ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG CHILDREN IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASS INSPIRED BY THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG CHILDREN IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASS INSPIRED BY THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

By Anat Porat

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This study investigated the conflict resolution abilities employed by 3-4 year old children within an Israeli kindergarten that was inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy. Conflict resolution is a significant phenomenon worldwide and the subject of considerable research, due to potential negative outcomes from involvement in conflict, and escalation of the conflict to a stage of violence. Nevertheless, a gap in knowledge was identified, regarding the Reggio Emilia educational approach, as an intervention to support the development of children's social-emotional competence to enable them to resolve interpersonal conflicts using pro-social strategies.

An in-depth case study was conducted using grounded theory principles to develop a model to answer the question: To what extent might a Reggio Emilia inspired approach support resolution of interpersonal conflicts between 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class? The rich qualitative data were gathered through video filmed observations, teacher's semi-structured interviews, children's interviews, documents, and field notes. A four-phase content analysis of the data enabled conceptualisation of the characteristics of the educational setting and the children's conflict resolution strategies.

The findings allowed the emergence of a model evidencing that both direct and indirect intervention strategies were used to support the conflict resolution among the children. Teachers responded in a range of ways to children's request for direct intervention, and most especially used a clarification-mediation conversation. Indirectly, they promoted democratic pedagogy with children through participation, listening and dialogue. The findings reveal the children's development in their conflict resolution, which indicate a significant advancement in their pro-social negotiation abilities. Additionally, the findings show a significant increase in the children's spontaneous intervention as peer observers of the conflict and a decrease in their request of teacher intervention.

The research suggests that over time, no extra-curricular intervention is needed within a supportive and democratic educational approach, such as the Reggio Emilia inspired approach provides. It illuminates strategies to support teachers, teacher trainers and policy makers for enabling children resolving conflicts independently using pro-social strategies. The research contributes to knowledge regarding selecting an intervention for improving kindergarten children's conflict resolution strategies.

Keywords: conflict resolution; Reggio Emilia approach; democratic pedagogy; early childhood; sociocultural theories

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If we are to reach real peace in this world ... we shall have to begin with the children.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Preview

Part I provides the background to my thesis and serves as a springboard for a comprehensible reading of this study, by introducing the topic of this research. Additionally, it introduces the main aims and themes of the research, discusses the research questions and goals, and then gives the focus and sets the theoretical context of my study. Furthermore, this part outlines the research boundaries and suggests the significance of conflict resolution within the context of an educational setting inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Finally, this part points to the possible contribution of this work to the understanding of an educational approach in supporting and facilitating conflict resolution as a pro-social process.

Chapter 1: Aims and Focus of the Research

Aims of the research

This research focused on the support that an educational setting inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach gives to interpersonal conflict resolution between 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class. The choice of the studied kindergarten was directed by the kindergarten staff who stated that they had been inspired by and were implementing the Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards, 1998). As a result, at the time of the research the children were 3-4 years of age. The research aimed to explore possible dimensions for early childhood contexts, and to develop a democratic practice (Moss, 2007, 2009) for young children as exemplified in supporting conflict resolution.

In the spirit of this educational viewpoint, this thesis examined the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia as it was implemented in the kindergarten studied according to the literature. Additionally, the Reggio Emilia pedagogy was examined according to the researcher's beliefs and experience, as one that has the potential to cultivate children with the social and emotional competence that are expressed in pro-social strategies for conflict resolution. A pro-social strategy relates to an ability to use a social and non-egocentric solution by integrating the interests of the individual with those of others (Putallz & Sheppard, 1992).

The worldview that constitutes the basis for this thesis coincides with the concept that sees early childhood interpersonal conflict as an integral part of social life and as having many advantages for individual and group development and social cohesion (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Schaffer, 1997; Verbeek et. al., 2000). Since involvement in conflict can lead to negative results deriving from an escalation of the conflict to a stage of violence, it is important to establish competence that enables constructive conflict resolution. The research relates to the educational setting as a context that supports the development of children’s social abilities enabling them to resolve interpersonal conflicts using pro-social strategies. According to Lewin (1997), conflict behaviour is a function of the person and the environment. In other words, the behaviour is generated by the reciprocal influence between the individual’s personal characteristics and those of the situation. Moreover, learning social-emotional competence is perceived in the literature as a process of apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990; Gardner, 1993) in which the active participation of

individuals with others in organized cultural activity enables the development of a more mature participation in that cultural activity. Thus, the features of the educational setting may influence the children's conflict behaviour.

The educational setting of the kindergarten studied is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, which relates to all components of the educational setting. The Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998) views the curriculum and interpersonal relationships as negotiable and characterised by sharing, reciprocal listening and dialogue. Following democratic experimentalism (Moss, 2009) social interdependence theory (Deutsch, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2005), and socio-cultural theory (Rogoff, 1990; 1998; 2003), the argument is made that an educational approach embodying values and practices that promote cooperation and participation will support the use of pro-social strategies in interpersonal conflict resolution among kindergarten children. In this view, the uniqueness of the Reggio Emilia approach is that it might influence the children's social and emotional competence and thus promote their abilities to resolve conflicts in a more pro-social ways.

Conflict resolution strategies were monitored during the school year to examine whether there was any change, even though neither the children nor the teachers participated in a specific conflict resolution intervention programme. Similarly, the study sought to identify features of the educational framework that might have supported these possible conflict resolution strategies among the children.

The research aims were to examine how a Reggio Emilia inspired kindergarten supports interpersonal conflicts, and to highlight the dimensions for implementing a pedagogical model for democratic practice with young children as well as implementation for managers, policy makers, and teacher trainers.

The research thus addressed the following primary research question:

To what extent might a Reggio Emilia inspired approach support resolution of interpersonal conflicts among 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class?

The research also addressed the following secondary questions:

1. What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?

2. What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change over the year?

3. What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?

Research boundaries

The research was conducted in one kindergarten over the course of a single school year that began in September 2006 and ended in June 2007. Thus, the case study was located in a kindergarten class belonging to Israel's official education system, in a large town in the centre of the country near Tel Aviv. This kindergarten declared itself to be working according to the Reggio Emilia approach. The study was conducted on 3-4 year old children. Since some researchers (Piaget, 1968) think children at this age have difficulty perceiving the perspective of the 'other', it is an opportunity to detect the changes that might occur in the ability to resolve conflicts during the period of a single school year. Since the study deals with interpersonal conflict resolution among kindergarten children, it did not relate to children's personal conflicts or conflicts between groups of children.

Significance of the study

The rise in violent incidents occurring in schools around the world in recent years has raised awareness of the anger and violence that can be generated following interpersonal conflict (Chen, 2003). The assumption is that well-managed conflict is a productive feature of human interaction but conflicts that are not resolved constructively run the risk of leading to student exploitation, violence, and low self image (Hale & Nic, 2007). Violent behaviours are evident in kindergartens in Israel (Forman, 1994; Arnon & Shalev, 2008) and in other places (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007), and are resistant to change by early school age. Therefore, violence prevention and intervention should begin as soon as possible (Vestal & Jones, 2004).

Many intervention programmes worldwide dealing with constructive conflict resolution have been set up within educational settings (Jones, 2004). These programmes predict that if training is conducted appropriately, kindergarten children will be able to learn integrative negotiation procedures to resolve their conflicts constructively (Stevahn, et. al., 2000; Gillespie & Chick, 2001), but that without training, children and adolescents tend to

manage their conflicts destructively (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). In this view, intervention programmes in the early years seem a key factor in training children to resolve conflicts.

Although these intervention programmes help children learn to resolve conflicts through negotiation and discussion (Arcaro-McPhee, et. al., 2002), the number of teachers who learn about such programmes and implement them in the long run is scant (Bayer et al., 1995). These programmes overload the teachers who have to meet already demanding curriculum requirements besides the teaching of conflict resolution. Other programmes, such as peer mediation, only train some of the children to be mediators, leaving the other children with weaker conflict resolution skills (Gillespie & Chick, 2001). Moreover, most such programmes do not take into account the unique culture of the educational setting (Sellman, 2002), thus harming the sustainability of the programmes.

Furthermore, a literature review (Sawyer et. al. 1997) pertaining to children in primary school maintains there is evidence to suggest that short-term conflict-resolution programmes delivered by teachers do not have long-lasting effects. In contrast, long-term programmes covering social problem solving, social awareness and emotional literacy in which teachers reinforce the classroom curriculum in all interactions with children remain effective over much longer periods of time. It can be said that a different approach is needed in the kindergarten context in order to support children's conflict resolution over the long term, one that matches the culture of the educational setting. An approach that relates to both direct intervention of the teachers and to indirect intervention that creates a culture of cooperation may emerge due to the educational approach.

According to Deutsch (2005), conflict that arises in a cooperative context has a greater chance of being resolved constructively than when it arises in a competitive one involving negative attitudes that we are against one another. As described in the literature (Malaguzzi, 1998), the Reggio Emilia approach perceives the child as able to solve conflicts, and views the conflict as an opportunity for learning. This creates a culture of cooperation within the educational setting, thereby implementing the democratic values of participation, listening and dialogue (Moss, 2009) that may lead to a culture of pro-social conflict resolution.

A gap in knowledge exists in the current literature regarding the Reggio Emilia educational approach as an intervention to support the development of children's social competence enabling them to resolve interpersonal conflicts using pro-social strategies. The significance of this study is that it is happening outside the original cultural context of the approach. Hence, the educational approach of the Israeli kindergarten case study might be perceived as a way to support the attainment of pro-social strategies to resolve conflicts.

Chapter 2: The Research Context

The Israeli education system within a society confronting internal and external conflicts

Since its establishment in 1948, the State of Israel has existed in a state of internal and external conflict (Kimmerling, 2001). The internal conflicts are related to the fact that Israel is a multi-cultural, immigrant society. In 63 years of existence as an independent country, Israel's population has grown from half a million to seven and a half million (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009), mainly through recurring waves of immigrants, most of whom were refugees. The large number of new immigrants has created an Israeli society with social and cultural issues (Sikron, 2004). Israeli society continues to be internally divided into different social groups, each of which wages an open cultural war against the others, in a "continuous conflict over the meaning of what might be called Israeliness, the rules of the game, and the criteria for distribution and redistribution of common goods" (Kimmerling, 2001, p. 2).

In addition, Israel is in a perpetual state of conflict with its neighbouring countries. In a little over 63 years there have been seven wars and six other violent conflicts that were not actually recognised as wars but lasted for a defined period of time. Furthermore, over the years Israel has suffered many terror attacks throughout the country. All of these have led to the deaths of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of civilians (Morris, 2003).

The socialisation processes in this society with its violent sub-culture might cause children to bring antagonistic and violent behaviour into the school setting (Horowitz, 2000). The situation exposes children to terror and wars with neighbouring countries, to trauma, to a sense of threat and violence. These are clearly linked to mental health, social behaviour and scholastic achievement (Davidson & Smith, 1990). In a society in which violence is perceived as legitimate, when armed police provide security, and all 18 year olds do military service, children will learn to resort to violence to resolve their conflicts (Harris, 2007).

Indeed, in the years 1996 - 2004 there was an increase in juvenile delinquency in Israel in general and violent delinquency in educational institutions in particular (Natan, 2006).

Research conducted in schools (Benbenishti et. al., 2000; Benbenishti, 2003; Benbenishti et. al., 2006) identified a very harsh reality of verbal and physical violence. In her qualitative study, Forman (1994) draws attention to the violent climate in a group setting of 2 to 6 year old children in Israel. An empirical study conducted many years later by Rolider and Mintzer (2006) indicated that 61.3% of kindergarteners are victims of harassment on a daily basis.

These data indicate a society that experiences violence both from within and from without. Nevertheless, to a great extent the situation in Israel is no different than other places in the world not in a region of external conflict, since one does not have to live in a region of conflict in order to be exposed to violence. Studies note that children are influenced even if they do not live in a region where there is war and even if they have not themselves experienced a terror attack. The mass media expose the world's children to the experiences of war and terror and affect the children watching them in different ways (Myers-Walls 2003; Harris, 2007). Furthermore, life in neighbourhoods with a lot of violence on the streets and in the schools gives the children a sense of living in a war zone (Osofsky, 1997).

During the data gathering period (2006-2007) of this study there were neither many terror attacks nor a war in Israel. However, tension and anxiety are always present because of the unresolved conflict with the neighbouring Arab states, but there was no acute state of distress that could have unusually influenced the research population. Moreover, the study was conducted in an educational setting in the centre of the country. This area is usually less exposed to wars and terror attacks. Unlike other areas in which there is an armed struggle, the children living in the centre are not usually exposed to the violence that accompanies the conflict with our neighbouring states.

The increasing violence and the fact that Israel is a country full of conflicts create a situation that requires some kind of coping intervention. Since interpersonal conflicts are very often seen as the source of violence in society and in the educational setting, this violence might be coped with through educational intervention that stresses interpersonal conflict resolution using pro-social strategies (Chen, 2003; Jones, 2004).

The Israeli education system's handling of conflict resolution

Like many places in the world, the Israeli education system seeks ways to deal with violence within the educational setting and in society in general. The Israeli Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring the safety of its students and teachers. The underlying assumption is that it is possible to significantly reduce violence in educational institutions by implementing a planned system-wide, consistent and long-term strategy. A document published by the Ministry (Ministry of Education, 2009) presents a policy based on the principles of a learning social community that makes it possible to create a climate of safety in the school. The goal is to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for violence, together with a social-community worldview in which teachers are a role model and the school lifestyle expresses the values that create a culture of community life. The Ministry of Education (ibid.) recommends a list of activities that will enable the children to feel that they belong, that they are safe and involved in the educational institution. Such activities include:

1. System-wide activity that enlists the significant parties (administration, teachers, students, parents, therapeutic factors) to work together to create a climate of safety.

2. Presentation of a clear policy of rules of behaviour and a mechanism for maintaining and enforcing these rules.

3. Implementing an intervention programme to develop an optimal climate as part of the curriculum.

The proposed intervention programmes include reactive intervention that focuses on how to handle violent events, and proactive intervention that deals with strengthening the protection factors of both the children and the system. Dealing with conflict resolution is part of the proactive programmes which include the development of emotional and social skills (Ministry of Education, 2010). The Ministry of Education presents early childhood teachers with a list of in-service intervention programmes for kindergarten and allows them to choose whether or not to participate in these programs (ibid). These programmes deal with a variety of social and emotional competencies as a means of improving the climate or of coping with violence and problems of functioning and adapting. All these programs involve training the teachers and conducting pre-planned hands-on lessons for the

kindergarten children. The recommendations of the Ministry of Education (ibid) do not obligate the teachers, mainly because alongside these programs there is the core curriculum which requires the teaching of various disciplines to meet certain standards. The researcher's personal experience reveals that only a relatively small number of kindergartens have actually implemented these programmes.

Despite the Ministry of Education statement about the importance of creating a positive climate and system-wide activity, almost all the programmes focus on practising the skills are unrelated to real life problems or as part of the daily routine, hence the reference to conflict resolution as in this study. For example, during circle time, the kindergarten teacher exemplifies conflict resolution using puppets. Implementing an educational approach that encourages the cultivation of pro-social abilities during everyday activities resembles the statement of the Israeli Ministry of Education but also differs from it.

Educational approaches in kindergartens in Israel

Each kindergarten in Israel is an independent institution, thus the kindergarten teacher may choose how to work according to her worldview, as long as it falls within the framework of the mandatory Ministry of Education programs. Until 2006, the Ministry of Education afforded kindergarten teachers flexibility in their choice of educational approach and curriculum. The Ministry published a framework programme stating the objectives of education, stressing the uniqueness of early childhood learning, and making recommendations about teaching methods (Limor, 1995). This framework proposes contents that are suitable for early childhood.

Over time, the Ministry of Education has offered and taught the teachers various educational approaches: the 'integrative approach' which includes work in the kindergarten via projects which integrate different content areas and a variety of skills (an approach based on Dewey's progressive approach) (Teubal & Wolf, 1997); the 'flow of activity ' approach (Levin, 1989) which emphasizes activity initiated by the children while the teacher refrains from intervening in the content of the activity; and the 'structured kindergarten' approach in which the teacher fulfils a central role in teaching content and skills through systematic structured processes. Despite the declared flexibility, from my visits to kindergartens it was noticeable that unofficially, the curriculum remained mostly

uniform with no major differences amongst the kindergartens. In most kindergartens, the educational approach combines features of the ‘flow of activity’ and ‘structured kindergarten’ and the content areas studied are similar.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education put out a new core curriculum composed of five main clusters: language, mathematics, science and technology, arts and life skills (Ministry of Education, 2009). This core program includes goals to be attained by every age group. Thus the Israeli education system has adopted a standards-based approach (Goldstein, 2007) and created a situation in which the kindergarten teachers have little flexibility to choose a curriculum since they are obligated to invest in developing the core curriculum.

The Ministry declares that the core curriculum does not interfere with the spirit of a kindergarten, stressing a combination of structured and unstructured activity. Nevertheless, the Ministry's statement that a kindergartener should have complete mastery in the basic skills that will enable learning and integration into the first grade curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2009) causes the kindergarten teachers to cut down on free play time and free choice, and focus on structured activities which, in their opinion, will help foster mastery of the basic skills.

This kind of approach to the curriculum very closely matches the Israeli culture of stressing individualist values and personal achievements such as independence, self-fulfilment, the uniqueness of the individual, equality and non-intervention (Ackerman et al., 1985; Ezrahi, 1996). In addition, an individualist culture attributes great importance to critical thinking and knowledge (Mundy Castle, 1974 cited in Sternberg, 2005; Kim et al., 1994). These cultural features also affect the nature of the ties between the educational setting and the parents. In Israel, as in the American culture, the kindergarten teacher is perceived to have professional knowledge while the parent has intuitive knowledge, and so there is a clear distinction between the role of the teacher and the role of the parent in the educational setting (New et al., 2000).

The change in perception of the curriculum by the Ministry of Education and the emphasis placed on individualist values raises a question regarding the possibility of implementing the Reggio Emilia approach, with its collectivist values, in the Israeli context.

The history of the Reggio Emilia approach in Israel

The Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards, et. al., 1998) was introduced into the Israeli education system in 1998 when its roaming exhibition came to Israel. Since then, there have been only a few attempts to adapt and apply the approach in Israeli kindergartens, probably related to the fact that it is not possible to transfer the approach in it s entirety from one cultural context to another (Rinaldi, 2006), also because of the difficulty of understanding it (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004). Additionally, this approach is very different from the standards-based approach adopted by the Ministry of Education in recent years (Ministry of Education, 2009).

In 2002, a programme for pre-service and in-service training of teachers was examined in order to create conditions that would enable the implementation of this educational approach in Israeli kindergartens. The programme was created by two pedagogical advisors from the Kibbutzim College, one of whom is the writer of this thesis. In this programme, kindergarten teachers learn about the approach alongside the student-teachers they are mentoring. Thus, a group of 8 kindergartens in one city was created where the educational approach is being implemented over time. These kindergartens have had ongoing instruction by the educational counsellor over several years and have gained in-depth familiarity with the educational approach and the dialogue regarding the adaptation of the approach to the Israeli cultural context. The research study was conducted in one of those kindergartens, where the researcher was not involved as a mentor.

