trap out into the ocean and waited.



Hoping that we might find some smaller crabs under rocks, shells, or anything else interesting along the beach, we decided to walk to one end of the beach. Holding up a plastic container, a child announced, *"I found some garbage!"*



*"Let's put it in the bucket,"* I replied. And as instantly as that moment happened, the group of children with me turned their focus to collecting garbage.

*"Here's some garbage!"*

*"I found garbage!"*

It seems most of the children had forgotten about the crab trap, because they seemed so intent on finding garbage. (Giving children a purpose is a very useful tool for education.)

We walked to the end of the beach and back to the crab trap with a collection of garbage. The children helped me pull in the trap to find no crabs. And so, we repeated the process: crab trap back into the water and down to the other end of the beach collecting garbage.

*“I found some garbage!”*

*“Here’s some!”*

The bucket was being filled, not only with what I would classify as garbage, but with other things as well, such as shells, twigs, and seaweed. At first, my impulse was to tell them that these things were not garbage, but I quickly recognized the opportunity to have a group discussion and resisted saying anything other than, “Thanks for caring for the beach.”

Back to the crab trap again, we pulled it in to find no crabs. We had had a nice walk up and down the beach however, *and* we had a bucket full of *learning opportunity*.



The next day, we put everything we had collected onto a large plastic sheet for the purpose of examining and sorting. (I had the thought of wanting to weigh all the *garbage* and then weigh each pile of the different types of *garbage*, but this thought got lost somewhere and we never did – an idea for next time, though.)



We separated everything into seven piles: **soft plastic**, **hard plastic**, **Styrofoam**, **wood**, **paper**, **porcelain**, and **natural materials**. The children then wrote the labels for each pile and we took pictures of our work.



Because some children from the Birch room had been with us on the initial outing when we collected everything from the beach, we wanted to share the learning experience with them. An educator from the Birch room and I decided to put on a puppet play to talk about everything we had found and share ideas for what we could do with all the *garbage*.

The puppets, (and excuse me, but I have forgotten their names), talked about and asked the children about each type of material. At the end of the puppet play, the children helped dispose of the soft plastic, hard plastic, Styrofoam, paper, and porcelain. As for the wood and other natural materials, the children brought these back to the forest and the beach the next day.

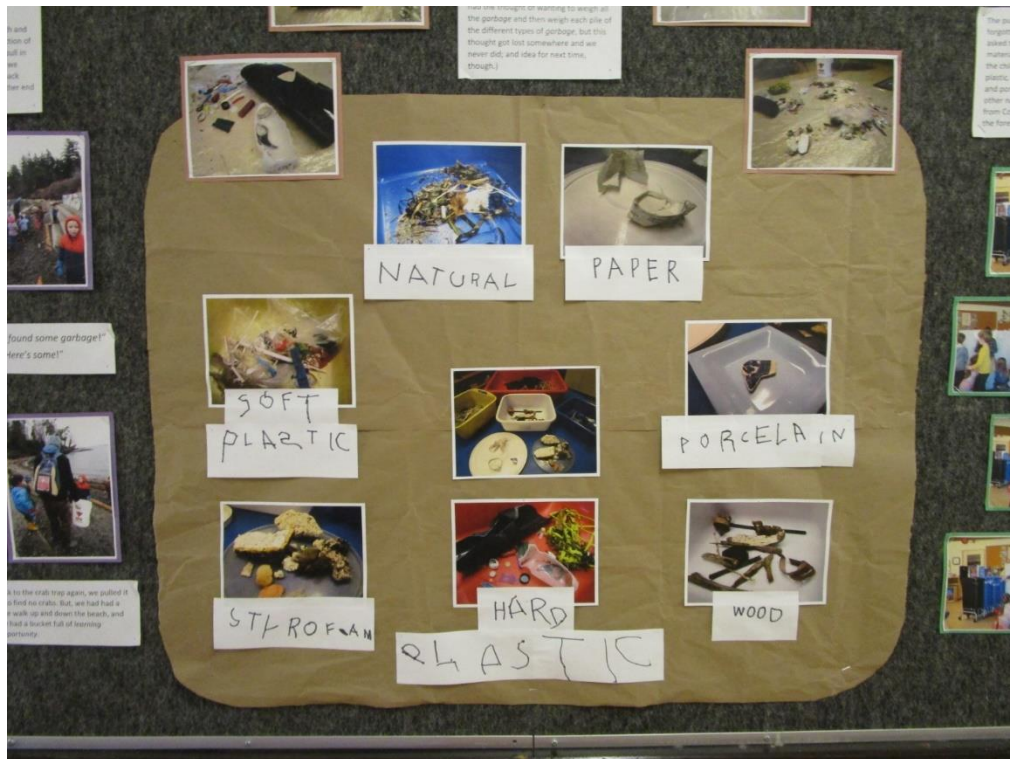
The Capital Region District (CRD) has a community outreach and education division that offers workshops for all ages. We contacted the CRD and someone came in to share some information with us,

pictures of where our garbage goes, and strategies for keeping garbage out of the landfills. The children seemed to enjoy the hands-on learning experience of sorting recyclables.