Despite the differences between the Ministry of Education's approach and that of Reggio Emilia, the project received support from the municipality and from local Ministry of Education representatives, support which was expressed in the willingness of the inspectors to change the curriculum in the kindergartens and cooperate closely with the initiating team at the Kibbutzim College. It is the researcher's estimation that the uniqueness and the worldwide appraisal associated with the Reggio Emilia educational approach (Grieshaber & Hatch, 2003) convinced the municipal authorities to adopt the programme and enable a group of kindergartens to be the groundbreakers in its application in Israel. Hence, the kindergarten studied implements an educational approach that is already held in high esteem around the world but considered innovative in Israel.

This part focused on the aims of the research, as well as its boundaries and significance. It related to how Israel handles internal and external conflicts and how the education system handles the exposure to violence. In addition, there is mention of the gap between the declarations of the Israeli Ministry of Education concerning the importance of the educational climate for the prevention of violence and the standards-based approach it has adopted which contradicts this climate. In addition, the limited scope of the adoption of the Reggio Emilia approach by the Israeli Ministry of Education is described. The following part will present the theoretical context underpinning the choice of methodology that was found to be appropriate for achieving the aims of this study.

PART II: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Preview

Part II provides a critical spectrum of the extant literature on the theories underpinning this research. Thus, chapter 3 in this part provides a discussion of early childhood education ideologies and curricula. Chapter 4 describes the Israeli kindergarten setting and approach, while Chapter 5 explores children's learning from the socio-cultural perspective. Chapter 6 discusses the Reggio Emilia educational approach as a democratic practice. Part II ends with a critical discussion of theories and interventions related to conflict resolution in early childhood (Chapters 7 and 8). Finally, the theoretical perspectives chapters provide a solid foundation of current knowledge in relation to this study in order to underpin the methodological choices that led the data collection process.

Chapter 3: Early Childhood Education

This chapter provides background for the concept of an early childhood educational approach and describes how an educational ideology is influenced by different philosophical and psychological approaches and then put into practice. The first part describes prominent early childhood education ideologies which differ from each other in how they perceive the child and the learning process and consequently, the role of the teacher in that process. The second part examines how ideologies are translated into a curriculum and an early childhood educational approach. The third part presents the approach of 'democratic experimentalism' as a contemporary educational approach gaining influence in educational institutions.

Different early childhood ideologies

According to Shonkoff & Philips (2000), early childhood is seen as a particularly sensitive period which offers a window of opportunity for motor, cognitive, emotional and social development. Children's experiences from this period create the infrastructure for development throughout their lives (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). This perception underlies the international consensus that 'learning begins at birth' (UNESCO, 1990, Section V Point 1), which encouraged most developed countries to see improving children's lives as a national and international task to be carried out by expanding and improving early childhood care and education (Woodhead, 2006).

Differences in child development are the result of many factors that may also be genetic, social and cultural. At the same time, the nature of early childhood education and its individual adaptation is of great significance for the development of children's abilities, their psychological well being, and for prevention of later delinquency (Barnett, 2002; Bowlby, 2005). Since spending time in a high quality educational setting greatly influences child development and learning (Sylva, 1994; Sylva et. al., 2004), educators have for many years been seeking the best possible pedagogical practices (Oberhuemer 2005). What early childhood educators consider the most appropriate curriculum is based on their understanding of how children learn, how they make sense of their surroundings and how they form relationships (MacNaughton, 2003). MacNaughton (ibid.) notes the increasing debate surrounding early childhood about what should underlie curricular decisions.

Educators sometimes have to make decisions about the teaching-learning processes in the educational setting. According to MacNaughton (2003):

> "Decisions about what to do with young children in a particular moment on a particular day are highly practical matters, but they are also deeply philosophical matters. This is because they arise from our ideas about what we believe it is important for young children to know and to experience and how we believe it is best to teach them" (p.114).

In other words, the teachers' educational approach derives from their social and cultural values and from how they perceive the role and implementation of education in society (Bruner, 1996). Hence, the practices of the educational setting are governed by an educational ideology and implemented through the curriculum or the educational approach. On a critical note it can be said that education is a political act (Freire, 1972) and teachers might be constrained also by statutory policies driven by political agendas, for example, for social cohesion and driving of standards taken as literacy and numeracy (Goldstein, 2007).

Many theoreticians have related to the development and learning processes in early childhood. Likewise, the objectives and means of education and what might facilitate optimal child development have been the subject of deep theoretical debate (Spodek & Saracho, 1994), and have been revised according to the spirit of the time and place. In addition to the diversity of educational ideologies, how they are actually put into practice has also been the subject of much discussion and has generated a variety of possible modes of implementation.

These ideologies differ in how they perceive the child and the learning process and hence in how they perceive the role of the teacher (Spodek & Saracho, 1994; Beck, 1999; MacNaughton, 2003). Table 1 presents a summary of the various educational approaches throughout the years.

Table 1: <u>A summary of educational ideologies</u>

Ideologies & Philosophers and psychologist sources	**The Romantic ideology:** Rousseau, Gessell, Freud	**The behaviourist ideology:** Hobbes, Mill, Locke, Watson, Skinner	**The Progressive ideology:** Dewey, Buber, Rogers	**The Constructivist ideology:** Piaget, Kant	**The socio-cultural ideology:** Vygotsky, Bruner, Rogoff
The image of the child	free and creative, developing towards adulthood in stages	'*tabula rasa*', 'empty vessel', passive in the learning process	initiating, inquisitive, can take responsibility for own learning	has learning potential that needs continual refinement, an active learner	has competence, active in managing learning
The learning process	development as a natural, innate process	cultural transfer through reward and punishment	support and opportunity for experience help attain high levels of development, child-centred	active construction of knowledge through interaction with environment.	learning occurring through social interaction and through participation in a community of learners
Teacher's role	standing between the known and unknown, without hurrying children	transferring knowledge, ensuring the child keeps the knowledge	creating an environment suitable for experiences, guidance and initiatives for learning as needed	stimulating the desired learning, challenging their thinking	partner for learning, facilitate learning by scaffolding

In sum, Table 1 shows the various educational ideologies and how they relate to the main issues under this study, namely, the image of the child, the learning process, and the teacher's role.

As the socio-cultural theory is the main theory underpinning this study, a wider discussion is needed here. Socio-cultural theories of learning view childhood learning as happening mainly through social interaction. It is considered a function of social interaction contextualized according to the particular cultural setting in which it occurred (Edwards, 2003). Hence, Vygotsky's (1893-1934) socio-cultural theory can also be linked to the constructivist approach which, like that of Piaget, sees the child as an active learner and

sees learning as a dynamic, ongoing process, but also sees development as a socially mediated process dependent on the support of others (MacNaughton, 2003). Unlike Piaget, the socio-cultural theory characterising the educational setting under study in this research rejected the notion of universal stages of development and perceived the differences among young and adult learners as a matter of degree and convention rather than a sign of having reached a certain cognitive level (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), every child's function develops first at the interpersonal level and later on at the individual level.

Consequently, the image of the child has changed over the years from a social actor and active agent in her or his learning and development, one who needs development readiness to learn, into someone who is an agent in his or her social and cultural worlds. Culturally situated teaching and learning processes can lead children beyond their current capabilities (Wood, 2007). Hence, the role of the educator is to mediate between the physical and social environment and help the child progress from the zone of current development to the zone of proximal development. These ideologies have influenced the planning of learning in early education settings, where worldview and beliefs govern the choice of curriculum. For example, Soler and Miller (2003) maintain that early years curricula like Te Whariki in New Zealand and Early Years Foundation and Reggio Emilia approach in Italy are not prescriptive in nature in terms of content, but rather allow for the child to co-construct knowledge.

Early childhood curriculum

The different visions of childhood are embedded and implemented in different ways in early childhood settings. The implementation of the ideology is expressed in the values relating to the content that is important for children to learn, the children's learning process, the role of the teacher and the ways in which children participate in the learning (Goffin, 1994). The terms 'approach', 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'traditions' which describe the practical application of an ideology are often interchangeable. For example, for Goffin (1994) the term 'curriculum' refers to the "conceptual framework and organizational structure for decision making about educational priorities, administrative policies, instructional methods, and evaluation criteria" (p. 1). In contrast, Spodek (1973) sees the curriculum for early childhood as a "value statement about what we want our children to be" (1973, p. 89). Yet another approach sees the curriculum as the content of

what children learn, while the beliefs about the children are seen as the pedagogy (Kagan & Kauerz, 2006). As a result of the lack of clarity regarding the use of these concepts, this research refers to ‘educational approach’ and ‘curriculum’ as general concepts containing a body of knowledge and values relating to the care for and education of young children, using clear practices (Chartier, & Geneix, 2006).

In the global field of early childhood education, one can find debates about ideology-based curricula and approaches. The Foundation Stage Curriculum in England is an example of a national curriculum based on developmental theories and the ideology of Maturationism that changed following the increasing recognition of the importance of high quality early education (Duffy, 2010). The Early Years Foundation Stage is today based on four principles: a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments, learning and developments. These principles underpin practitioners' work with young children (The Early Years Foundation Stage, 2008).

Despite the understanding in the early education field that a stage-based curriculum may be seen as elitist, non-egalitarian and non-democratic since it focuses on commercial and economic considerations (Soler & Miller, 2003), there are those who see it as helpful to practitioners because it enables clear guidance for consistent implementation of the goals of early learning within the educational setting (Staggs, 2000). Furthermore, detailing can help direct teachers with limited training and ensure they cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups and regions of a country (Goffin, 2000). In contrast, a limited curriculum that emphasises values and goals gives academic freedom, stressing the trust of policy-makers in the teacher’s professionalism (Goffin & Wilson, 2001). A curriculum that creates a program outline enables recognition of the rights and needs of various populations and allows teachers to adapt the curriculum to the actual children in their class. Furthermore, the program outline supports implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by allowing young children a high degree of initiative.

The Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) approach is an example of a theoretical and philosophical framework that provides guidelines for best practices in an early childhood educational setting (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The DAP emerges from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and is thus influenced by the

political, social and cultural context of the U.S.A. It is anchored mainly in the progressive ideology, but its name, which stresses ‘developmental appropriateness’, indicates that it is also influenced by the Romantic ideology. This combination is clearly evident in the list of principles of learning that appear in the NAEYC publication (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) that tend to highlight the developmental stage-based characteristics emerging from Piaget's work. On a critical note, it can be said that in light of Bruner's critique of Piaget’s notion of 'developmental appropriateness', it is possible to teach anyone anything, regardless of their developmental stage, or their 'readiness' (Olson, 2007). According to Donaldson (1984), younger children could achieve Piaget's tasks if these were significant enough for them.

The DAP approach was formulated following the increasing concern that the methods being used did not fit in with existing knowledge about early childhood development and learning. The writers of DAP claimed that the educators were placing too much emphasis on formal teaching and transfer of academic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, while theoretical and research knowledge indicated that the best learning is through play and learning by doing (Dayan, 2006). Dayan (ibid.) points out that the dichotomous wording of the features of educational activity that are or are not developmentally appropriate as stated in the guidelines, are suited to the behaviourist concept in which there is right and wrong in educational activity. This kind of attitude undermines the message that doing the right thing is context-dependent and is determined by the parties to the activity, that it is not a technique but an overall approach.

The term ‘curriculum’ is less suitable when referring to education that is usually considered alternative (Carnie, 2003). Waldorf and Montessori education, for example, are based on ideas and concepts of education that lead to particular methods. The educational philosophy paves the way for the methodologies (Carnie, 2003). The various models of alternative education are characterised by an attempt to create a positive experience appropriate for the child. The small number of children studying in these settings makes it possible to develop a program that caters to the individual needs of each one (Carnie, 2003). This concept of a curriculum or an educational approach fits the Reggio Emilia approach described later on and which inspired the educational setting in this research.

‘Democratic Experimentalism’- a contemporary model for early childhood education

Moss (2007, 2009) presents ‘democratic experimentalism’ as an alternative model for the provision of early childhood education and care services. While focusing mainly on the differences between this model and conventionally accepted ones, he does not relate to it as the only good alternative. This research relates to the model as an educational approach since, according to Moss (ibid.), it involves concepts, goals and values that govern the practices in the educational setting. The choice to deal with this model arose from the findings of this research which highlight the features of democratic practices in the setting studied.

The term ‘democratic’ refers here to the description of the interpersonal relationships in everyday practice and not necessarily to formal social systems (Moss, 2009). A similar referral to democracy can be found in Dewey, who claims that democracy is “primarily a mode of associated living embedded in the culture and social relationships of everyday life:

> "It is “a personal way of individual life: … it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life" (Dewey 1939, p. 2 cited in Moss, 2009).

In other words, democracy is not just institutional, representative and concerned with equality before the law, but rather it is a society which makes choices and holds criticism, debate and dialogue in high esteem (Wisler, 2009). ‘Experimentalism’ refers to a way of life that relates to the “open-ended (avoiding closure), open-minded (welcoming the unexpected) and open-hearted (valuing difference)” (Moss, 2009, p. viii) when bringing to life new thoughts, knowledge, services or products.

For Moss (2007), democratic participation is a criterion and the right of citizenship. It is how children and adults can collectively shape decision making that affects them. It also provides the means to withstand power and mastery and to resist oppression and injustice. He further claims that democracy allows for difference and creates an environment that facilitates new thinking and the appreciation of pluralism. A similar concept was presented by Dewey in the early 20th century, who claimed that education is important for the

development of democracy as a way of life, and that through it, children become part of humanity's social development. A good society can only develop through its children's personal experience of participation, mutual understanding and shared interests. Similarly, Noddings (2005) claims that a democratic society needs an education system that will help sustain democracy by developing thoughtful citizens who can make intelligent civic choices.

The 'democratic experimentalism' model "values certain attitudes, qualities and behaviours, whether in major decisions of state or in the everyday life of the family, nursery or school: plurality, respect for difference, dialogue, listening, deliberation, shared enquiry, critical judgement, co-operation, collective decision-making, individual freedom" (Moss, 2009, p. 30). Certain values underpin these qualities. The value of *plurality* makes it possible to see that "there is more than one way to do things, more than one answer to every question, more than one perspective that needs to be brought into the debate" (p. 2).

Another value is that of *respect for diversity*, which is created by adopting a relational ethic (Dahlberg & Moss 2005). In order for democracy to exist in daily life, we must welcome *curiosity, uncertainty and subjectivity***,** and the responsibility they require of us. According to Moss (2009), these values leave us open to complexity, diversity and the unpredicted. *Critical thinking* is also an important value since it ensures continued questioning and contesting of what there is. The *principle of choice* is also mentioned as an important value (Moss, 2009) where the emphasis is not on individual consumer choice but on collective choice or decision making.

The model of democratic experimentalism sees children as agents and rights-bearing citizens in the here and now. Hence, children must live in a democratic environment from an early age and not just be taught values they can experience only as adults (Moss, 2009). Living in a democratic culture can make one democratic and not just prepare the individual to be a future citizen in a democratic regime. From this perspective, learning is situated in context and thus learning democratic values is achieved by taking part in the educational practices (Biesta, et. al., 2009; Arrue et. al., 2009; Moss, 2009). Children learn about democracy through reciprocal relationships with adults who encourage their participation (Korpi, 2000) and not as a distinct subject confined to set periods and a set curriculum. Rogoff (1990; 1998) believes that learning occurs whenever people participate in shared

endeavours with others. Therefore, learning a democratic practice will be conducted within active participation in a democratic learners' community.

This approach differs from the one currently found in ordinary schools in England (Woodhead, 2006; Moss, 2007) and in Israel (Vorgen, 2007), which do not adopt democratic practices. Nevertheless, in England, there is growing evidence of children as participants, especially since the Every Child Matters policy (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) which notes the importance of listening to the children and consulting with them about the framework they live in. In Israel, democratic values are taught when students study Civics - a subject in which they must take a matriculation exam, but in their daily lives they experience these values neither at school nor in kindergarten.

Democratic practice means giving children the right to have a voice and to be heard. Developments towards democratisation in early childhood have been ongoing since the publication of the United Nations Convention (1989) on the rights of the child. The adoption of the convention led to the search for ways to include the children's opinions and perspectives regarding their education (Woodhead, 2005: Moss, 2007, Smith, 2007). However, a real fight for children's rights is not yet evident in practice (Pascal & Bertram, 2009). Many countries prefer to develop democracy at the macro level which enables better access to institutions and programs, which in turn enables more just access for vulnerable children or those with special needs (Bennett 2006; Turnsek & Pekkarinen, 2009). However, there are Nordic countries, certain regions in other countries such as Reggio Emilia, which successfully implement democratic practices (Moss, 2009). Moss (ibid.) suggests that democratic experimentalism must exist at all levels from federal, through the regional and the local, to the individual institution – the children's kindergarten. The commitment of all levels creates a mutual support system in which the educational setting in early childhood promotes and supports democracy in society at large.

Giving children the opportunity to participate and exercise rights requires an image of the child as capable and the role of the teacher as that of negotiator, facilitator and observer (Woodhead, 2006; Moss, 2009). Democratic practice and the reference to the rights of the child as stated in the United Nations Convention (1989) have been criticised. Sheridan & Samuelsson (2001), claim that the document was worded generally and universally in

order to be a worldwide document and so does not take cultural variation into account. A further criticism relates to the fact that rights should not be given to children until they can be responsible for their actions and young children are not capable of participating in decision making processes. Adults who need to help give children rights will usually support basic ones such as the right to life, health and education, but will find it hard to accept their changing role from teacher or parent with authority to negotiator, facilitator or observer (Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001). On a global perception of children, questions might be asked about the age at which children are deemed to be able to take responsibility, the age at which children have criminal responsibility, and whether or not children have a voice about their own education (Yitzhaki, n.d). Another issue that might be raised here pertains to the fact that these democratic views of children are essentially seen through Western eyes.

This chapter dealt with the educational ideologies of early childhood and how they are implemented as curricula and approaches in educational practices. The various educational approaches discussed in this chapter, including that of democratic experimentalism, constitute the theoretical foundation for the study of conflict resolution strategies taken by the children in an Israeli kindergarten inspired by the Reggio Emilia educational approach. The next chapter will discuss the features of the Israeli kindergarten.

Chapter 4: The Israeli Kindergarten

This chapter describes the features of the Israeli kindergarten as the context for this research. It begins with a description of the history of the kindergarten system in Israel. This is followed by a description and a critique of the current conventional educational ideology of early childhood education. The chapter then provides a description of the organisational structure of early childhood education in Israel. The chapter thus provides an understanding of the context of the kindergarten under study and what makes it unique.

The history of the Israeli kindergarten system

The first kindergarten in Israel opened at the end of the 19th century, many years before the official establishment of the State of Israel. The kindergarten as an educational institution developed and changed over the years following ideological, social and economic changes that took place within the local Jewish community from the early days of Zionist settlement and on into the years of the existence of the State (Sapir et. al., 2010)

Initially, the kindergarten prepared children for school, its main role being to improve the children's level of Hebrew since most of them had immigrant parents from different countries. This preparation helped create uniform linguistic competence so that school studies could begin as they should. The kindergarten was part of the school structure and the educational environment was also similar to that of the school (Museum of Rishon Le-Zion, 2010). The change in the perception of the kindergarten as an institution in its own right occurred when the first teachers trained at the Pestalozzi-Froebel Haus in Berlin came to Israel. They turned the kindergartens into rooms in which the furniture for the children and the work they did took on features of family life. In time, these kindergartens were influenced by the theories of Montessori, Dewey and Piaget, as well as information brought by teachers who had studied in Russia and Eastern Europe (Sapir et al., 2010). These kindergartens gave pride of place to play and creative activity and even included physical, musical and art education (Siton, 1998).

In time, Israel wanted to change from a country of immigrants to a modern, western, secular society with a national character based on Jewish heritage (Siton, 1998). Thus, the kindergartens were enlisted in the construction of the new secular Israeli culture. This was

expressed in the stated educational goals. Reaching a proficient level of Hebrew has remained a goal because of the waves of immigration that continue to this day. Children in Israel both in the past and in the present have taught their parents the local spoken language (Levin, 1998). Another goal was teaching the values of nature, agriculture and work, which were of great importance to the developing country, but which diminished over time as the more mature society's attitudes towards agriculture and physical labour changed (Levin, 1998).

From the start of the 20th century, education was split into ideological streams, each of which emphasised different values. These streams were united in 1953 with the passing of the Compulsory Education Law. However, to this day there remains a separation between secular education and the various kinds of religious education (Levin, 1998).

Levin (1998) claims that one can divide the pedagogical trends of the kindergarten into four periods, each with its own prevailing educational ideology. The first period was from 1898 - the opening of the first kindergarten - until the establishment of the State in 1948. During this period, the progressive ideology was dominant thanks to the kindergarten teachers who had been trained in the Froebel and Montessori schools prior to coming to Israel. The second period, the 1950s, was dominated by the empiricist ideology based on behaviourist psychology. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was the turn of the Romantic approach, which allowed for plenty of creativity and self expression. From the end of the 1970s until today, the influence of the constructivist approach, especially influenced by Piaget's theories, has been on the rise. In this view, Israel's demographic development and the establishment of the state of Israel have contributed to the evolution of the educational ideologies pertaining to the Israeli kindergarten.

The current dominant ideology in Israel's early childhood education system

The framework curriculum of Israel's Ministry of Education reveals that the current dominant ideology is based on developmental theories. The kindergarten education system heavily emphasises the developmental aspect, indicating that development is based on maturity (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010b). The reference is to Piaget's universal stages of development (Flavell, 1963) that guide the teaching and create expectations from the

children to meet standards in each of the core subjects. There is emphasis on teacher-centred learning with the understanding that there is also learning through interaction with the environment. Hence, it is recommended that alongside the activities planned by the teacher, time is set aside every day for free play and artistic activities, which according to Piaget, create opportunities for cognitive imbalance and hence for learning (Flavell, 1963).

Early childhood education in Israel focuses on the development of the individual personality of each child, while catering to his or her physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs, fulfilment of the child's potential and creative abilities (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010 (a)). Dayan (2006) claims that Israel's early childhood education system frequently adopts various educational initiatives such as types of literacy, development-appropriate mathematics, the integrative approach and a core curriculum. She claims (ibid.) that although variety is refreshing and encourages comparison and critical thinking, it would appear that a particular approach may lack a solid theoretical foundation or an awareness of its origins, which can lead to unprofessional work. In other words, the Israeli education system does not focus on an educational ideology that governs and directs educational activity.

The official education system includes kindergartens that employ a variety of educational methods. The 'structured kindergarten' method based on the empiricist ideology typically has children's activities that take place at a regular hour, the activities are defined and the children follow a work plan set by the adult. The educator's involvement is guiding, authoritative and activating (Levin, 1989). The 'flow of activity' method based on the constructivist ideology focuses on the children's activities and is thus built up on the children's initiatives. The daily timetable is flexible and is determined by the children's supply of activities. The work plan is set in part by the adult but mainly by the children. The educational environment organised by the adult enables a child to choose and to initiate while the teacher participates and integrates into the children's activities as needed (Levin, (1989). Most of the kindergartens try to combine the various approaches by infusing the 'structured kindergarten' method with some 'flow of activity' elements. Similarly, Moyles (1989) offers the notion 'play-spiral' which describes the combination of child-led free play and adult-led structured play as learning enablers.

Parallel to the official kindergarten system, there are also private kindergartens that have adopted the Montessori (Chattin-McNichols, 1992), anthroposophist (Goldshmidt & Ben-Shalom, 2000) and democratic (Hecht, 2005) approaches. These kindergartens are for children up to the age of 4, although some have special permission to accept 5-year-olds as well, even though these children would normally be part of the Compulsory Education Law system.

This chapter critically examined the early age education system in Israel and described how it has undertaken over the years to implement the needs of society. The curriculum changed according to demographic and value-laden changes that occurred in Israel. Today, the kindergarten curriculum reflects the value of individualism and personal achievement and is based on the developmental theory.

In the light of socio-cultural perspectives and the democratic experimentalism approach, the Israeli kindergarten seems to have adopted few democratic views in its practice. Nevertheless, one may assume that the socio-cultural theory will find its way into the Israeli education system and affect the curriculum. The change might occur because Israel is a democratic country whose values of solidarity and partnership are an integral part of its cultural legacy and because it is very open to knowledge accumulated around the world. The following chapter will describe the Reggio Emilia approach as a socio-cultural system.

Chapter 5: Children's Learning – the Socio-Cultural Theories

This chapter deals with how young children learn and develop. It presents aspects of the socio-cultural theories of learning that underpin this research. Initially this chapter briefly reviews and critiques the socio-cultural approaches to learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990, 1995, 2003; Bruner, 1996) as they relate to the principles upon which learning is based. The chapter then presents the main ways in which young children learn. Socio-cultural theories consider learning to be a function of social interaction contextualised according to the particular cultural setting through play, interaction with more experienced peers or adults (Vygotsky, 1978) and through participation in endeavours shared with others (Rogoff, 1990).

Thus, children's learning is presented through play in general, and through pretend play in particular. This mode is presented first because it is the main activity of young children in the educational setting. Play also creates the space for learning by other means as will be shown later on. The second mode is learning through participation, which describes learning through taking part in the functioning of the educational setting community, making decisions, taking part in joint activities and watching others. The third mode is learning from adults and more experienced peers.

Socio-cultural approaches to learning

There are various theories of early childhood learning. Berthelsen and Brownlee (2005) list the most significant theories of learning. Despite the critique of Piaget's lack of regard for the social context in early childhood learning (Edwards, 2003), Berthelsen and Brownlee (2005) relate to Piaget's recognition of the importance of social interactions to learning and the idea of the active child (De Vries, 1997); Bandura's (1989) attitude to the importance of reciprocal relations within social environments; and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model where development is the result of interactions between an individual and his or her social world (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). These theories rely mainly on the developmental perspective and emphasise the individual process of learning within a context.

However, following post-modernism, early childhood education has been characterized in recent years by a shift towards the socio-cultural perspective that emphasises the social and cultural nature of development (Dahlberg et. al., 1999; Edwards, 2006). This approach stresses the reciprocal influence of the individual and the context, originating with seminal ideas of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) (Corsaro et. al., 2002). Socio-cultural theories of learning see childhood learning as occurring mainly through social interaction. It is considered a function of social interaction contextualized according to the particular cultural setting in which it occurs. Hence, the essential difference between this and the individual development approach is that Piaget, for example, emphasises the child's exploratory behaviours in the external world as central to development, whereas Vygotsky sees social interaction as central to the child's development (Edwards, 2003). Similarly, Bruner (1996) claims that learning takes place within a cultural context when an adult or peers offer scaffolding in the facilitation of learning. Bruner (1996) adds that reciprocal learning is the optimal culture which, through its narrative, provides its members with models of identity and agency.

Similar to Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff's (1995) theory relates to development as occurring within three mutual and interacting planes: the interpersonal, the intrapersonal and the community/institutional. Development is perceived as occurring when the individual participates in the activities of the community. Thus one cannot see development as occurring only within the individual, between members of the community or within the community itself. Rather, all three components contribute to the development process and so development and learning are characterized as a transformative process defined by participation in community activity. According to Rogoff (1995), from the socio-cultural point of view, learning relates to the ongoing change of the children's involvement in their community rather than the discrete change within each individual. A similar approach can be found in Corsaro et. al., (2002) who claim that human development is always collective and shared with significant others.

The socio-cultural perspective, which matches the values and the place given to the child as a participant and as someone with rights in the educational setting was chosen to underpin this research despite the existing debate regarding the role of this theory. Furthermore, the Reggio Emilia educational approach has inspired the approach of the

kindergarten studied and drawn on aspects of socio-cultural theory to inform its pedagogy (New, 1999). From the socio-cultural perspective, childhood learning takes place through play, through participation in collective processes of the cultural context and through more experienced peers and adults.

Learning through play

Play refers to an activity typical of early childhood. Despite differences in theoretical starting points, it is conventionally agreed that play fulfils a wide variety of roles in the various developmental processes from childhood to maturity (Soker, 2001). Another point of consensus is that play emphasises the means and not the goal of the activities, the process rather than the outcome (Piaget, 1962; Rubin et al., 1983).

The psychoanalytical approach claims that play enables an alternative, more refined expression of children's traumatic experiences and thereby balances out emotional pressures and prepares them for emotional maturity (Erikson, 1963; Winnicott, 1971). The cognitive approach points out the contribution of play to intellectual development, in other words, to the development of problem solving skills, creativity, abstraction, concentration and linguistic development (Smilansky, 1968; Singer, 1973, cited in Soker, 2001, Perkins, 1992). The social-cognitive approach on the other hand, emphasises the contribution of play to the development of social skills such as sharing and conflict resolution and of thinking skills needed for proper social functioning in adult society (Rubin, 1980; Rubin et al., 1983; Bretherton & Beeghly, 1989). Thus the function of play is to train children for the serious roles they will have to fulfil in society as adults (Buhler, 1935; Groos, 1922, Piaget, 1962 all cited in Smilansky & Shfatia, 1993).

In contrast, the socio-cultural perspective that informs this work focuses on the common ground in play, on meaning-making and how children interact and develop their peer cultures of which context and content are significant aspects. In Vygotsky's (2004) view, play is more than a reflection of a child's current level of development; it is also a mechanism for propelling that development. Play provides an active, ongoing process of creating peer social and cultural patterns, and mutual construction of a world of action and content (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 1986). Since these patterns pass from one generation of children to the next, their learning and execution through cooperation are in themselves

significant stages in the social development process (Higgins & Parsons, 1983). Similarly, Sawyer (1997) claims that children's plays are not reproductions of scenarios of adult life, but rather they are part of the children's creation of their own social world.

The 'real' play according to Vygotsky (Bodrova, 2008) refers to that in which the children create an imaginary situation, take on roles and follow a set of rules determined by those roles. 'Pretend play' is such play, one that is often also called socio-dramatic or 'make believe', where children's engagement moves up a gear and they take on characterisation and adjustments in respect of the emotional responses of play partners. The pretend play of 3-5 year olds is a sub-category of play in which actions, objects, places and other aspects of the immediate context are transformed or dealt with non-verbally (Garvey, 1977). This play is characterised by a combination of the reciprocal relations and the representational-symbolic ability the child has refined, and those of the partners in play. The children build their ideas for their own play and that of others and expand on them. This indicates an ability to symbolize and the development of inter-subjective sharing (Göncü, 1993; Smilanksy & Shfatia, 1993).

During the pretend play, 3-5 year-olds generate scripts ('what if') that provide a framework of information about the topic and about the events in the play; this provides a coherent structure by means of which the children can predict the sequence of actions they have to perform (Garvey, 1977). The script includes the roles, the objects and their 'pretend' use. Since the rules in pretend play are not formally defined, there has to be coordination among the children in order to maintain and refine the sequence of play (Garvey, 1977). The children negotiate as they play, clarifying positions, responding to suggestions and acting more precisely than before. They strengthen and guide the play framework through meta-communication (communication about the communication) (Stockinger-Forys & McCune-Nicolich, 1984). All these contribute to the progression of the play (Howes & Unger, 1992; Sawyers & Carrick, 2003).

According to Harris (2000), children's entry into play roles illustrates that despite the egocentricity Piaget attributes to them, young children can be involved in roles they create through a shift in perspective. For example, they talk as if they were someone else, and express feelings and needs that are appropriate to the role they have taken on. The

implication of this is that like adults, children are equipped with a mechanism that enables them to put aside reality and adopt the perspective of the figure in the “imaginary landscape” (Harris, 2000, p.54).

From a socio-cultural perspective, play can lead to conflict. Vygotsky (1978) reasoned that play is a 'paradoxical activity' because it requires children to behave contrary to their desires and adapt themselves to the rules and limitations of reality. Conflicts arise also because of the nature of play in early childhood. Corsaro (2005) claims that gaining access to play groups, maintaining interaction and making friends are still demanding tasks for kindergarten children. Entry into play is hard because kindergarteners tend to protect shared space, objects, and ongoing play from the entry of others. The children who are playing refuse to let anyone join in because they want to continue to share what they are already sharing and see others as a threat to the community they have established. Since the sequence of play is fragile, every interruption or misunderstanding is a threat. Unlike adults, young children find it hard to get back into shared play after they have been distracted (Corsaro 2005). However, not all children find it hard to join a playing group. In order to do so, the child must decode its emotional and social context and adapt to it flexibly. Moreover, the child must be able to withstand the frustration of an initial rejection, not give up and try again (Corsaro, 2005).

Hence, in early childhood, pretend play creates a space for the expression and testing of social relations. Children involved in pretend play are well able to express positive emotions, they are more prone to pro-social behaviours, and are more popular with their peers (Rosenthal et. al., 2008). Through active participation in the creation of the rules of play, the decisions about what is allowed and what is not, or who is allowed to set or change the rules, the children learn to understand the meaning of the rules in children’s society and participate in shaping them (Corsaro et. al., 2002).

From this point of view, like any other kind of peer discourse play provides a ‘double opportunity arena’ (Blum-Kulka & Taglicht, 2002) - simultaneously enabling the creation of meaning in the peers’ socio-cultural world as well as practicing discourse skills. However, in the process of play many conflicts arise about entry into play and how it is managed. Thus pretend play also serves as an opportunity to practice and acquire conflict

resolution skills within the peer group. Effective conflict resolution will enable the children to continue playing.

Learning through participation

The participation of children in an educational setting relates to taking part in everything that concerns them. Participation affects both their own learning process as well as the overall environment in kindergarten and it is one of the child's rights (United Nations Convention, 1989). This convention gives children the right to express their own perspectives and views on issues that concern them and affect their daily lives, and they also maintain that children's views should be listened to and respected. The right to participate in the educational setting and be part of the decision-making process improves the quality of that setting and promotes its democratic principles (Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001). Moreover, active participation is one of the means of indirect involvement that promotes children's learning processes. Corsaro et. al. (2002) mention active and creative participation of children in social contexts as the most important foundation for learning and acquiring cultural values. Learning occurs through explicit teaching by others and through working with materials, but also through direct observation of or sharing with others (Rogoff, 1990).

Rogoff (2003) describes how people learn by watching and listening to others as they share common tasks in flexible and complementary roles. Watching the activity of another as a significant way for children to learn is neither inadvertent nor passive. While watching and sharing, children use language as an essential, active cultural tool. Furthermore, Rogoff (2003) claims that human development and learning take place through the transformation of participation in social-cultural activities. In other words, learning is a process of change in the level and nature of the participation. In this process, it is not the subject's internal experience that changes but rather the degree of participation in social activity that moves from the periphery to the centre (Rogoff, 1990). According to Rogoff (1990) development, unlike the somewhat universal description offered by Piaget (1968), is defined by the community in which it occurs and involves progress towards local goals and valued skills. An expression of learning through participation may be the 'audience phenomenon' (Golemann, 2006; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2011). This phenomenon refers to children learning

by virtue of being the audience in conflict events and their management within the educational setting. They listen and see the emotional expressions of others, observe the reciprocal interactions between the adult and the children and learn by observing how others regulate their emotions.

Children's participation in the cultural routines of the educational setting enable them to take part in 'priming events', and this prepares them for the changes expected in their lives and creates "social construction of representations of temporal aspects of their lives…because children's social representations do not arise from simply thinking about social life, but rather from their collective, practical activities with others" (Corsaro et. al., 2002, p. 325). The notion of 'priming events' according to Corsaro et. al. (2002) match Rogoff"s notion of 'participatory appropriation', which refers to the fact that every event in the present is an expansion of a previous event and is directed towards as yet unattained goals (Rogoff, 1995). Rogoff (2003) sees children's activity participation itself as the process by which they gain facility in an activity. This learning process differs from the 'internalisation' process (Piaget, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978) which relates to the process of development and knowledge acquisition from the external to the internal and it implies a separation between the person and the social context.

According to Corsaro (2005) ''...children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns'' (p. 18). These cultures, also called ''social worlds'' and ''peer cultures'' are defined as ''a stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers'' (Corsaro, 2005, p. 110). Peer interactions create social knowledge and increase understanding of the cultural milieu in which they exist. Wenger (1998) expands the notion of participation into a theory of learning, claiming that it refers to being active in the practices of the social communities and in constructing identities relative to these communities. In other words, participation is both a kind of activity and a form of belonging. Hence, the learning process is an integral part of daily life and is tied to integrating into the community and contributing to its activities. The connection to social and cultural activity enables internalization, applied and re-created learning at the proper opportunity.

Learning through participation and observation might be effective for acquisition of social skills such as conflict resolution since, as Rogoff (2003) point out, such learning often occurs in authentic situations in which children are very eager to participate. Many conflicts occur during play time, which is an authentic situation for children in which they are eager to take part (Corsaro, 2005). Hence, learning through participation can promote pro-social conflict resolution. Learning through participation is a dynamic, shared process that involves experiencing the cultural practices of the educational setting but can also occur as a result of observing the experiences of others in the community.

Learning through adults or more experienced others

According to Vygotsky, learning is a process that takes place in the interpersonal space between the learners and significant others, in a field in which the learners wish to develop abilities and knowledge (Zellermayer, 2004). Having identified the needs of the learners, the teachers create a zone of proximal development (ZPD) for them. This is a mental space in which the children's functions are still in an initial state. The children have not yet mastered them and thus are unable to utilise them except through the support of the teacher or any other skilled figure (Chaiklin, 2003 cited in Kozulin, 2004), even a child (Dunn & Munn, 1986), who can help the children function in a more advanced manner than they could have on their own. The more experience other interprets, organises, censures and regulates the stimuli, thus mediating the world for the child (Vygotsky, 1978).

Rogoff (1990) used the term 'guided participation' to include the two concepts of guidance or 'scaffolding' and participation in culturally approved activities. She sees guided participation as enabling the children to do as well as possible on their own and then, what they cannot do is done by an adult or a more experienced peer. The experienced person suggests ways in which the learner can solve a complex task, and this is done also through gradual transferral of responsibility for performance of the task through shared management until the learner can perform the task alone. Similarly, Bruner's (1986) prominent term 'scaffolding' has been used to describe the steps taken by the knowledgeable person to help another by restricting the degree of freedom in performing certain tasks so that the learners can concentrate on the difficult skill they are in the process of acquiring. In this manner, the adult or more knowledgeable peer creates indirect

awareness that supports learning in the ZPD. Scaffolding constitutes the mediation of the learning according to the needs of the learner through various strategies.