### Development of the Documentation Board





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**Activity – Reading and Analysis:** Reread through the writeup for *What is Garbage?* and ask yourself these questions:

*What, if anything, has been developed from the first example of a pedagogical narrations, The Dollhouse?*

*From both the writeup and the documentation board, list all the examples of child involvement you can find?*

*Aside from, or along with, the Capital Region District (CRD) Education Outreach workshop, what are some other community resources that could have been used in this project?*

*Although not represented here, the documentation of this project was used to later reflect on the experiences, generate further discussion, and connect to other activities and experiential learning experiences with the children. If you were an educator in this project, what other connections or experiences might you try and create? How would you incorporate this learning into the culture of the classroom?*

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## Learning

In this section, I will provide a brief reflection on what I have learned during the process of this project.

To be able to create a training resource for early childhood educators in British Columbia, there was a need, not only to understand pedagogical narrations from a theoretical, academic perspective, but more importantly, to have the experience of *doing* pedagogical narrations in an early learning setting. Before even getting to the point of doing a pedagogical narration, relationship-building with the children, families, and other educators needed to take place. An early learning environment conducive to different ways of inquiring, experiencing, and learning needed to be created. The conditions for implementing this type of pedagogical work needed to be discussed, compromised, and actualized. For educators who have only experienced pedagogical narrations in college coursework, or for educators who have never experienced pedagogical narrations at all, aside from reading about them in the *Early Learning Framework* (BC Ministry of Education, 2019), I needed to learn how to present my goal of doing pedagogical narrations. Using the documentation board in the classroom, each month's display became a visual representation of the journey to the goal of pedagogical narration. When I finally took down the January display from the classroom and reorganized it onto a documentation board in the main hallway, the journey of learning and the process of doing pedagogical narration became actualized. Educators from the other programs and others working in the building were reading the documentation, providing feedback, and expressing interest in wanting to do pedagogical narrations in their program. The most effective presentation of my goal became the display of the narration itself on the documentation board in the main hallway, and it also seems to have been the best way of convincing other educators that what I was doing had value.

Time is the most coveted resource for doing pedagogical narrations, and learning how to use and manage time in the most effective way was probably the biggest challenge of the entire project. But, when I was focused on the next step in the process of each pedagogical narration, and I had clearly communicated my intent with the other educators while incorporating their feedback and perspective, even fifteen minutes per day provided me with the time I needed to accomplish each of the narrations. Having a plan, communicating with others, taking little steps, and maintaining a sense of perseverance proved to be a formula of what was needed to work through each pedagogical narration.

Another important skill I learned was knowing when to be satisfied with the work. Pedagogical narrations, by nature, can be continued indefinitely into the future, but recognizing when the work had reached a point where a story could be told was an invaluable skill to learn. Thinking about the pedagogical narration as writing a basic story in a literature class became of thinking about the display of the narration itself. Would a parent understand the flow, movement, and theme of the story? Could the children easily recognize and be able to re-tell the story by looking at the display board? Thinking from these different perspectives helped me to understand how I might display the narration.

The design of a workshop will fulfill the requirement for this Master's degree, but I expect, through Island Health, to provide a workshop to early childhood educators at the Island Health facility. Facilitating this workshop will provide me with the opportunity for more learning, whether it comes in the form of knowing how to present information, changing to adapt to the audience, or supporting the learning needs of other educators who come with their own level of understanding, and I look forward to the continued learning journey.