Neo-Vygotskian researchers (Moll & Witmore, 1993; Feuerstein, 1998; Rogoff, 2003) broke down the term 'mediation' in order to better understand the role in and contribution of the adult to the child's learning process. Feuerstein (1998) and his disciple Klein (2000) claim there are basic criteria for adult behaviour necessary to create the experience of mediation for young children. These behaviours include the following:

(a) Focusing – attempts to get a child's attention;

(b) Affecting – attempts to raise the child's awareness of the affect or significance associated with objects, people and actions in the environment;

(c) Encouraging – mediating feelings of competence to the child;

(d) Expanding – transcending verbally or non-verbally beyond the immediate concrete context of the interaction;

(e) Regulation and behaviour – attempts to mediate planning behaviours including considerations that precede actions as well as actually demonstrating to a child how to do things.

According to this theory, affecting turns teachers into culture agents by providing stimuli with significance related to social, cultural, and moral aspects. Mediation through expanding can expose children to masterpieces of science, philosophy, morality and art (Aloni, 2005), and thus enrich their cultural heritage (Dewey, 1959). These theories which perceive peers as more experienced others does not relate to qualitative differences between mediation of adults or peers. Moreover, Shamir et al., (2007) found that peers of primary school age can be significant mediator figures for their friends and their ability even improves after participation in an intervention programme.

The basic assumption of the neo-Vygotskians (Wertsch, 1985) is that the learning process takes place in the ZPD through the discourse created between the adult or knowledgeable peer and the learner. Wertsch (ibid.) set out principles for learning in the ZPD: (a) interpersonal and intrapersonal activity – learning occurs in contexts in which there is both interpersonal activity relating to interactions with the social context, and intrapersonal activity relating to issues occurring within the individual. Both types of activity are

expressed through discourse; (b) mediation – during the interpersonal activity, the adult or more experienced person helps the learner derive meaning from what is said or done; (c) pattern of participation – in addition to the content of the activity engaged in, the learner also internalises the rules and modes of participation in that activity, and the importance of the relationships that enable the learning. The discourse is the expression of cooperation between the adult who will help the child express thoughts independently at some time in the future. This discourse gives the child an opportunity to use speech, the psychological tool which modifies and organises thinking and learning, listening and focus of interest (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, the narrative theory (Bruner, 1986) also notes the contribution of discourse with others to the development of social relationships and sense of identity through shared experience (Lawler, 2002).

According to Wertsch (1985), the pattern of participation in the discourse is created through the familiar pattern of participation for both parties and includes the following elements: (a) initiative – the child attempts to do something new for which there is a real need; (b) encouragement and support – the adult identifies the attempt and encourages it; (c) reflection and interpretation – the adult provides content and meaning for the new experience and makes it possible to link the new concept to prior knowledge or other cultural contexts.

According to Vygotsky (1978), the role of the adult is to use discourse to familiarise the learner with the learning tools developed in the local culture. During the interaction between adult and learner, the psychological tools become objects to be used when thinking. These tools are the concepts, symbols, skills, thinking abilities and knowledge that have been accumulated. Their role is two-fold: to mediate between the person and his or her environment (communication) and between the person and him/herself (thought processes). Through teaching, the adult may help the child move from spontaneous concepts acquired during daily life that are not yet organised into a set of orderly thinking skills, into scientific concepts that are organised into a systematic learning process. The scientific concepts of which the learner is initially unaware develop within a dialogic process of teaching and learning so that the learner does become aware of them. In addition to the adult, the peer group also generates opportunities for varied interactions in which the child acquires social-emotional abilities as well as cognitive ones (Vygotsky, 1978). These

social-emotional abilities are often called emotional intelligence (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 2006).

The socio-cultural perspective refers to reciprocity in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). However, reciprocity is based on teachers and learners really knowing each other in order to enable the proper reactions (Edwards, 2001) and also on caring relationships (Noddings, 1984; 1992). Wells (1999 cited in Chak, 2001) asserts that the whole person is involved in activity undertaken with others, thus, interaction in the ZPD necessarily involves all facets of the personality and not only cognition. Accordingly, Goldstein (1999) argues that the interpersonal nature of the joint construction of knowledge by teacher and student (Vygotsky, 1978) is very similar to the caring encounter between teacher and student according to Noddings (1984). Goldstein (ibid.) quotes researchers who claim that the caring of the teacher raises self esteem and sense of belonging and creates an atmosphere of trust that enables children to take risks and take part in the learning and development process. Consequently, Goldstein suggests that the inter-relational dimension of learning is a shared affective space created by teacher and student in the ZPD. This relationship within the teaching-learning relationship begins in the ZPD prior to the cognitive activity, thus facilitating its commencement.

Similarly, Fox et. al., (2003) proposed a four-stage model called the 'teaching pyramid', according to which the first stage is creating a positive, nurturing and supportive relationship between student and teacher and between the teacher, the parents and the staff. This relationship resembles safe relations of engagement (Ainsworth et. al., 1978) created when the parties to the engagement are present and accessible to the children. This approach is similar to Maslow's theory regarding the importance of satisfying the basic needs of the individual as a prerequisite for learning and development (Maslow, 1954). Appropriate responses to children such as reactions to their social signals (e.g. crying, laughter) and their physical needs encourage safe engagement (Fogel, 1993) and help them handle tension and anxiety better (Barnas & Cummings, 1994) . Moreover, Berendtro, et. al., (1990) claim that empowerment is the reinforcement of the individual in terms of self esteem by meeting four higher order needs: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. If these needs are not met, the individual does not function properly and is not empowered. Thus, empowerment is a process signifying the transition from a state of

helplessness to a state of relative control over one's life, fate and environment (Sadan, 2008). It may assume that dialogic discourse characterised by caring will create the most appropriate space for learning. Aloni (2008) defines dialogue as:

> "discourse in which those involved make themselves present and take an interest in the other both in terms of their shared humanity and of their unique personality, basing themselves on mutual trust, respect, openness and attentiveness, they advance together towards better, more comprehensive understanding of themselves, of others and of the bonds they share" (p. 26).

This definition of dialogue differs from those that refer solely to its linguistic aspect (Grice, 1989; Halliday, 1994), but is similar to the definition of Freire (1972) according to which dialogue is comprised of respect, love, cultural familiarity and hope. It is what makes it possible to relate to learners as subjects and even empower them by taking their voices seriously and giving them a chance to express themselves.

Unlike Freire, (1972) who emphasises the mutuality in relationships, for Rogers (1973) dialogue places the child at the centre while the teacher, like the therapist, is in a position to help, but in a manner that enables the child to learn independently from experience. Like the therapist, the teacher must be reliable, empathic and accepting in order for the teacher-child dialogue to allow for growth. Rogers (1973) claims that in order to sustain dialogue, the teacher must create a special climate of acceptance out of a sense of reliability and legitimisation of the expression of feelings and opinions. At the same time, it is important for the teacher also to set limits if this is done out of empathic understanding and unconditional acceptance in order to create a safe environment for learning.

Like Rogers (1973), Buber (1973) claimed that the I-Thou dialogic relationship, even if limited in its equality, will enable an educational encounter beyond the transfer of information or development of skills. The I-Thou relationship describes the existential experience in which the parties to the discourse perceive themselves as one fact with multiple facets. In contrast, the I-It relationship occurs when at least one of the parties to the discourse sees it as a means to benefit beyond the context of the encounter (Avnon, 2008). In order for an I-Thou dialogic relationship to exist, certain essential conditions must be met. The conditions that Buber (ibid.) mentions are: presence, full communication, inclusion and approval. Presence refers to "setting aside thoughts about reality, facing what exists through sensory attentiveness prior to thought processes that decipher and organise

the sensory signals" (Avnon, 2008, p.153). According to Buber (1973), full communication occurs when the two parties are involved in honest and sincere dialogue in accordance with the time and place. Inclusion is a situation in which the educators can see the event shared with the children from two angles simultaneously: their own and that of the children. Approval means non-judgemental acceptance of the other as a separate, unique entity (Itzhaki & Herzano-Lati, 1998). I-It relationships are a common occurrence (Buber, 1973), and are created out of necessity. In educational dialogue, this kind of relationship occurs when the teacher sees the dialogue as a necessary outcome of his or her role (Itzhaki & Herzano-Lati, 1998).

In conclusion, from the socio-cultural perspective one may say that early childhood learning in general, including the learning of conflict resolution, takes place through play, through participation and through an adult or more knowledgeable peer. Play enables children to experiment and explore their environment and provides structures that enable children to use logical and emotional processes (Sherratt & Peter, 2002) while different kinds of participation in the educational setting enable hands-on experience, observation of various models and the undergoing of social experiences in daily life. Furthermore, learning takes place through an adult or more knowledgeable peer who creates dialogic discourse, mediation and a relationship that creates a safe environment for the children.

Critique of the socio-cultural approach to early childhood

Despite the shift of early education towards the socio-cultural perspective, this approach has its critics. One of the arguments concerns the degree to which the socio-cultural discourse is accessible and understandable at the level of practice (Edwards, 2006). The socio-cultural theory draws particularly on the idea of the ZPD, seeking to identify teaching that uses the competence of the adult or more capable peer as the guide for participation in an activity. However, the idea does not explain how to intervene in the ZPD, which raises questions about the degree to which early childhood educators can understand and practically implement the socio-cultural theory, mainly in light of the fact that the developmental orientation is field based (Edwards, 2006).

In addition, the reference to the involvement of the adult or more experienced peer does not always take into consideration the fact that the readiness of the children to learn

depends not only on the appropriateness of the cognitive demand, but also on their motivation to engage in the activity (Chak, 2001). Hence one must also relate to the importance of the affect and the arousal level of engagement (Sherratt & Peter, 2002). Nevertheless, socio-cultural theories have a strong presence in the discussion of early childhood learning and educational approaches implementing them such as Reggio Emilia can be found all over the world and are perceived as highly influential in contemporary educational thinking.

This chapter presented three ways in which children learn and develop: through play, through participation and through an adult or more knowledgeable peer. The next chapter will describe how approaches to early childhood education derive from ideologies based on theories of learning.

Chapter 6: The Reggio Emilia Approach as a Socio-Cultural System

This chapter critically discusses the Reggio Emilia educational approach as an example of democratic experimentalism**.** This chapter includes several sections about the main facets of this approach. The first part tells the story of the education system in Reggio Emilia. The second part critically analyses the importance of relationships in this approach. The third part relates to the image and role of the child as perceived in the approach. The fourth part discusses the role of the teacher in the educational setting. The fifth part deals with the environment and its role as the third educator. The sixth part analyses the praxis of the Reggio Emilia approach. Following that is reference to the place of conflict in the Reggio Emilia approach and the implementation of this approach around the world. Thus, this chapter provides a deeper understanding of the educational approach that creates the climate and culture of an educational setting where the children learn to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

The story of Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia is a name of a small town in the Emilia Romagna region of northern Italy, where for the past 40 years an educational vision has been turned into a practical approach. The town has developed an educational system through the joint efforts of parents, teachers, and the community, under the influence and guidance of Loris Malaguzzi (New, 1990; Malaguzzi, 1993; Gandini, 1991). It was the life of the Reggio inhabitants under fascist rule that inspired a pedagogy of listening. It "taught them that people who conformed and obeyed were dangerous, and that in building a new society, it was imperative to safeguard and communicate that lesson and maintain a vision of children who can think and act for themselves" (Dahlberg et. al., 1999, p.12). The first school with the Reggio Emilia approach was set up by parents after the Second World War. The money was raised by selling the iron of the tanks left behind after the war while the land and other materials were donated by the community.

The Reggio Emilia schools grew out of a particular social system. There had been a strong movement toward democracy in this region of Italy and since World War II, Reggio Emilia

has had a socialist municipal government (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). Hence the philosophy underlying the Reggio Emilia system emerged from this socio-cultural perspective and many school practices emphasise collaboration and reflect the socialist leanings of the people of the region.

The origin of the Reggio Emilia values lies in the shared relationships of the locals in various areas of life that typify the local as well as the broader Italian culture (New, 1993). In the Reggio Emilia approach, they use the term 'social constructivism' to describe the epistemological and philosophical position that mental activity is bound to its social context (Wertsch, 1991). They claim that children and adults coexist in a social world full of culturally defined meanings and significance, and contribute to their own development through their participation in everyday cultural events (Bruner, 1985; Rogoff, 1990). Evidently, the Reggio Emilia educational approach did not evolve in isolation, but received inspiration from Dewey, Vygotsky, Erikson, Bronfenbrenner, Freire and others (Malaguzzi, 1998). Hence, some researchers claim that the Reggio Emilia approach offers nothing new, and is only a repetition of the progressive approach (Phillips & Bredekamp, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Spodek & Saracho, 2003). These claims ignore the fact that the approach actually is innovative mainly in its ability to incorporate ideas from other approaches and adapt them to a socio-cultural perspective. The approach leaves room for the group of children rather than just the individual child as we find in progressive education (Dewey, 1959).

Pedagogy of relationships

The Reggio Emilia approach stresses the importance of relationships between the three central protagonists: children, teachers and families. Thanks to these relationships, the children feel at home within the educational setting (Malaguzzi, 1998). Furthermore, these relationships enable "assuring complete attention to the problem of education, and of activating participation and research …. to become more united and aware of each other's contributions" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 65). Accordingly, in the Reggio Emilia approach, the participation of the parents in the educational setting is important.

The cooperation between educators and parents evolved through a system of community-based management in the infant-toddler centres and pre-primary schools run by the city as

well as through committees in the public schools, with wide parent representation. This model linked to traditional Catholic support for the role of the family and the community (Spaggiari, 1998). This view is expressed in the fact that the network of kindergartens in Reggio Emilia, including those set up by the parents, is to varying extents funded by the municipality, which even offers them a special training programme. This relationship seeks to promote strong interaction and communication among educators, children, parents and the community in order to enhance the values of communication and solidarity (Fontanesi et. al., 1998; Spaggiari, 1998; New et. al., 2000). The partnership in the discussions about how the kindergarten should function helps "to view the participation of families not as a threat but as an intrinsic element of collegiality and as the integration of different wisdoms" (Spaggiari, 1998, p. 104).

Similarly, other educational approaches consider the inclusion of parents in the educational process to be very important. DeVries et. al. (2002) relate to the importance of creating a cooperative social-moral atmosphere in the constructivist classroom, but they stress the relations with the teacher in the classroom and not with the other educational staff or with the parents.

In contrast, Edmiaston (2002) describes the roles of the parents and the educational staff in the constructivist classroom as partners in the process of assessing learning. She claims that "collecting and discussing documentation data with others who are familiar with the children can enrich and extend the interpretation of data." (p. 62). She sees their importance in providing examples of children's application of learning. Although she expands the role of the parents in the educational setting, she does not give them weight in all areas of school life as in the Reggio Emilia approach. Giving them only a role of assessment leaves the parents as examiners of the children and of the educational setting rather than as real partners.

However, the rising complexity of educational work and teaching has increased the need for cooperation between various elements such as school, family and community (Hargraves & Fullen, 1998) on the understanding that the teachers' work is more effective when they act within the framework of different communities (Wagner, 2001). Moreover, the process of sharing in decision-making contributes to the development of a meaningful set of interpersonal relationships between community members and the various institutions

within the community, including the school (Heckman, 1996). Hence, there is great importance to the role that the Reggio Emilia approach assigns to parents within the educational setting.

An Israeli study (Friedman, 2010) describes the mutual suspicion between parents and schools. According to Friedman (ibid.) when the state was established over 60 years ago, schools had a 'locked door' attitude towards the parents and there was a 'melting pot' policy which was expressed in ignoring cultural differences. However, Friedman claims that since then things have changed and openness towards parents has developed. Nevertheless, these changes are partial and fragile and there might be a return to a policy of lack of consideration for the parents.

Yet another element of the relationships, according to the Reggio Emilia approach, is the promotion of learning thanks to the relationships between the protagonists. The concept of "*Io chi siamo*" (I am who we are) (New, 1998) reflects how an individual is embedded within a social context. Thus the individual identity of each child is cultivated through a recognition that comes from peers and adults (Mead, 1934). The teachers encourage peer communication through asking questions, initiating face to face relations and changes in the intensity of the interactions with certain children (Malaguzzi, 1998). The class activities are carried out in small groups, which enables effective communications and interpersonal relations that create a sense of belonging and self-confidence to participate in the school activities (ibid.).

Additionally, the lack of hierarchy between the members of the teaching staff and the active partnership with the parents presents the children with a consistent cultural model of cooperation among adults (New, 1998). Organising the environment also promotes opportunities for cooperation and the increase of mutual interest among the children. For example, creating a centre for socio-dramatic play, organisation that encourages pleasant activity in the washroom, windows rather than walls as partitions between classes and teachers encouraging collaboration in the exchange of ideas and materials (New, 1998).

Like the Reggio Emilia approach, Rogoff (1990) claims that learning is a process of transformation of participation in which adults and children support and direct the shared effort of learning. Various models of learning in a community of learners (Brown &

Campione, 1990; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993) emphasise the joint striving towards meaning and understanding in which children participate to the full extent of their abilities. Hence, the term 'participation' in the Reggio Emilia approach describes the feeling of belonging and taking part in the school experience for all participants in the process (Rinaldi, 2001). Relationships and communication facilitate social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) through dialogue among all participants (Spaggiari, 1998). This dialogue creates quality communication among staff, parents and children, which is expressed in joint decision making about work organization, annual planning, the educational program, and the interaction between the school and the community (Malaguzzi, 1998).

Despite the focus on relationships and community, the Reggio Emilia philosophy highly values the image of the individual child. However, this image is described within the context of relationships. Similarly, Rogoff (2003) argued that development occurred on three interacting planes of influence, including the intrapersonal (i.e. the individual child), interpersonal (interactions among social partners) and community (contextual).

The image and role of the child

The image of the child in the Reggio Emilia approach resembles the socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978). Loris Malaguzzi (1994) describes children as being "authors of their own learning" (p.55). This statement emphasises the image of the child as 'rich' (Moss et. al., 2000), competent, strong, and a partner in the educational process. The child is a social being who constructs knowledge through activity within a social context and is no longer viewed as an empty vessel to be filled. This image of the child grew from collective experience at Reggio Emilia, and from a re-examination of educational philosophy and psychological theories (Rinaldi, 2006).

Like Dewey (1959) and Piaget (1968), Malaguzzi claims that the child is born ready for activity and learning, therefore children must be taken seriously and their ideas recognized as valuable, worthy of being listened to and examined (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). But unlike Piaget (1968), the Reggio Emilia approach claims that teachers who see children as competent will encourage them to continue making an effort, as they know they have the ability to progress given the right support, rather than wait till they are 'ready' (Fraser &

Gestwicki, 2002). The image of the child as ‘strong’ causes teachers to allow and encourage mutual feedback among the children, the raising of new ideas, and mutual support among themselves (Rinaldi, 2006).

Additionally, children in the Reggio Emilia approach are viewed as having rights rather than needs (Malaguzzi, 1998). Cohen (2005) claims that children all over the world are rarely regarded as citizens with a right to participate in civic life. Instead, adults generally develop laws, policies and practices on behalf of children, arguing that their innocence and immaturity renders them incapable of making decisions for and about themselves. This perception is also expressed in the Israeli education system in which children cannot usually be part of choosing their own curriculum.

Despite this determination, in recent years there has been an increase in the belief that children have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them (MacNaughton et. al., 2007; Woodhead, 2006). Woodhead (2006) claims that human rights for early childhood policy as established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, lies in the fact that it has been ratified, or acceded to, by 192 States and is not based on research studies. MacNaughton et al. (2007) claim that regarding the child as a ‘social actor’ and governmental determinations that children are citizens with capabilities whose opinions should be considered in legislation and policy making are what reinforced development in the international early childhood field of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (November 2005) about children's rights. These developments created a change from the focus on the needs of the child to a focus on the rights of the child.

Consequently, the concept that the child has rights and abilities allows the teachers to see the children as protagonists of their own growth: "…actors in their shared history, participants in society and culture, with the right (and obligation) to speak from their own perspective, and to act with others on the basis of their own particular experience and level of consciousness" (Edwards, 1998, p. 180). Furthermore, Rinaldi (2006) argues that young children make enormous efforts to put together all the different points of reference in their daily lives. This search to understand something, to extract meaning make the Reggio Emilia approach refer to a child as competent and strong. According to this meaning, one might also see as competent children who are perceived elsewhere as having special needs.

The child in the Reggio Emilia approach is thus considered not just as an individual full of potential, but as a social being. As a member of the community, the child is interested in maintaining complex relationships with others and contributing to the community through collaboration and, caring as well as negotiating (Nimmo, 1998).

The role of the teacher

According to Rinaldi (2006), the competent child is one who has an adult who views him or her as such. Thus, the image of the child shapes the role of the teacher. Malaguzzi (1998) explains that by stating that everyone possesses an image of the child that directs him or her when relating to a child. Malaguzzi (1998) stresses that the teacher must be active in order to create this image of the child which is created by listening to the child and by documentation which is discussed with others. These create "one of the most important opportunities for professional training and growth" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 57)

In Reggio Emilia, the role of teacher is fulfilled by everyone who takes part in the education system. In addition to the two teachers, the educational staff includes the *atelierista*, who is in charge of creating space and techniques for artistic expression (Vecchi, 1998), the *pedagogista*, who is in charge administratively, mainly of the pedagogical quality of the schools (Filippini & Bonilauri, 1998), and the auxiliary staff (teaching assistants, cook, driver). The role of the two designated teachers in Reggio Emilia developed alongside the pedagogy, the organization of the environment, and the curriculum (Edwards, 1998). For that reason, in addition to the teacher's traditional role as class manager, environment organizer, and promoter of children's learning (Edwards, 1998), the Reggio Emilia approach assigns the teacher the additional roles of collaborator and co-learner, guide and facilitator, researcher and reflective practitioner.

As the child in Reggio Emilia is seen as active and able to learn, the teacher serves as a collaborator and co-learner (Rankin, 1992; Edwards et al., 1998; Gandini, 2004). This approach sees the teacher as playing a crucial role in the learning as opposed to Rousseau's approach (1762, cited in Fisher, 2002) as quoted in his book *Emile*, where nature directs the growth of children in its own way and should never be disturbed. Similarly, Piaget (1968) believes that children undergo stages of development, with no connection to the support they get from adults. In contrast, Donaldson (1984) claims that young children are

learners with abilities and that the teacher plays a crucial role in enhancing those abilities. Likewise, Vygotsky (1978) believes the role of the teacher is to help children cope with tasks they cannot perform without adult support today so that in the future they will be able to perform them independently. Similarly, Bruner (1965) stresses that the teacher has to put up the scaffolding to help the children's learning. A similar perspective of the teacher's role is proposed by Rogoff (2003), who claims that learning is a process of transformation of participation in which adults and children support and direct the joint effort.

Accordingly, Malaguzzi (1998) describes the reciprocity in learning between children and adults through the metaphor of a game of ping-pong where two players, the adult and the child, have to change themselves in order to permit optimal growth and learning. From this perspective, the teacher does not control or supervise the child and his learning; but rather respects the child's rights in mutual participation (Rankin, 1992). The teacher is not perceived as an exclusive expert or as having a monopoly on knowledge within the education system, and the other learners may also be used as 'scaffolding' for each other (Bruner, 1996; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). Therefore, the teacher's role is to encourage collaboration among the children (Edwards, 1998). The reciprocity and partnership between teacher and learner is so important in the Reggio Emilia approach that Malaguzzi claims that "when the child dies, the teacher dies as well, because the teacher's goal is the same as that of the children: to find meaning in her work and in her existence…" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 56).

Since collaboration is a cornerstone of the Reggio Emilia approach, the teacher's role is also to cooperate with colleagues and with the children's parents (Malaguzzi, 1993). Cooperation with the staff and the parents takes place at joint meetings for planning, thinking and reflecting on the educational activities (Spaggiari, 1998). Reflection is carried out in a joint discussion with colleagues, parents, experts in the community, and even children (Malaguzzi, 1998). This enables children's and teachers' growth. Reflective thinking is part of the professional experience in the Reggio Emilia approach and conducting it in a wider forum stresses the value of participation and partnership. Moreover, Dewey (1934) defines reflective thinking as consistent and cautious active scrutiny of proven belief of knowledge, in light of the claims that support them and the drawing of conclusions that derive from this scrutiny. Therefore, reflection can be latent

within present activity – reflection in action (Schön, 1988) or as anticipation of the future when considering planning (Louden, 1992).

The regular meetings for the purpose of reflection and planning create a culture that legitimizes a flexible learning environment where the teacher is not afraid of surprising situations where she has to deviate from the plan (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992). The complexity of situations within the educational setting, the need to make choices while relating to considerations and dilemmas and understanding that every decision has profits and costs (Lampert, 1985) make reflection an important tool for improving educational activity (Hatton & Smith, 1995). The educational situations are particularly complex during a process of educational change such as learning a new educational approach. In such a process, reflection helps to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge on an ongoing basis (Fullan, 1999).

In addition, the Reggio Emilia approach views the teacher as a guide and facilitator. This perception of the role of the teacher is based on Dewey's (1959) paradigm of progressive education, the goal of which is to enable a learner's personal development. Like Dewey, Bennet (1976), sees the teacher as a provider of learning opportunities, enabling the child to experience the world out of curiosity and interest. Even as facilitators, teachers do not give up the responsibility to teach and educate, but instead of leading the learner through direct intervention, they intervene indirectly by organising the learning environment in such a way that the desired learning will take place. Such a perception of the role of the teacher also appears in Rogers (1973), who claims that the quality of learning much depends on the type of attitude that exists between the helper and the learner.

In the Reggio Emilia approach, interpersonal relationships and acceptance are seen as an important but insufficient phase in the educational process. According to Edwards (1998), the teacher's role "centres on provoking an occasion of discovery through a kind of alert, inspired facilitation and stimulation of children's dialogue, co-action, and co-construction of knowledge" (p.182). The teacher observes the children's actions, but also causes provocations which permit knowledge construction, as well as providing the children with the necessary tools for achieving their personal goals. According to Wenger (1998) the learning process is empowered when there are situations which challenge our sense of familiarity and when we are challenged beyond our ability to respond. Such situations are

based on “hot cognition” and remain etched on our memory but are only possible in an optimal state of arousal (Hoffman, 1984). Hence it is important to adjust the degree of provocation to the children and their needs.

Since the teacher is present within the learning situation (Bredekamp, 1993) and is the child's partner in the process, she can "… ask questions, offer suggestions, or provide information and technical assistance without taking over the learning experience" (Hewitt, 2001, p. 97). This teacher's role is based on Vygotsky's theory (1978) of the ZPD which sees learning as a process that occurs in an interpersonal space between the learner and the significant others in an area in which the learner wishes to develop competence and knowledge. Similarly, Forman and Fyfe (1998) claim that discourse between teachers and children make room for provocation and learning. They define discourse as an intelligent pattern of thought worthy of investigation. They claim that in the Reggio Emilia approach, treating conversation as discourse makes the teachers look for the theories, hypotheses, false assumptions, erroneous applications, smart analogies, ambiguities and differences in the communicative intention of the children. Through conversations, children and teachers learn to negotiate and generate shared meaning.

Hence, "if we believe that children possess their own theories, interpretations and questions, and are co-protagonists in the knowledge-building processes, then the most important verbs in educational practice are no longer 'to talk', 'to explain' or 'to transmit'- but 'to listen' " (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 125). Rinaldi (2006) further depicts education as a process of dialogue in which the boundary between teacher and child has to be maintained. She sees the dialogue not as an exchange, but as a process of transformation where the teacher completely loses the possibility of controlling the final result. The dialogue makes it possible to welcome contrast, differences and different perspectives. In the eyes of those who see being able to meet standards as the goal of education, this view of the teacher’s role might seem to be a shirking the responsibility for cultivating the children’s progress (Goldstein, 2007). However, according to Rogoff (2003) learning and development take place through the transformation of participation in social-cultural activities. Hence, the dialogue between teacher and learners is a learning tool that changes the degree of participation in this social activity.

However, the most important role of the teacher is to listen. In the Reggio Emilia approach, listening is a metaphor that expresses how teachers create dialogue (Rinaldi, 2006). Listening is so meaningful to the approach that it is called "the pedagogy of listening". According to Rinaldi (1998, p. 120), "listening is thus a general metaphor for all of the processes of observation and documentation". Listening through observation and documentation serves as a basis for decision making with the children and parents (Edwards, 1998; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). Rinaldi (2006) claims that to listen is an active verb, because it means not just to record a message but also to interpret it, and this message acquires meaning the moment the listener receives and evaluates it. Listening legitimises the other, since communication is one of the basic means of attributing meaning to thoughts. The communicative activity conducted through listening creates meanings that enrich all the participants in this kind of reciprocity.

Moreover, listening is perceived as a metaphor of openness and sensitivity as it enables the listener to be open to differences while recognising the value of the viewpoints and interpretations of others. Listening makes the listener pause and wait for the reaction of others, respect them, extract them from anonymity and give them presence and form (Rinaldi, 2006). Furthermore, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that active listening to children's theories and meaning making are imbued with Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the ethic of an encounter. According to Levinas, people give primacy to knowing, therefore they grasp the other and make the other into the same.

> "With grasping through the will to know, alterity disappears and singularity and novelty are excluded, to be replaced by 'the totalitarianism of the same'. The ethics of an encounter attempts to counter this grasping through respect for the absolute alterity of the other." (cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.14).

In other words, listening within the educational setting enables the encounter with the "other", giving him visibility and thus preserving his uniqueness. The main teacher's tool that demonstrates listening in the educational setting is the 'documentation' which makes the listening 'overt'. Listening to children is not to be taken for granted for a teacher brought up on behaviourist principles which emphasise the importance of cultural transfer (MacNaughton, 2003). Hence, in Israel, where there is a mixed influence of the Romantic, behaviourist and constructivist approaches, teacher training will have to place an emphasis on the change in the perception of the role of the teacher. The purpose and use of documentation will be expanded on in the chapter on praxis.

In addition to the role of facilitating children's learning, the teacher is also a researcher (Edwards et al., 1998; Malaguzzi, 1994). While observing and listening, the teacher collects data from which she can produce important knowledge regarding children's development, their fields of interest, and what makes them curious (Malaguzzi, 1993). The analysis and documentation serve as a basis for the continued learning process which is often conducted through projects. Documentation can facilitate children's abilities evaluation without basing oneself on the stereotype according to age which makes it possible to relate to the child's abilities in new ways (Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005).

Another role of the teacher is to create an educational setting that conveys values and not just knowledge. Rinaldi (2001) claims that the term 'education' is correlated with the concept of 'value'. The values might derive from the teacher's educational ideology and even affect it. However, it is possible for different and even contradictory values to exist within the same person's scheme of values (Kleinberger, 1961; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Furthermore, within the educational process there can be terminal values relating to the final goal as an ideal state of experience and instrumental values which are modes of behaviour constituting a means to attain the goals of other values that are terminal in nature (Rokeach, 1973). Thus, Rinaldi (2001) views the school as a place where individual and collective culture develops. This culture affects the context and the community socially, politically and in terms of values.

At the same time, the educational setting is deeply affected by the cultural context. This approach embodies reciprocity between society and school in creating culture and in teaching. This approach differs from the 'melting pot' concept of assimilating those outside the dominant cultural majority into the culture of the majority as an explicit goal of the Israeli education system (Lavi, 2000). Here the cultural influence is one-way, from the community to the educational setting. Thus it is the community that determines the cultural content and values conveyed within the educational setting. These relations between the community and the educational setting might make it hard to implement the Reggio Emilia approach in places where the values of society differ from those of the educational approach. In Israel, there is a cultural tradition of socialist values which originates in Jewish culture and in the processes of coalescence needed to found a state. In recent years, these values have become blurred because the individualist values of western culture have

been adopted and because there is a lesser need for the ‘melting pot’. Nevertheless, the collectivist roots of the Jewish tradition might help to preserve collectivist values and enable the introduction of this educational approach into Israel. While the teachers have an important role in the Reggio Emilia approach, they are not perceived as the sole educators. The children’s environment is also considered a significant educator.

Environment as the third teacher

The environment in the Reggio Emilia approach is considered "a third teacher" (Gandini, 1998, p. 177), together with the two teachers on staff and all the other stakeholders and the children. Likewise, Bruner (1996) sees the classroom as an environment in which “teachers and students meet and conduct decisive but mysterious interactions that we call ‘education’” (p.55). The environment contains physical components, i.e. various objects, and human objects i.e. learners, teachers and other figures that make up part of the classroom world. All these jointly direct towards learning objectives. Learning takes place through reciprocal interaction between the learner, the teacher and the teaching materials. Learning will be meaningful if the teacher makes sure to create opportunities for joint attention to cultural artefacts (Adamson & McArthur, 1995) as the focus for creation of shared cultural meaning and ascribing of linguistic labels (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986). The interactions give the main “flavour” of the learning environment and the main axes around which it is organised (Salomon, 2000).

From the Reggio Emilia perspective, the environment is stimulating, with enriched materials and equipment (Rinaldi, 2006) and resourceful teachers, so that children can explore, invent, test hypotheses, think in depth, play, and have fun as well (McCarthy, 1995). According to the constructivist approach, investigation of the environment is important since the learners actively construct knowledge by themselves (Piaget, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Piaget (1968), the environment generates opportunities for the individual to violate cognitive balance and expand schemas, while Bruner (1996) claims that the environment enables children ‘enacting learning’ which leads to ‘discovery learning’, mainly when there are others as significant mediators in the vicinity (Vygotsky, 1978).

Hence, the learning environment must offer a variety of open and challenging activities (Bruner, 1996). Accordingly, the physical environment in Reggio Emilia centres helps create conflicts, confusion and disturbances, and challenges children's thoughts and skills so that they can challenge one another's views, revisit and review their own theories and hypotheses (New, 1998).

Fraser & Gestwicki (2002) have identified eight Reggio Emilia approach principles as key to the environment as third educator:

Aesthetics- beautiful place, inviting, light-filled, orderly spaces.

Transparency- windows that allow the outside world and the light to come inside and mirrors that enable reflections.

Active learning-stimulating environment that offers many choices and encourages to explore.

Flexibility- flexible space, time and materials.

Collaboration- places and materials to work alone and with others.

Reciprocity- environment open to changes and responsive to the children, parents, and community.

Bringing the outdoors inside- using natural materials for decoration, investigation and creativity.

Relationships- objects are shown in relation to other materials.

These principles make it possible to see the organisation of the space and the educational choices made while using the space, especially what they imply. An environment with such features can offer children many opportunities to create relations that have conflicts concerning objects, space and friendships and thus also opportunities to learn how to handle them (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

The organization of the physical environment also includes the organization of time and relating to it within the educational organization (Greenman, 1988). In Reggio Emilia there are no expectations of immediate results. Instead, there is appreciation of long term

learning processes and learning from experience. The approach respects the time children need in order to develop and mature (Malaguzzi, 1998) and the time each of the staff members need for internal dialogue (Abbott & Nutbrown, 2001). For this reason the projects they deal with may be long term ones, and there are no topics which 'must be completed'. Similarly, Bruner (1996) claims that the object of the teaching should not be coverage but depth.

This approach lies in opposition to the standard-based approach that prevails in the United States and other countries (Goldstein, 2007). Goldstein (ibid.) claims that working according to a standards-based approach means:

> "changing kindergarten from a peaceful and pleasant environment shaped by the needs of the children and the professional judgments of the teachers into an educational racetrack on which teachers and students are expected to rush at top speed toward a predetermined finish line" (p.48).

In order to meet the required rate, teachers are afforded less freedom, given fewer choices, and expected to do more, do it more quickly, and more effectively than ever before. Unlike the United States, where the parents also put pressure on the education system to meet the standards, in Reggio Emilia the parents and the establishment show great respect for doing things in depth. Hence, the children are provided with extended periods of time to discuss ideas, study the way things should be done, try out, and redraw (Abbott & Nutbrown, 2001). This kind of time organisation might be seen as problematic also among parents in Israel, who feel that achievements and meeting standards are important. At the same time, a challenging environment that encourages children to learn may provide a response to the needs of the parents. The educational environment in Reggio Emilia kindergartens makes room for local culture. (Gandini, 1998). The value of cooperation is a concept with strong social and political value in the Emilia Romagna region, and so the educational environment as described above, stresses these values.

The praxis in the Reggio Emilia approach

Malaguzzi (1998) sees the practice as a necessary means for success of a theory. In his opinion, the practical work of the teacher is "the only rich ‘text book’ on which we can count to aid us in developing our educational reflections" (p. 86). The praxis of the Reggio Emilia approach relates to creating relationships and learning opportunities by planning the

curriculum through projects using the children's "hundred languages" and the documentation of these projects.

In contrast to the concept of a *curriculum* as a content of what children learn, (Kagan & Kauerz, 2006), the Reggio Emilia approach relates to the broader aspect of the curriculum which includes all aspects of school life (Rinaldi, 2006). The curriculum in the Reggio Emilia approach consists of a series of short and long range projects. The term '*progettazione*' (project), rather than 'curriculum', describes a dynamic, flexible process which changes according to the work process and the learners themselves (Gandini & Kaminsky, 2006). The project's uniqueness is that it is child-initiated and teacher-directed. It starts with teachers' observations of the children's areas of interest, and is based on the children's responses, provision of materials by the teachers, and the provoking of opportunities for further investigation.

The approach demonstrates how it is possible to create an integrative learning framework that suits the children without planning the curriculum in advance. The conventional curriculum, where lessons are planned in advance and are aimed at attaining objectives and standards, often contradicts the features of early age development (Fisher, 2002; Goldstein, 2007). Furthermore, Donaldson (1984) and Tizard and Hughes (1984) indicated that the school world is perceived as having no continuum when compared to the children's other worlds, and that learning is good when the teaching is adapted to the children's learning styles and development. A curriculum that develops according to the children's areas of interest might create an experience of listening, caring and visibility that enable meaningful learning (Combs, 1974), as opposed to a predetermined curriculum that does not take into consideration the children, their needs or areas of interest.