### Future Work and Research Needed

The field of early childhood education would do well with having a detailed history of the field itself, especially documenting the changes in perspective and approach that have occurred and that will continue to occur. That future educators can judge which perspectives, approaches and changes have been based in sound judgement, it makes sense, not only to create a historical list of the changes, but also to couple the historical timeline with a qualitative examination of the values, philosophies, and thoughts that pre-empted any change. This would provide the field the opportunity to re-visit and re-examine anything historical in our field that we may have overlooked. A specific example of a decision that was made for the entire field of early childhood education that does not seem to be explained or described in the literature is: why was *pedagogical narration* chosen as the term for this pedagogical practice in British Columbia? Another question might be: Why, with no evidence based in research in a Canadian or British Columbian context, was this pedagogical practice esteemed by those who influence our field? Meticulous documentation of how pedagogical narrations came to be in the province of British Columbia would be helpfully informative to the field of early childhood education.

Another important piece of work that could be done in British Columbia would be to create a space where early childhood educators across the province could share examples of pedagogical narrations with the goal being that other educators could learn from examples; where these examples would represent, not just one way of doing a pedagogical narration, but as many perspectives and processes as there are educators and projects going on in early childhood education settings. There would need to be a mediator making sure that privacy and confidentiality of children, families, and settings remained intact, but I think the ECE Registry and the Ministry of Education could easily create a monitored forum where registered ECEs could share, discuss, ask questions, and garner other perspectives on their work.

Only when more early childhood educators are consistently using pedagogical narrations as a pedagogical tool in an early childhood education setting will there become more opportunities to do research to answer other questions relating to the efficacy of this pedagogical tool, the development of the self as educator of young children, society's image of the importance of the early childhood educator, the need for a more educated early childhood educator, etc., etc.

Appendix A

# Pedagogical Narrations: A Guided Workshop

by James McGran

## Introduction

My connection and passion for  
pedagogical narrations...

## Overview

1. What is a Pedagogical Narration?
2. The History and Context of Pedagogical Narration
3. The Habits of Pedagogical Narration
4. The Purpose and Value of Pedagogical Narration

## Learning Goals

- ▶ In this workshop, an early childhood educator will learn:
  1. how pedagogical narration is defined in the literature to then create your own working definition of pedagogical narration
  2. some of history and context from where the practice of pedagogical narration comes from to give you a deeper understanding
  3. some of the habits you can practice to help incorporate pedagogical narrations into your daily practice
  4. how this pedagogical tool can be used to create curriculum in your class.

Figure 1



## Activity: Mind Map

Without referring to the Early Learning Framework or any other sources, take a few moments to map out in writing, from your present understanding, your interpretation of what a pedagogical narration is.

## Definition of Pedagogical Narration

Using the ideas from your mind map, create a definition of pedagogical narration. Note that this will be a first draft that you *will* revise.

## Five Definitions of Pedagogical Narration

1. The Early Learning Framework (2019)
2. Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice (2009)
3. Dahlberg et al. (2007)
4. Rinaldi (2006)
5. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015)

## Five Definitions of Pedagogical Narration

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5. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015)

## Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice (2009)

... defines pedagogical narration as:

“the process of observing, recording, and, individually and collectively, interpreting a series of related ordinary moments in your practice. The process should be ongoing, cyclical and based on the art of critical reflection on the part of a community of learners” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13).

## Dahlberg et al. (2007)

... describe pedagogical documentation as content within a process, and as the process itself. The content is defined as the “material which records what the children are saying and doing, the work of the children, and how the pedagogue relates to the children and their work” (p. 144). This *content* can take the form of the photographs, children’s artwork and creations, conversations and inquiries that have been recorded as text, audio or video.

## Rinaldi (2006)

... defines pedagogical documentation by stating: “Most simply expressed, pedagogical documentation is a process for making pedagogical (or other) work visible and subject to interpretation, dialogue, confrontation (argumentation) and understanding” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 12).

## Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015)

... provide a concise definition of pedagogical narration:

“simply put, [pedagogical narration] is a way to make children’s learning visible as educators make decisions about curriculum development” (p. 114).

## Activity: Group Discussion

Whether in a group or on your own, read through and think about the different definitions of pedagogical narration.

- ▶ How are the definitions similar?
- ▶ How do they differ?
- ▶ What components of a definition of pedagogical narration do you think are necessary for your own practice?
- ▶ Are there definitions or components of definitions similar to your rough draft?  
What was different?

## Activity: Synthesis

Using the examples of definitions from the literature along with your first draft, re -create your own working definition of pedagogical narration. This may be done individually or in a group.

## Part 2: The History and Context of Pedagogical Narration?

Now that you have a working definition of pedagogical narration, knowing something of the history and context from where this pedagogical tool came will provide depth to your understanding which will then influence your practice.