In contrast, other researchers say that a lack of a written curriculum shows a lack of accountability towards society, and that the large amount of documentation which makes learning visible is not a substitute for the accountability present in other programs (Soler & Miller, 2003). Such critique relates to accountability through the prism of standards, and assumes there is only one possible way to present the learning process.

During project work, the children use *"a hundred language*s" (Malaguzzi, 1998). This notion refers to the hundred ways in which a child may use mother tongue in order to

express a general attitude towards something. Another way to understand it is as the hundred symbolic systems which may serve as languages to pass on a message (Gardner, 1993; Forman & Fyfe, 1998). When children describe their mental images to others, they describe them to themselves, developing a more aware interior listening. The move from one language to another and the reflection on this move allows the children to change and enrich their theories and conceptual maps, especially when the process takes place during social interaction where they can express differences and be open to the ideas of others (Rinaldi, 2006). Learning through different languages is directed towards experiential learning as proposed by Dewey (1959). Experience gained through different languages turns it into an experiential continuum and therefore into meaningful learning. The theory of *multiple intelligences* proposed by Gardner (1993) also underlies the concept of the "hundred languages" in that it relates to different ways in which people can learn. The two theories make it possible to relate to the child as a whole with strengths and weaknesses and preferred learning channels. Frameworks that apply the practices of the 'hundred languages' may well enable an easier integration by virtue of the flexibility in adapting teaching and learning methods to each person.

The project process is accompanied by *documentation* presented in the class in different ways. The documentation is part of a process of reciprocal learning which allows the teacher to get to know the children and their areas of interest, and share the children's learning process with all partners in the process (Rinaldi, 1998). In addition, Malaguzzi (1994) stressed that teachers should observe children in order to fulfil their desire to be observed by an adult and to feel important.

Similarly, the idea of 'documentation' might be viewed as externalisation as presented by Bruner (1996). In this context, Bruner presents Meyerson's view (Meyerson, 1987, cited in Bruner, 1996) which states that "the primary role of any collective cultural activity is to create 'works' (*oeuvres*) which take on a kind of life of their own" (p. 35). Bruner (1996) expands on this, saying that the works of small groups, such as the documentation presents, are a cause of pride, identification and a sense of collectivity and solidarity for those taking part in them, even indirectly. Through externalisation, these works, which may be either cognitive or concrete, move from suggested cognitive activity to public activity subject to negotiation, reflection and meta-cognition. The documentation on the walls or in the files

represents the learning process and thus creates a narrative of the educational setting. According to Bruner (1996), this narrative promotes the cohesion of the school culture and helps construct meaning. Hence in Reggio Emilia, documentation does not relate to the individual child but rather to the representative child who illustrates the potential thinking strategies of children in general (Forman & Fyfe, 1998). In addition, the documentation contributes to the learning experience and the visibility of each child and creates a sense of belonging to the educational setting. For parents in Israel, the documentation can be by getting to know the learning process in the educational setting and by reducing worries that might arise following the new educational approach.

The Reggio Emilia approach does not emphasise free play as part of educational setting praxis. New (1998) uses Vygotsky to claim that play has more value than that given it in the Reggio Emilia approach. Vygotsky (1978) sees play as extremely important, and says it is the ultimate setting in which the ZPD may be seen, and a context in which the child is "a head taller than himself" (p. 102). Furthermore, Bruner (1996) emphasizes the importance of both logical (analytical) and narrative (intuitive) learning experiences in order for balanced, holistic functioning. The Reggio Emilia approach sees play as a means of promoting children's development, but for the educators it is not more valuable than the environment and the projects the children and teachers are involved in. Although Rinaldi (2006) mentions the importance of play for the child's creativity, the examples of play she presents do not include 'pretend play' but rather words games and tricks in play which make 'pretend play' less important in the Reggio Emilia approach.

Implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach around the world

Many books and articles have been written by educators who have documented their experiences on adopting the Reggio Emilia approach around the world and have described the principles of this educational approach (Hendrick, 1997; Edwards et. al., 1998; Abbot & Nutbrown, 2001; Stålnacke, 2002; Wurm, 2005; Kroeger & Cardy, 2006; Hughes, 2007; Moran et. al., 2007**)**. However, despite the desire to adopt the educational approach, implementing it in another country and another culture is far from simple. Rinaldi (2006) claims that the educational approach is above all a cultural convention and so it cannot be transported as is into another culture. Furthermore, Dahlberg and Moss (2006) claim that "Reggio is not a model, a programme, a 'best practice' or benchmark … it offers a sense of

belonging and a standing provocation to those who look for different values and ways of thinking to those they find around them" (p. 20). Therefore, Reggio is just a place that gives space to interpersonal dialogue which enables people to enter into a learning process and reconstruct their knowledge, values and identity. Thanks to the dialogue, the otherness of Reggio Emilia will remain and there will not be any attempt to grasp the Reggio Emilia approach and make it into the same (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006). Thus, any educator wishing to take inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach faces quite a few challenges deriving from insufficient knowledge about the approach, cultural and economic differences and the educational ideology of the adopting country.

Earlier studies claimed that it was hard to adopt the approach because educators do not have enough knowledge about it (Hirsch & Associates, 2002; Wong, 2003; Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004). Teachers in Hong Kong who were motivated to adopt this approach abandoned their attempts because of the frustration and lack of confidence caused by the fact that they did not know the theory behind the approach. The teachers mentioned feeling helpless and lacking the appropriate pedagogical knowledge and skills (Wong, 2003). These teachers who used to be experts or masters, who have a broad repertoire of experiences, might act and feel as novices or just competent in a Reggio Emilia inspired educational approach (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980).

Other studies relate to the cultural differences as a hurdle to be overcome in implementing this educational approach (Nyland & Nyland, 2005). Firlik (1996), who examined the Reggio Emilia approach in the USA, suggested that the difficulty in adopting it lies in patterns of thinking, attitudes within the macro society and cultural conventions which distinguish between European and North American societies. Furthermore, Wurm (2005) suggests that in Reggio Emilia everything is thought to be interconnected, which is very different from the American mentality, with its tendency to measure and test things individually. He claims that American teachers are challenged by the differences between them and Italy which include a different attitude towards fluidity versus control, emergent versus prepared curriculum, knowing the answers versus questions, and structured versus relaxed and open-ended time (Wurm, 2005).

Other cultural and ideological differences are expressed in the assumptions underlying American educators who see construct learning as the result of the individual, rather than

the group; teachers as consumers, rather than generators; assessment as outcome-driven rather process-focused; and teaching and learning as only cognitive rather than aesthetic, ethical or affective acts (Krechevsky & Stork, 2000). Cultural and ideological differences also refer to differences in teachers' order of priorities. Researchers mention the difference in attitude to time and how it should be used (Cadwell & Fyfe, 1997; Kinney & Wharton, 2008). Kinney & Wharton (2008) mention that teachers in Britain have difficulty finding a sufficient amount of time to talk, listen, reflect, record and be together. Similarly, teachers who adopted the approach in Hong Kong reported dissatisfaction with the lack of time they had to go further with children's initiative and interests and allow projects to develop. For these educators, a structured curriculum must be a top priority when planning class time (Wong, 2003). Another study conducted in Australia (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004), reported that finding time was the biggest barrier to adopting the Reggio Emilia approach: the time needed to discuss documentation, plan projects and find ways to integrate the approach into the ordinary timetable (Hirsch & Associates, 2002). The difficulty of implementation also relates to the economic aspect. Studies note money as a barrier to the implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach in Canada (Fraser, 2006), Hong Kong (Lee Lai Wan & Tsang Kam Shau Wan, 2005), Australia (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004), and the USA (Bersani & Jajoura, 2002). They claim that special funding is needed to cover the positions of *atelierista* and *pedagogista* in the kindergarten and for the documentation.

There might be another difficulty for implementation in countries where there is a standards-based curriculum. Such an education system could put pressure on the teachers to achieve the standards (Wien, 2004) in addition to pressure from the parents, who are not used to the Reggio Emilia style of learning, that their child must be 'ready for school' (McClow & Gillespie, 1998).

Although these studies might dishearten those interested in adopting the Reggio Emilia approach, they might also give direction to training and appropriate professional pre-service and in-service support. From these studies one may conclude that effective implementation in countries other than Italy must take into consideration the local cultural characteristics and create a dialogue that will examine which values are a match and which practices contradict the local values and educational ideologies. The teachers must study in depth the theory and philosophy underlying the educational approach and be familiar with

the practices as an integral part of the theory. Furthermore, long-term support of the professional staff is important for them to be able to adapt the principles, values and practices to local demands and culture with limited resources.

This chapter examined the philosophical principles of the Reggio Emilia educational approach and its best practices. The place of conflict in this approach was also examined as well as the transportability into other cultural settings in the world. The next chapter will relate to various theories and the development of conflict resolution in early childhood.

Chapter 7: Early Childhood Conflict Resolution

This chapter critically discusses conflict resolution among peers in early childhood. It relates to conflict as a significant component in the relationships between children that derives from the differences in their desires, beliefs and developmental abilities. The chapter relates to various definitions of conflict, the place of conflict in the different theories and the influence of conflict on children's personal development. Later on, the nature of conflict in early childhood and its connection to friendships among children will also be discussed. This chapter will create the basis for understanding the contribution of conflicts and their pro-social resolution to children's social development and also of the role of the adults present in conflict situations among young children.

Defining conflict and conflict resolution

Conflict is a key mechanism for change and development (Shantz, 1987). Shantz & Hartup (1992) concluded that: "Whenever people interact - especially when they interact often - disagreements and oppositions are inevitable…Conflicts - between people and within people - are part and parcel of everyday living, and to such an extent that they must be regarded as intrinsic to the human condition" (p.1). Shantz (1987) defined 'conflict' as an interpersonal episode involving clear behavioural opposition, with several discrete functions such as oppositions and resolutions. The social conflict involves two or more partners engaging in incompatible activities (Deutsch, 1973). Similarly, Malloy and McMurray (1996) define conflict as a relationship where two people with incompatible goals use a variety of pro-social and anti-social strategies to influence each other's behaviour. Some researchers describe conflict as an exchange with at least three elements (e.g., Shantz, 1987; Laursen & Hartup, 1989) as follows: 1. A influences B with an act or a verbal utterance. 2. B resists this influence. 3. A attempts once again to influence B. With this third element, the opposition becomes mutual. In contrast, other researchers (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Hay & Ross, 1982) also defined as conflicts one-sided objections or protests that are unanswered.

While aggression can lead to conflict, not every conflict is aggressive. Conflict involves incompatible goals and overt opposition to the actions or statements of one person by another, with no intention of causing harm to the other. Opposition is transformed into

conflict when it becomes mutual - when the opposition of one child is in turn disputed by the child whose actions were first objected to (Shantz, 1987). Unfortunately, even after decades of research establishing the positive outcomes of conflict, it is still typically perceived as negative (Shantz, 1987; Killen & Turiel, 1991) and as "toxic" to kindergarteners' relationships (Roseth et. al., 2007, p. 1606). The confusion between aggression and conflict leads to the assumption that conflict leads to violence, so there is a desire to end the conflict as soon as it arises (Chen et. al., 2001). Since conflict often causes frustration and challenges the communicative abilities of most adults (Katz, 1985), it is related to as an abnormal situation (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Relating to aggression and conflict separately makes it possible to see conflict as an opportunity to help children learn to see the other's point of view, develop conflict-resolution strategies (Chen, 2003) and create a process of change with positive outcomes (Deutsch, 2005).

Schellenberg (1982) defines conflict resolution as "any marked reduction in social conflict as a result of a conscious settlement of issues in dispute" (p.9). Additionally, Aureli and de Waal (2000) claim that conflict resolution refers to actions that eliminate the incompatibility of attitudes and goals on the part of the conflicting individuals. Conflict resolution may occur through self-conscious efforts to come to an agreement or by other means such as environmental change, the influence of third parties, victory for one party, and so on (Schellenberg, 1982). Deutsch (1973) distinguished between two different types of conflict - destructive and constructive. "Destructive conflict" was defined as conflict in which threats and coercion are used and in which there is an expansion and escalation beyond the initial issue. In "constructive conflict", the issue remains focused and is negotiated through mutual resolution. Consequently, a conflict resolution program or and educational approach as Reggio Emilia "models and teaches, in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes, practices and skills that help address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, and create safe and welcoming communities" (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2002, p. 1).

Theories of conflict resolution

Various theories have related to the origin of interpersonal conflict and to the factors affecting how it is resolved. In his review, Deutsch (2005) mentions theories that view conflict from the perspective of "competitive struggle". The prominent theories of Darwin, Marx and Freud emphasize the competitive, destructive aspects of conflict. These theories explain the behaviour in terms of innate, evolutionary derived instincts. These theories lost popularity following the development of empirical studies which focused on the investigation of cooperation and competition.

Unlike the earlier theories, the Field Theory of Kurt Lewin (1951) represents the integration between the individual and society. From this socio-cultural perspective, complex interacting influences affect children's social behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Accordingly, behaviour is always the result of a field of forces, never a matter of specific traits in the individual or specific conditions of environment. The way these forces come together determines the behaviour of the individuals involved. Thus, according to Lewin (1997) "style of living and thinking initiated by the leader dominated the relations between the children" (p. 63). From this point of view, people's behaviour is influenced by the social climate in which they live and so children will be likely to resolve disputes collaboratively if the atmosphere of the setting is democratic and if the norms of the school expect it.

Following in Lewin's footsteps, Morton Deutsch continued research on cooperation-competition systems (Deutsch, 2005). In his Social Interdependence Theory he highlighted the social-psychological processes which would give rise to individual and group outcomes of cooperation and competition (Deutsch, 1949 cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1989, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). In contrast, in social dependence relationships, one individual's goal attainment is affected by the actions of another individual but not vice-versa (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). According to Deutsch (2005), compared with competitive group relations, cooperative ones show more effective communication, friendliness, helpfulness and less obstructiveness. These behaviours make it possible to see conflict resolution as a shared process without coercion because the parties do not see it as a power struggle or a matter of moral principle, but as a specific issue at a given time and place. Hence, an educational

approach that supports cooperative processes leads to greater productivity and better interpersonal relations and constructive resolution of conflicts.

Another theory that adopts the social-biological model is de Waal's (1996, 2000) Relational Model. This model is embedded in evolutionary theories which see social animals as trying to develop constructive ways of coping with interpersonal conflicts (Trivers, 1971; de Waal, 2000) where constructive conflict resolution is a critical element in group life. Individuals who wish to stay together and enjoy the benefits of living in a group must find a balance between the cost and the benefit of the conflict. In other words, the conflict behaviour is influenced not only by the value of what the parties want to gain, but also by whether this behaviour might endanger their relationship (de Waal, 1996, 2000; Verbeek & de Waal, 2001).

According to the Relational Model, the chances of pro-social conflict resolution increase when the parties have a mutual interest in repairing potential conflict-induced damage to their relationship and have access to a relational-repair mechanism (deWaal, 2000). From this perspective, the more friendships the children in an educational setting have and the busier they are with meaningful activity such as pretend play, the greater their interest in resolving conflicts in a way that does not damage the relationship or the shared activity. Moreover, the better social-emotional and cognitive skills they have, the more effective conflict resolution will be for continued friendship. The more effective the conflict resolution mechanism, the less afraid the parties are of entering into conflict. Their ability to preserve relationships despite the conflict also creates a space for aggression as a negotiating tool (de Waal, 2000).

The model perceives the cycles of conflict and reconciliation as contributing to the fine tuning of expectations between the parties to the conflict, to building trust despite the original disagreements and creating closer relationships than if the conflict were repressed (de Waal, 1996). Thus, an educational approach which encourages social relations and makes room for them to develop, such as Reggio Emilia, might affect children's ability and motivation to resolve conflicts in a pro-social manner. Moreover, according to this theory, the involvement of the teacher must be adjusted to the needs of the children in order not to harm their continued friendships.

In the Reggio Emilia approach, conflict is desirable and has value as a tool for the promotion of higher order thinking (Hewitt, 2001), and as part of the implementation of the value of learning and the feeling of belonging to a community (Rinaldi, 2001). Like Piaget (1973), Malaguzzi claims that conflicts are not necessarily negative. Malaguzzi does not necessarily mean conflict resulting in violence or hard feelings, but "differing of perspectives and the possibility of co-constructing a shared understanding." (Nimmo, 1998, p. 301).

The teacher's role centres on provoking opportunities for discovery influenced by listening, stimulating the children towards dialogue, joint activity, and joint knowledge construction (Edwards, 1998). The teacher assists in turning an argument following a conflict among the children into a hypothesis which can be examined (Filippini, 1990 cited in Gandini, 1998). She encourages the children to work out the conflict themselves, but will be there if they need an arbitrator or assistance in the negotiation (Filippini, 1990 cited in Gandini, 1998). The range of feelings that surface during the conflict become part of the group's shared memory and vocabulary (Nimmo, 1998). Similar treatment of interpersonal conflict by teachers might support the children’s ability also to resolve such conflicts on their own using dialogue.

Conflict as a part of child development

Some theories (Freud cited at Hall, 1954, Ericson, 1963, Piaget, 1965) present the conflicts and contradictions as part of the intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviour. Conflict seems necessary for the creation of any change in the individual. Developmental change is caused by the dialectic between the individual and society (i.e. other people) as well as by intrapersonal conflicts. It is a necessary part of life and as such must be related to as intrinsic to the human condition (Shantz & Hartup, 1992).

Interpersonal conflicts involve emotional ability which enhances people's experiences (Schaffer, 1997). This ability motivates the child’s reorganisation of knowledge and leads to learning (DeVries & Zan, 1994). Piaget (1965) believed that conflicts among children foster a better understanding of others, thereby reducing egocentrism. In agreement with Piaget, Shantz and Hobart (1989) wrote that conflicts between children increased opportunities to learn both social connectedness and individuality. Rizzo (1992) found that

conflicts provided children with the opportunity to work out the terms of their relationships, which implied that conflicts were vital to the cultivation of friendships (Ross & Conant, 1992). Some peer disputes between friends were initiated purposely in order to bring about positive changes in their friend's behaviour. Another influence was Vygotsky's theory, which claims that higher forms of mental activity originate in socio-cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Conflict causes opposition, negotiation, listening to the other's point of view, and the decision whether to adopt or rephrase an initial assumption. This dynamic is perceived as supportive of the cognitive process, and even necessary for the democratic process (Rinaldi, 2001).

Conflicts with peers are also associated with the development of moral abilities and social learning, including the ability to coordinate the needs of the self with the needs of others (Killen & Nucci, 1999 Verbeek, et. al., 2000). These kinds of conflicts create an opportunity to compete, confront and learn to act together. During these conflicts the children must regulate their feelings appropriately (Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992) and express their feelings and desires in a socially appropriate manner, in other words, they must develop their social competence.

Social competence is the ability to use personal and environmental resources to achieve personal or mutual gain in different areas of life (Waters & Sroufe, 1983). The competent child is usually popular within the peer group (Rose-Krasnor, 1997) and so can effectively handle conflicts that arise following social interaction in a way that will enable adaptation with peers in the kindergarten environment and good relations within the social group (Rubin & Ross, 1988; Mendez et. al., 2002; Ladd, 2005). Researchers suggest using the broad concept of social-emotional competence because social ability is founded on cognitive-emotional abilities (Goleman, 2006) such as emotional expressiveness, emotion regulation and social-emotional understanding (Salovey cited in Goleman, 1995; Denham et. al., 2003).

Emotional expressiveness relates to facial expressions, body gestures (such as hugging or raising an arm in threat) and sounds a person makes following an emotional experience (such as crying, whooping with joy or screaming in fear). The clearer a child's emotional expressiveness, the easier it is for others around him to decipher his or her emotional experience and respond sensitively (Denham et. al., 2003). The ability to control emotional

expressiveness is connected to neurological maturity and to cognitive, social, verbal and motor development that all occur at the same time and through contact with the environment. As a child's verbal ability expands, the more he or she is able to use words to describe emotional experiences (Dunn et. al., 1987). During this development, children acquire the rules that are accepted in their culture for emotional expressiveness such as concealing feelings and regulating the intensity of emotional expressiveness, pretending etc. (Yafeh, 2007). Since the differences in emotional expression might make interpersonal communication hard and lead to conflict, support from the teachers is important in the form of recognising the physical clues, interpreting the emotional expressiveness and mediating between children whose emotional expressiveness is "hard to read" (Rosenthal et al., 2008). Hence, clear emotional expressiveness of the parties to a conflict will enable them to understand and to be understood.

In addition, interpersonal conflict might lead to emotional arousal. The ability to regulate emotional arousal and its expression are essential for cognitive functioning and the child's ability to solve problems, and handle violence (Davidson et. al., 2000; Rosenthal et al., 2008). *Emotion regulation* refers to the ability to respond flexibly with a range of feelings: on the one had to generate effective interpersonal responses and on the other, to control and delay ineffective ones (Katz & McClellan, 1997). This involves emotional processes to calm physiological arousal, cognitive processes to assess the situation and focus on a way to solve the problem, and behavioural processes that regulate emotional expressiveness. Difficulties in regulation range from lack of regulation - a flood of emotions that might harm the learning of social knowledge, or over-regulation as seen in withdrawal from interaction in order to avoid emotional flooding, which may then lead to a loss of opportunities to acquire and practice social competence (Hoffman, 1984; Denham, 1998; Fox & Calkins, 2003).

The regulation process can be activated independently by the child (such as thumb sucking) or as an interpersonal process in which the child is helped to regulate emotions by someone else such as a mother or a teacher (Rosenthal et. al., 2008). The involvement of the teacher might entail identifying emotion-related words, understanding the causes of emotion, and providing them with constructive means of emotion regulation (Ahn, 2005).

This involvement might come in the wake of a peer conflict or on other occasions of emotional arousal.

Studies show that the success of emotion regulation depends on abilities that continually improve with age. During the kindergarten years (3-5), there is a dramatic leap in the children's ability to communicate verbally, talk about their feelings and understand the feelings of others (Rosenthal et. al., 2008). The repertoire of emotion regulation strategies also expands, thus enabling better organisation and control of emotional expressiveness (Cole et. al., 1994; Denham et. al., 2003). However, other studies found that 3-year old children growing up in a parental environment in which emotions were often discussed were better than their 6-year old friends at making judgments about others' emotions (Dunn et. al., 1991) and regulating their own (Gottman, 1997). Although the studies related to the parental environment, one may assume that a similar environment in the educational setting might also promote the ability to regulate emotions. Hence, a Reggio Emilia inspired setting that encourages dialogue that is both cognitive and emotional among peers and between the children and the educational staff might support this.

The ability to regulate emotion is extremely important when handling interpersonal conflict. We may assume that the more effective the children's emotion regulation, the more effectively they will be able to handle conflict in a way that will also enhance their social competence. We may also understand the important role of the teacher in supporting children's emotion regulation (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004) following a conflict incident to help them improve their emotion regulation strategies and hence, their social-emotional competence.

Another component of social-emotional competence is *social-emotional understanding* (Denham et. al., 2003; Goleman, 2006). It relates to children's ability to distinguish between verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion or emotional states of their own or of others, to understand the meaning of these states and identify the reasons for the emotions (Denham, 1998). In addition, social-emotional understanding also refers to the ability to understand the effect of one's behaviour on others, the ability to decode signals from others and understand the social causes of the other person's emotional state (Rosenthal et. al., 2008). Social-emotional understanding also includes social knowledge about accepted ways to behave within the social environment. Children who can identify

the expressiveness on their peers' faces or comprehend the emotions elicited by common social situations have a better chance of behaving pro-socially. For example, a child observing a conflict between two peers may guess the emotions of a friend and offer consolation rather than just move away or get into a quarrel (Denham, 1998). Hence, it will be possible to identify high social-emotional understanding when children recognize conflict situations and intervene in them appropriately.

Researchers found that kindergarteners between the ages of 3 and 6 can "read" positive emotions similarly to adults, but do not yet interpret well the range of negative emotions that others may express (Fabes et. al., 1994). These children have difficulty distinguishing between what people really feel and what they appear to be feeling (Friend & Davis, 1993). DeVries and Zan (1996), who quote the model of Selman (1980), claim that social understanding up to the age of 3 is in the first stage of development (0) in which the child does not recognize the needs and intentions of others. There is often a transition to the second stage (1) in which the child understands that others have feelings, desires and intentions that differ from his or her own, but cannot yet take into account more than one perspective. According to this model, (Selman, 1980), it is only at the age of 4 or 5 that a child is capable of reaching the third stage (2) in which he or she can also take into account the perspective of the other person, having received support from the teacher, while children will reach the fourth stage (3) after the age of 8.

Social-emotional understanding is based on the ability to understand one's own mental states (thoughts, desires, intentions and feelings) as well as those of others. This ability or theory of mind (TOM), enables children to understand the motives of others and to understand that they might have perspectives, desires or beliefs that differ from their own (Ziv, 2009). Hence, TOM may help children before or during the conflict to understand that the other party has opinions, feelings and intentions that may resemble or differ from their own and might interpret the conflict and its causes differently. This ability may enable attainment of a resolution that relates to the needs of both parties (Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Foote& Holmes-Lonergan, 2003). Furthermore, it was found that 3-4 year old subjects who used a higher proportion of other-oriented arguments scored higher on the false-belief task attributed to TOM (Slomkowski & Dunn, 1992; Foote& Holmes-Lonergan, 2003).

Theory of mind develops and is refined during early childhood, and helps all interactions with other people. Up to the age of 3, children discover the connection between people's overt behaviour and certain covert mental motives. Their language, which is constantly being enriched, expresses the understanding of initial mental concepts and enables a preliminary representation of different viewpoints (Ziv, 2009). Despite this development, while 3-year olds do understand certain aspects of desire, when there is a real conflict, they have difficulty understanding the desire of the other. In contrast, 5-year olds are able to understand the desires of another and even relate to a desire contrary to their own (Ziv & Frye, 2003). In addition, 3-year olds recognize feelings, when the external expression matches the genuine feeling, while 5-year olds recognize genuine feeling even when it does not match the external expression (Harris et al., 1986). In other words, there is a significant change in children's social thinking and understanding between the ages of three and five, while it is only between four and five that children begin to understand different viewpoints in conflict situations, the link between different mental states and how they come about, and the link between mental states and behaviour (Ziv, 2009). Similarly to the developmental approach of Selman (1980), there are those who claim that TOM is an innate competence and that growing social understanding among children expresses this process of maturing (Fodor, 1992).

On the other hand, other researchers indicate the importance of a variety of social experiences for the development of TOM and social understanding (Nelson et al., 1998). Dunn et al. (1991) found a close correlation between the features of daily discourse between mothers and children and TOM. The factor with the greatest impact on children's mental understanding is the maternal mediation pertaining to the causes and mental explanations for people's behaviour and even encouraging children themselves to offer mental explanations for their behaviour and that of their partners in play or in conflict (Wellman & Lagatutta, 2004). Hence, we may assume that discourse with similar features in the educational setting may also cultivate social understanding. Moreover, since pretend play is characterised by suggestions for shared planning of scenarios and shared discourse on ideas for play, this is also an opportunity to cultivate TOM and social understanding (Brown et al., 1996; Ziv, 2009). Furthermore, play and play-drama can benefit wider range of children with severe and complex learning needs to understand social narratives and to develop social competence (Peter, 2002).

Accordingly, there is great value in creating room within the educational setting for varied social experiences that enable children to refine their awareness of their own perspectives as well as those of their peers. These experiences will be more meaningful when accompanied by the guidance and support of the teachers. A Reggio Emilia oriented approach might create such a supportive framework. This kind of environment might develop children's social-emotional competence so that they can resolve conflicts using pro-social strategies despite their young age.

Unlike the concept described here, which sees interpersonal conflict as an opportunity to strengthen various developmental competencies, conflicts might be stressful situations for children. A situation is considered stressful or threatening when a person estimates that his or her needs or motives are threatened. According to Lazarus (1966), people differ in their perceptions of stimuli as threatening and in their reactions to stress, which is subjective and dependent on how the person assesses the situation and the degree of threat. Since in a conflict situation children might feel threatened, they might experience stress, which might increase if they experience many conflicts that are not resolved constructively. Furthermore, Watamura and Donzella (2003) mention the possibility that the lengthy time spent in the group and in the educational setting harms the children by causing a rise in the level of cortisone, a hormone that indicates a high level of stress. High levels of this hormone are found in children who tend to experience distress in social situations. Earlier studies emphasised that social and emotional abilities such as that of positive emotional expression, displaying empathy or joining in play, prevent a stressful response to a social situation (Saarni, 1990; Parke et. al., 1992). Hence, although peer conflicts have many developmental and social advantages, when they are managed unconstructively, over time they might become a stress factor or even adversely affect development and relationships. This kind of perception of conflict stresses the importance of the involvement of the teacher in the conflict, giving support to emotional regulation and reinforcing the children's competence in pro-social conflict resolution. This is in order to reduce the stress they might feel following the social relationships in the educational setting.

The nature of children's conflicts

Many studies have dealt with the nature of children's conflicts (Shantz, 1987; Laursen et. al., 2001; Chen, 2003). These studies relate to the unique characteristics of conflict in early

childhood among children who had not participated in any intervention programme. These characteristics might be a source of comparison to the characteristics of conflict resolution among children in a Reggio Emilia oriented setting.

Some of these have shown that children use both violent and non-violent means to deal with situations of conflict, and that eventually they learn how to cooperate, take turns, share and enjoy different roles while they play (Smith et. al., 1995). Most studies on children's conflicts focused on their content, duration and the various resolution strategies and outcomes (Shantz, 1987). Studies that examined conflict content found that for children below 5 years of age, object-oriented conflicts concerning the distribution of resources (e.g. toys, materials, space) were the most common issues (Hay, 1984; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Killen & Turiel, 1991; Chen et. al., 2001).

Children use different strategies to resolve their interpersonal conflicts. Permanent use of inappropriate strategies may result in difficulties in peer relations such as aggression, victimisation, and peer rejection (Perry et. al., 1992). The term ‘strategy’ refers to sets of behaviours that might serve a social goal. These may be conscious and planned, with a particular end in mind, or alternatively they may be unconscious, automatic, or habitual behaviours that nevertheless serve those goals (Shantz, 1987). Two to six year old children, respond to initial opposition by insisting, aggravating, reasoning, offering alternative proposals, compromising, ignoring, requesting explanation, and using physical force (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981). Some children respond by asking for adult assistance in different ways such as tattling, whining, or directly asking for help (Dunn & Munn, 1987; Chen et. al., 2001). They also use two main types of gestures which Sackin and Thelen (1984) describe as subordinate (e.g., crying, withdrawing, and yielding); and conciliatory (e.g., cooperative propositions, apologies, symbolic offers, and sharing of objects).

Some research studies of conflict resolution among children have categorised conflict strategies (Vuchinich, 1990; Chen et. al., 2001; Thorenberg, 2006). Most of them came up with basically similar categories that distinguished between five different conflict resolution categories: compromise, third-party intervention, withdrawal, standoff, and submission. Empirical evidence suggests that these resolutions may be further collapsed into three categories: negotiation (compromise and third-party resolution), disengagement (withdrawal and standoff), and coercion (submission) (Jensen-Campbell, et. al., 1996 cited

in Laursen et. al., 2001). Negotiation relates to the process of compromise that reflects a certain level of concession by both parties through sharing, turn-taking or talking things out. Coercion describes a process in which one party yields to the demands of the other who uses commands, refusal and physical and verbal aggression. Disengagement is described as cessation of conflict without resolution when discussion stops, the parties leave or a change in topic of conversation and focus on the activity (Laursen et. al., 2001).

Other studies divided the conflict resolution behaviour according to their level of insistence. Insistent behaviours reflect low levels of desire or ability for interpersonal understanding and coordinating between the perspectives and desires of the other (Selman, 1980; Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Dunn & Munn, 1987). Such behaviours include direct forceful or coercive physical and verbal behaviours, invocation of pre-established rules, adult authority or peer pressure. Non-insistent behaviours, which reflect the desire and ability to understand the other's point of view, include abandoning the conflict through submission or compromise or negotiation so that both parties can attain their respective goals. Similarly, DeVries and Zan (1996) divided the conflict resolution strategies following Selman (1980) into four levels according to the development of interpersonal understanding. These levels reflect the increase in the ability to see the perspective of the other party. Zan, (1996) claims that despite the sequence of stages she described in her research, the development of the negotiating ability depends more on experience and less on the age of the children. A higher level of negotiation can be reached when the teacher respects the ideas of the children and works with them as a partner rather than as authority (DeVries & Zan, 1996). This approach to children's competencies is in line with the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998) and with democratic practices (Moss, 2009).

In contrast, Selman (1980) claims that reciprocation based on exchanges takes place when children are over 8 years old and they may recognize that reciprocally satisfying agreements are possible when they are over 14. Similarly, in his much earlier work, Piaget (1969) argued that in early childhood, a child is egocentric and finds it difficult to develop empathy and relate to another person's point of view. Some research studies even provided evidence that children younger than 7 or 8 years old are unable to make comparisons with others and therefore they cannot resolve conflicts by taking into account the other person's

point of view (Ruble et. al., 1980; Nicholls, 1984; Boggiano & Ruble, 1986; all cited in Stevahn, et. al., 2000).

Critical views of Piaget claim that in early childhood the children do expand their ability to understand another person's point of view, as well as their own ability to fulfil the needs of others (Donaldson, 1984; Dunn & Munn, 1987; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). This ability enables children to resolve conflict through negotiation, especially when they are able to experiment with different conflict resolution strategies (Arcaro-McPhee et. al., 2002). Moreover, the developing ability of the theory of mind between ages 3 and 6 enables children's understanding and knowledge about mental situations (Ziv, 2009) and thus also enables 3-5 year olds to see the other point of view in a conflict (Foote & Holmes-Lonergan, 2003) and to distinguish between behaviour and a mental state such as emotions, and grasp that they can affect the mental state of another through their behaviour. Research studies (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992; Foote & Holmes-Lonergan, 2003) found that children who employed other-oriented arguments in conflict resolution scored higher in false-belief tasks since the social interactions occurring in the educational setting are an important source of theory of mind knowledge (Nelson et al., 1998).

Moreover, the socio-cultural theories (Rogoff, 2003; Corsaro et. al., 2002) emphasise the likely improvement in children's competencies following their participation in social interactions. Thus, an approach such as that of Reggio Emilia, which perceives the child as competent and enables varied interactions among children within the educational setting, might support pro-social conflict resolution at an even earlier age than expected in the various theories or as shown in the various studies.

Children have been seen to modify their conflict resolution strategies depending on the partner, the topic of conflict, and other conflict- and non-conflict-related objectives (Brownell & Brown, 1992; Chung & Asher, 1996). They also vary their conflict strategies according to whether their goals are to gain control of an object, maintain a good relationship with the peer, or avoid trouble with an adult (Chung & Asher, 1996). Additionally, children chose more pro-social and passive strategies if their goal was to maintain a good peer relationship or avoid trouble with an adult. Children wanting to avoid trouble made more appeals to adults. In contrast, control-seeking children tended to use more hostile or coercive techniques (O'Brien et. al., 1999).

Sometimes conflicts move from episode to episode and continually unfold through interactions between the parties. The moves and interpretations of each party influence those of others (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Conflict can also get out of hand when strong feelings are involved. This causes the parties to shift from a useful exchange to efforts to damage the other person (Baron, 1984). Escalatory conflict is characterized by great reliance on overt power manipulation, threats, coercion and deception (Deutsch 1973).

Behaviours that are more insistent tend to induce similar behaviours in the partner, so there is conflict escalation (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Hay & Ross, 1982; Perry et al., 1992). On the other hand, behaviours that are not insistent involve non-coercive reasoning, compromise and negotiating strategies that offer more details about the speaker's perspective and what solutions would be reasonable in the eyes of the speaker. These behaviours reduce the chance of conflict escalation (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Genishi & DiPaolo, 1982; Shantz, 1987; Ross & Conant, 1992; Killen & Naigles, 1995). Hence, an educational approach that encourages dialogue and a teacher who is a role model for this kind of problem solving might help prevent the escalation of conflict.

Another explanation for conflict escalation might lie in the fact that the mirror neurons are aroused and make the child respond in a manner that imitates the response of the other person (Oberman et. al., 2007). Thus, insistent behaviour on the part of one child may bring about similar behaviour in another (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Brownell & Brown, 1992; Chung & Asher, 1996). Unlike relating to the behaviour of the parties to negotiation as an echo of each other, in studies on adults, it was found that even though it disrupted negotiation, power behaviour might be beneficial to the party using it in conflict resolution at least in the short term (Deutsch, 2005). Similarly, Galin (2005) claims that the anger of one of the parties to the conflict during negotiation signals to the other party that a crisis might be imminent, and that they should change their behaviour in the conflict. Furthermore, it was found that even in early childhood, the strategy of coercion actually paves the way for the strategy of negotiation later on (Hartup, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Laursen & Collins, 1994).

When children acquire negotiating and compromising strategies and they are less insistent in their conflict behaviour, the escalation declines. This decline during the years in kindergarten suggests the growth of conflict management strategies which increase the

options for friendly resolution (Chen et. al., 2001). The ability to negotiate makes the conflict constructive and thus desirable (Gillespie & Chick, 2001; Deutsch, 2005).

However, it has not been proven that negotiation is the most effective method for every situation, especially in light of the findings that controversial children involved in conflicts are often identified as leaders (Coie, et. al., 1982), Hence, one may also see the use of non-negotiating strategies as desirable when they do not escalate into violence, and as long as they are part of a range of the children's strategies. Thus, according to the socio-cultural theories (Lewin, 1997; Rogoff, 2003), although it was found that conflict in early childhood has unique characteristics, that might change in the context of democratic practices. Accordingly, a Reggio Emilia inspired educational setting might affect the characteristics of children's conflicts.