## Activity: Reading

While reading the History and Context of Pedagogical Narrations handout, make note of anything you find interesting, anything that was new to you, anything you question or would like to know more about.

## Activity: Reflection

- ▶ **Questions to answer:** What values or principles were endorsed by the Reggio Emilia educational project and how were these values or principles expressed? What do **you** value in/for early childhood education? And how are your values actuated?
- ▶ If this is being done as a group activity, use your notes to initiate a discussion about what you have written.

Figure 2



## Activity: Analysis

- ▶ Looking at Figure 2 on the previous page, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous 'Analysis' activity.
- ▶ How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well developed practice of pedagogical narration?
- ▶ Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1? Record the main points of your analysis

## Part 3 - The Habits of Pedagogical Narration

a) **to document** – in a variety of ways for the purpose of reflection, dialoguing, and meaning -making

b) **to conserve** – retaining the documentation for the purpose of revisiting and reflecting upon

## Photography as a Method for Documenting

### \* An Important Consideration

This section was created with the assumption that you will follow the policies for photographing children specific to the centre you work in.

If there is any conflict between this activity and those policies, please adhere to the policies of your centre.

## Activity: Creating a Habit

After deciding on a designated place(s) in your room where the camera can be kept safe and accessible, at the beginning of the day, as part of the setup routine, put the camera in its designated place.

Using the handout and starting a **Day 1**, put a mark on each day you remember to put the camera in its designated place. Circle any days that you forgot to put the camera out.

## Photography: Perspectives in Composition

- Play with the position of the subject in the frame. If you always center the subject, try taking photographs with the subject in other areas of the frame.
- Take photos from bird's eye view, or from the ground -up
- Play with colour, shape, lighting, patterns, etc.
- Take before-and-after photos
- Experiment with taking photos through glass, or reflected in a mirror
- Try setting the timer on the camera to take random photos

## Photography: Skills in Hardware or Software

- Try taking a series of photos using the different settings on your camera
- If your camera allows you to use interchangeable lenses, try a different lens
- Use a tripod and/or a remote trigger
- Try using cameras the children can wear
- Drones have become popular for getting aerial views
- Modify or enhance photos with software

## Photography: Getting Children Involved

- ▶ One technique for adding the children's perspective is to get them involved in the documentation process, and digital photography is a great method to do so.
- ▶ Consider giving the children a way to get involved directly. Digital cameras are a great way to encourage the children to capture what is important to them.
- ▶ Every educator and every early learning setting will have different rules for using the camera, and it is recommended these rules be created and discussed beforehand.

## Activity: Analysis

- ▶ Looking at Figure 3 & 4 on the next two pages, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous 'Analysis' activity.
- ▶ How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well developed practice of pedagogical narration?
- ▶ Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 through Figure 4? Record the main points of your analysis.

Figure 3



Figure 4



## Transcriptions as a Method for Documenting

- Use your writing utensil and blank piece of paper to write down what was said.
- Put it in quotation marks.
- Add the name(s) of who said what.
- Add words that describe *how* something was said.
- Add a note of why it captured your attention, or what it caused you to think does it relate to anything else that has been going on or being talked about? What type of play might connect to what you have transcribed?
- Add the date to your transcription or any other pertinent contextual information.

## Some Things to Consider with Transcriptions

- It may not be necessary to transcribe entire conversations. In fact, you may find that transcribing one line is all that was necessary to become the basis for making connections or further exploration.
- Not all conversations are limited to one moment. The thoughts/ideas of a particular subject or theme may be expressed by the children over the course of a few days to a few weeks. For this reason, transcriptions can be ongoing. Listing the names of who said what and the date/context of what was said will help you organize the next steps in the process.
- To help organize the transcriptions, you may want to consider coding each transcription by theme or idea.
- If you wish to transcribe longer conversations, or if you are also a part of the conversation, you may want to consider audio recording the conversations to give you the freedom to stay within the experience of conversing while documenting.

## Activity: Analysis

- ▶ Looking at Figure 5 on the next page, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous 'Analysis' activity.
- ▶ How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well developed practice of pedagogical narration?
- ▶ Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 now to Figure 5? Record the main points of your analysis

Figure 5



## To Conserve

- ▶ The other habit of Malaguzzi's that helped to provide a basis for the practice of pedagogical documentation was **to conserve**; that is, to retain the documentation for the purpose of revisiting and reflecting upon.
- ▶ As there are various ways to document, there are, as well, various ways to conserve documentation: individual portfolios, whole classroom portfolios, digital video and/or photo collage saved to disk, a password - protected social media forum for parents, and presentations.
- ▶ My favorite medium for conserving documentation is very simple, however: cork display boards.

Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

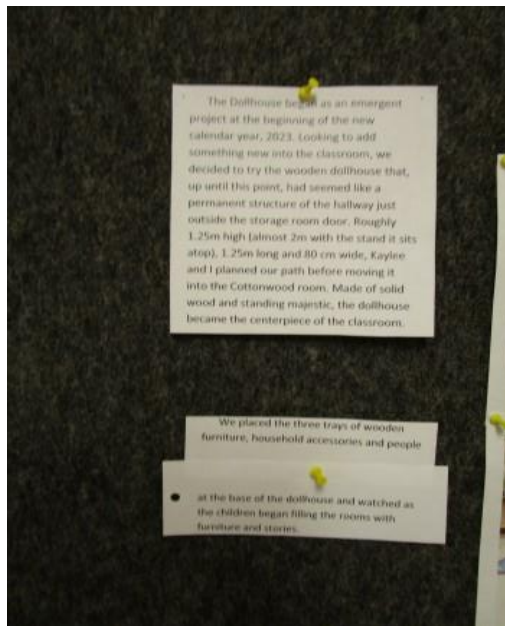


Figure 10



## Activity: Analysis

- ▶ Looking at Figure 6 through 10 on the previous pages, ask yourself the same questions as in the previous 'Analysis' activity.
- ▶ How is this, or how is it not, a pedagogical narration? What components of a pedagogical narration are present? What components of a pedagogical narration are missing? What could be changed to make this an example of a well-developed practice of pedagogical narration?
- ▶ Considering, not only the singular example of pedagogical narration but, the practice of pedagogical as a process of development, what, if anything, has changed or developed from Figure 1 now to Figure 10? Record the main points of your analysis.
- ▶ **Question:** Now at this stage of developing a pedagogical narration, what is next to do? How can this be developed even further to achieve the level of practice that we would want to achieve as a field of educators in the province of British Columbia?

## Part 4 - The Purpose and Value of Pedagogical Narrations

- Pedagogical narration as an educational tool for building curriculum, learning and development
- Pedagogical narration as a tool for communication
- Pedagogical narration as a means for validation
- Pedagogical narration as a tool for political activism

### Activity: Reading and Analysis of the Narration

- ▶ Read through the writeup for 'The Dollhouse' and ask yourself these questions:
- ▶ What purpose(s) for doing pedagogical narrations do you find in 'The Dollhouse'?
- ▶ Was the story easy to follow?
- ▶ What helped you to understand the decisions that were made to move the experience in the direction that it went?
- ▶ At any of the junction points, what other direction(s) do you think the story could have gone?

## The Narration: Components

- There is a title
- The opening paragraph introduces the narration/the setting/the material
- There is a descriptive account of what transpired
- Quotation marks and italics stylize and define quotes of what the children said
- There is a description of the process and how the experience unfolded
- A description of how the experience was continued, or scaffolded

## The Narration: Components (continued)

- A description of what the experience(s) generated for the children and the educators
- Asking a variety of questions to locate the potential underlying point of interest of the experience with the intention of cultivating that interest with more experiences
- Testing hypothesis with an account of the next steps taken in the experience/process
- A record of any branches, or derivations, of the topic of interest or experience
- A description of the reasoning of why educators took a particular curricular path

Figure 11



## Activity: Reading and Reflection

- ▶ From the 'February' monthly documentation board (Figure 11), a pedagogical narration was created and transferred to a documentation board in the hallway, as seen in the next photograph (Figure 12).
- ▶ Read the next example of the pedagogical narration, 'What is Garbage?' and create a list of anything you notice, question, or appreciate.

Figure 11



## Activity: Reading and Analysis

- ▶ Reread through the narration for 'What is Garbage?' and ask yourself these questions:
- ▶ What, if anything, has been developed from the first example of a pedagogical narrations, The Dollhouse?
- ▶ From both the writeup and the documentation board, list all the examples of child involvement you can find?
- ▶ Aside from, or along with, the Capital Region District (CRD) Education Outreach workshop, what are some other community resources that could have been used in this project?
- ▶ Although not represented here, the documentation of this project was used to later reflect on the experiences, generate further discussion, and connect to other activities and experiential learning experiences with the children. If you were an educator in this project, what other connections or experiences might you try and create? How would you incorporate this learning into the culture of the classroom?

## An Example of a Simple Documentation Board



Thank you for participating!