Conflict resolution and friendship

Although it seems that there would be conflicts between children who are not friends, it was found that in actual fact, conflicts are created very frequently within friendships in early childhood (Shantz, 1987). In his study of 3 and 4-year-olds in American schools, Corsaro (2005) recognized that conflict often developed during play. In these cases, the children used their friendship as a means of applying pressure to get what they wanted ('I won't be your friend any more'), as a "denial of friendship" strategy. Children take such threats seriously and quickly give in or become disappointed and turn to the teacher for comfort. However, the use of this strategy is a 'double-edged sword', as the children on whom it is used could just as quickly turn it around and make their own threats. This kind of response might support the role of the mirror neurons (Goleman, 2006) in choosing the response strategy during conflict.

Rizzo (1992) claims that notions of friendship are used to elevate the seriousness of the situation, to convince the friend to play, and to make it easier for the children to get what they want in the future. Additionally, Hartup (1989) found that the early childhood friendships did actually have an impact on conflict behaviour. He claimed that despite the similarity in the topics of conflict between those who are friends and those who are not, friends tend to resolve conflicts differently from those who are not friends because the very fact they are in conflict puts their future friendship at risk. This 'risk' influences the

conflict resolution and encourages a situation in which each party can fulfil his or her needs within the friendship. Similarly, the Relational Model (de Waal, 2000) demonstrates the increase of pro-social conflict resolution when the parties share a mutual interest in repairing potential conflict-induced damage to their relationship.

No difference was found regarding the existence of aggression in conflicts between friends and not friends, but the intensity of the conflicts was lower among friends (Hartup et. al., 1988). These findings support the idea that constructive conflict resolution develops pro-social skills (Dunn & Munn, 1986; Smith & Ross, 2007) and enables the continuation of friendships. Thus one may assume that a setting where the educational approach emphasises the importance of the relationships between the children and which creates an environment that facilitates friendship building through all kinds of interactions, will support pro-social conflict resolution.

This chapter focused on the characteristics of conflict resolution in early childhood. Many studies presented here claim that conflict resolution is affected by the developmental features of the children as reflected in their social competencies. At the same time, studies and theories were presented that stress the great influence of the educational environment on the children's ability to resolve conflicts pro-socially. Accordingly, the next chapter will relate to intervention and its influence on interpersonal conflict resolution.

Chapter 8: Intervention in Peer Conflict

This chapter discusses the various interventions in children's conflicts in the educational setting. The need for involvement in conflict derives from the fact that in addition to its advantages, conflict is a cause of stress for children and might escalate to violence, and the various forms of involvement can mitigate this. The first part examines the direct intervention of adults and peers in children's conflict resolution. It also relates to the involvement in the educational setting through intervention programmes. The second part discusses the indirect intervention in conflict resolution through the cultural and environmental influence of the educational setting.

Direct intervention in peer conflict

Peer intervention

Some studies show that a large number of conflicts attract more than two peers. Strayer and Noel (1986 cited in Ross & Conant, 1992), reported that one in every five or six conflicts among 4- to 6 year-old children included a third party. Since there is a lack of research for the 3-4 age group, a research relating to children older than those in this study is presented. Its importance lies in its emphasis on the existence of the phenomenon of peer intervention in their friend's conflicts.

Third parties may side with or oppose one or other of the parties to the conflict. They can offer their support spontaneously, or it can be sought by one of the other parties (Ross & Conant, 1992). Strayer and Noel (1986 cited in Ross & Conant, 1992) identified four types of triadic conflict: defence, alliance, generalization, and displacement. The distinction is based on whether the third party is the source or the target of conflict and whether the alliance is made with the child who originally attacked or was attacked.

Analysing a number of conflicts among 3- to 5-year old children cited by Corsaro (1985), Ross and Conant (1992) found that when one child tried to join a play group, collaboration occurred in eight of the nine conflicts, alliances were most often formed between the original players, although these players sometimes defended the joining child as did bystanders (six times in all). When bystanders supported group entry attempts, they were not successful if opposed by an alliance between original group members. Bystanders

might be more effective in successfully defending others from attack or restoring toys to a victim. From the perspective of social responsibility and involvement, the effectiveness of the observers in preventing an attack on their peers in the educational setting is important and worth encouraging (Dunn, 1993; Sandy & Boardman, 2000). This behaviour indicate children's ability to grasp of rules and drew others attention to the displeasing actions (Dunn, 1988).

Bystanders aged 2-7 play active roles in mitigating and mediating tense situations during or after aggression and may encourage opponents to reconcile (Butovskaya et. al., 2000). Schoolchildren in Kalmyk, Russia, acted as moderators of aggression by pushing opponents apart and persuading them to stop quarrelling (Butovskaya et. al, 2000). Fujisawa et al. (2006) claim that bystanders' affiliations with victims of aggression occurred more frequently and earlier among 5-year-olds but not among younger children. At this age, the children exhibit pro-social behaviour more often than younger children.

Another study found that 2-3 year olds intervened in 21% of the conflicts mainly through support and taking the side of one of the parties (van Hoogdalem et al., 2008). The study related to intervention in various cultures and found that, as one might expect, in an individualist culture (Dutch) there is less intervention than in a collectivist culture (Moroccan and Antillean). Similarly, Corsaro (2005), who compared kindergarten children in Italy and the USA, mentions that it was only in collectivist Italy that there was ever a third party that intervened in discussion pertaining to a peer conflict. The results of this study raise the question of whether in an Israeli kindergarten, which is part of an individualist culture (Rosenthal et. al., 2008) the observing peers will intervene in their friend’s conflicts. Since the kindergarten under study professes a collectivist culture, there is the possibility of greater involvement of observers in peer conflict. Nevertheless, this ability might prevent an atmosphere of competition in the classroom (Maccoby & Lewis, 2003).

Hence, kindergarten children tend, to a certain extent, to intervene in their peer’s conflicts. Usually they intervene when the conflict is aggressive. However, bystanders may play a decisive role in constructive conflict resolution if they have the proper tools and if they also take part in conflicts that are not aggressive.

Adult intervention

The research literature expresses conflicting views regarding adult intervention. Contrary to what many parents and teachers believe, research claims that young children between the ages of 2 and 5 can resolve peer conflicts without the intervention of an adult in both structured and unstructured settings (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Nucci & Nucci, 1982; Killen & Turiel, 1991; Chen et. al., 2001). However, conflict management and resolution by children is not always constructive. Interventions designed to decrease conflict in children's relationships are often directed at providing the individuals with strategies with which to manage relationship conflict constructively, as well as to decrease the overall amount of conflict (Furman & McQuaid, 1992). Despite this, researchers found that the involvement of the teacher increases in physically aggressive conflict in order to separate the parties rather than to improve their skills (Roseth et. al., 2008).

Empirical studies that have examined teacher behaviours when conflicts occur in the naturalistic setting describe two main types of conflict intervention strategies used by teachers for 2 and 4 year olds: cessation and mediation (Bayer et. al., 1995; Chen, 2003). Cessation strategies are interventions focused on external management of conflict situations by directing children to what they should do. In this way, teachers act as judges or arbitrators and create solutions to the children’s conflicts without involving them in the resolution. In contrast, mediation strategies are focused interventions that help the parties resolve their own conflicts.

Based on socio-cultural theories (Rogoff, 1990; Corsaro, 2005), an adult who uses mediation strategies helps the children participate in cultural practices and supports the transformation of participation. These strategies enable children to take part in conflict constructively. Neo-Vygotskian researchers (Wertsch, 1985; Hicks, 1996) likewise stress the importance of mediation-type discourse for learning, during which the more experienced party helps the learner derive meaning from what he or she says or does.

The few empirical studies that examined the teacher’s behaviour when conflict occurs in a naturalist classroom setting claim that mediation strategies are rarely used (Russon et. al., 1990; Bayer et al., 1995). Despite the literature's suggestions that mediation strategies are preferable (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Katz & McClellan, 1997),

researchers note (Bayer et. al., 1995; Chen, 2003) that teachers tend to use cessation strategies regardless of the age or conflict resolution behaviours of the children involved.

Furthermore, studies found that parent training in mediation of children's conflict facilitates constructive communication between parties in conflict so that they can resolve their differences (Siddiqui & Ross, 2004; Smith & Ross, 2007). These studies looked at 5-10 year olds, who were mediated by their parents. Consequently, it is worth examining whether similar mediation by a teacher in an educational setting for younger children would yield similar results that promote social abilities and interpersonal conflict resolution.

There is little empirical support for the use of mediation over cessation strategies in kindergartens. DeVries et. al. (1991) found that children in a kindergarten class where the teacher uses mediation resolved more of their conflicts in structured play situations, employing high levels of negotiating strategies, and were more sharing in the conflict resolution than children in a class where cessation strategies were used.

Other researchers (Dunn et. al., 1991; Racine et. al., 2006) demonstrated that ways of talking about the conflict are connected to social understanding. They claim that explanatory talk, which draws the attention of the conversation to feelings, intentions, motivation and results, helps the child understand the psychological context of the conflict. Similarly, Harris (2008) discusses the importance of conversation and notes that it enables the development of social understanding since in such conversation we constantly remind the child that other people have other perspectives. In these terms, creating a child-teacher and even children-teacher conversation will introduce the children to the notion that others may have a different perspective to their own and that they have different information. However, Corsaro (1985) is in favour of having an adult available who can intervene during conflict between early childhood children if necessary. He believes that adults play an important role in the social development of young children in terms of being a positive role model for social behaviours, socio-linguistic patterns and the general handling of conflicts.

Additionally, the involvement of the teacher in the group context can foster social-emotional competence and in mediating social-emotional situations between members of

the group (Howes, 1990; Howes, et. al., 1994; Howes & Ritchi, 1998). The kindergarten teacher might be a model for displaying positive or negative emotions. When the teacher displays negative emotions such as anger and irritation, or when the display of emotion is shallow, children have difficulty absorbing emotional information that will guide them as to how to react (Denham et. al., 1994). There is a correlation between the positive response pattern of the teacher in social-emotional situations and the children's social competence. It was found that the more the educators tended to show affection, consolation in times of distress, explaining feelings and intentions of the others and displaying pleasure at children's interactions, there was a greater incidence of pro-social behaviour (Zur, 1992; Howes, et. al., 1994; Stolarsky, 2000). Attributing positive social and emotional competence to children also gradually develops their confidence in themselves and in their abilities (Rosenthal et. al., 2008). Moreover, a post-conflict reflective conversation between peers or through the mediation of an adult can foster emotional understanding and even help children organize and regulate their social behaviour (Rosenthal et al., 2008).

In contrast, Roseth et. al., (2008) claim that the intervention of an adult disturbs the circle of conflict resolution among 3-4 year olds and disrupts that continued interaction, causing a detachment that does not prevent a later reoccurrence of the conflict. Another study (Fujisawa et. al., 2005) stresses that the absence of teachers at the site of conflict increased the chance of reconciliation among Japanese 3-4 year olds. These studies are based on the Relational Model (de Waal, 1996, 2000), which claims that asking for help from the teacher might harm the relationship between the friends and so they might refrain from asking for it.

Although studies confirm the importance of mediation in the conflict interaction, Killen and Turiel (1991) claim that when there is no adult intervention, the children can resolve conflicts on their own more frequently. Furthermore, Killen and Turiel (1991) noted that children's conflicts were resolved more aggressively when there were adults present. The passiveness of the adult makes children expect that aggressive overtures are acceptable to this authority and at the same time, that they are protected by the adult from intense peer retaliation (Ross & Conant, 1992).

Similar findings emerge from an earlier study. Laursen and Hartup (1989) concluded that children took responsibility for their interaction and created their own resolutions more

frequently when a teacher was not present. This finding suggests that perhaps adults should give children more autonomy when playing and resolving conflicts in order to give them 'room to grow'. It was found that kindergarten children used force and negotiation in over 90% of the incidents while they only sought help in less than one percent of the incidents (Rourke et. al., 1999). In other words, since there are very few occasions when children ask for adult intervention in their conflict, does the teacher have enough opportunities to mediate in peer conflicts? Even though the children ask for the adult's help in only a small percentage of cases, the 2 to 4 years old children in the research of Chen et al., (1998 cited in Chen, 2003) frequently referred to teachers or authority figures in their verbalization (e.g. "The teacher says everyone can play here"). While solicitation of teacher helped reveals increased understanding of the function and power of teachers as enforcers of social rules, it also serves as an indication of learning and development (Dunn, 1987). Laupa (1994) found that kindergarteners understand the legitimacy of non-parental adult authority, and so they can use this authority to support their position in their peer conflict. Furthermore, the children perceive the teacher as one whose abilities are better than theirs and so they turn to her for help (Pramling 1983 cited in Pramling & Johansson, 2009).

However, children believe that teachers should use domain-appropriate explanations when intervening in moral and social-conventional transgressions (Nucci, 1984; Killen, et. al., 1994) but regarding personal choice issues, such as free-play decisions, friendship preferences, children think that teachers should give children the chance to decide what to do rather than to intervene or formulate a rule about it (Killen & Smetana, 1999). We may say that initiated intervention of the adult should occur only when the conflict escalates out of control. In this manner, the children will be able to practise conflict resolution on their own. However, when children turn to the teacher or when the teacher chooses to intervene, mediation is the preferred form of intervention. Since a Reggio Emilia type educational setting perceives children as competent and sees dialogue as an important tool for learning and teaching, it is likely that teachers adopting this approach will use mediation strategies in their involvement in conflict resolution. This study examines this issue.

Intervention programmes

Although 2-5 year olds can resolve their conflicts by themselves (Chen et. al., 2001), some of them do so by using destructive strategies (Thorenberg, 2006). Thus, various intervention programmes offer to teach children how to resolve conflicts peacefully. The writers of these programmes believe that children need to learn social skills such as self control and problem solving from an early age so that they can reach mutually agreeable solutions (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Gillespie & Chick, 2001). Even though this study examined conflict resolution processes among kindergarten children without an intervention programme, a discussion of this issue is necessary here in order to examine their effectiveness and the problems inherent in such programmes.

The desire to educate children towards a constructive approach to conflict resolution in school has led to the development of intervention programmes (Jones, 2004). Most of the studies on their effectiveness were conducted in schools where most of these programmes are active (Jones, 2004). Relatively few studies have been conducted on the nature of conflict resolution among young children or on their ability to learn how to handle conflict constructively (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Vestal & Jones, 2004). Thus, in order to provide kindergarten children with training in conflict resolution skills, programmes already in use in schools were adapted for kindergarten use. Various researchers describe the positive change in the children's ability to negotiate following intervention programmes (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Vestal & Jones, 2004; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007; Aram & Shlak, 2008; Allen, 2009; Pickens, 2009). The intervention programmes are characterized as being structured, extra-curricular and delivered by the teachers or other external counsellors.

Another approach to the cultivation of conflict resolution abilities is presented in the study by Arcaro-McPhee et. al. (2002), who claim that constructivist teaching based on mutual respect between the children and the teacher and an atmosphere of cooperation (DeVries & Zan, 1995) enhance the development of conflict resolution skills. According to this approach, the role of the adult is to create scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) for the children through support and guidance using teachable moments (Hyun & Marshall, 2003) rather than directing them towards the desired solution or teaching them skills in a separate lesson (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

A different method for dealing with conflict resolution is the “peer mediation approach” (Gillespie & Chick 2001), which is different from the constructivist approach described above, where the teacher plays a significant role in promoting conflict resolution ability. In this approach, some children from the class are empowered by virtue of their training to be mediators in peer conflicts. Sellman (2002) argues that "for peer mediation projects to be effective they need to be in synergy with the culture of the school including its approach and vision to the management of conflict" (p. 7). He believes that relating to pedagogical practices and to the environment so that there are opportunities for constructive conflict resolution will increases the likelihood of the internalisation of peer mediation and the sustainability of the skills.

Studies describing peer conflict as situated skills (Ross & Conant, 1992; Thornberg, 2006) mention the importance of the climate of the educational setting. According to the socio-cultural view, conflict strategies vary across different situations and are affected by the context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hence, other writers have suggested conflict resolution intervention programmes that relate to the class climate as involvement through the mediation of an adult (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992; DeVries & Zan 1994; Evans, 2002; Singer, 2002; Wheeler, 2004). However, no studies were found that describe the application of these programmes in early childhood, although a study was conducted on the Israeli training programme “Learning to live together” (Rosenthal et. al., 2008), which helps teachers build a toolkit that focuses on cultivating social relationships among the children. The programme deals with teachers’ attitudes towards social events and suggests intervention methods, without dictating any defined intervention structure. A study of this programme (Berr, 2008) found that caregivers who participated in the programme offered more support for emotion regulation, cultivation of joining-in skills and conflict resolution than those who had not participated. Hence, in a Reggio Emilia inspired educational setting that perceives the child as having the ability to solve conflicts and the conflict as an opportunity, engaging in negotiated learning and collaborative relationships may constitute a framework through which the children acquire a culture of constructive conflict resolution.

Indirect intervention in peer conflicts

Context is a key component for appreciating the amount and type of behaviour children exhibit. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) psychological approach to human ecology recognizes that development is always embedded in and expressed through behaviour within one's environment. Conflict behaviour can be greatly affected by subtle changes in children's social environments, such as different play partners (Malloy & McMurray, 1996; Rourke et. al., 1999), a change in social settings from school-time free play to semi-structured peer groups (Killen & Turiel, 1991) or cultural beliefs, social policies and institutions, as well as experiences in interpersonal processes.

Cultural effects

Interpersonal interactions both affect and are affected by the peer culture and the local culture. Consequently, peer relations and friendships are in many ways a reflection of the values and customs of the local and general community and of the culture in which they develop (Corsaro, 2005). Peer relationships may be more directly influenced by cultural beliefs and values than individual characteristics because peer activities are often based on social norms and norm-related interpersonal perceptions, evaluations, and reactions (Hinde, 1987). Culture may affect peer interactions and individual development through the organization of various social settings, such as community services, school, and day-care arrangements (Tietjen, 2006). Similarly, Rogoff (1990) uses the term *appropriation* to express the idea that children naturally adopt the rules and values of their culture as part of their participation in relationships with their caregivers.

Most of the cross-cultural studies relating to conflict (Orlick et. al., 1990; Zahn-Waxler et. al., 1996) have related to cultural dimensions such as collectivism versus individualism or interdependent versus independent orientations (Triandis, 1990). DeRosier and Kupersmidt (1991) point out that in collective cultures, the individual’s objectives and interests are subordinate to social ones, while in individualistic cultures the individual’s autonomy and the effort to attain personal goals are highly valued. The organization of interactions among peers is precisely what manifests this tension between group and personal interests.

Accordingly, there are significant variations in how peer interactions are organized and developed as a function of cultural factors. Various studies have demonstrated that the type

of activity, group composition and management of the interaction vary significantly from one cultural group to another (Farver & Howes, 1988; Hold-Cavell et. al., 1986). Other studies showed differences in how kindergarten children manage conflict resolution and in their preference for group or individual activity between collectivist and individualist cultures (Medina et. al., (2001), and in the degree of aggression and self regulation in relation to a hypothetical conflict (Zahn-Waxler et. al., 1996). It was also found that the nature and types of conflict were tied to the features of ongoing interactions within the context of peer culture (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990). Despite the obvious differences in conflict resolution among children in different cultures, there are studies that show a similarity in children's behaviour and the beliefs of the teachers in those different cultures (Kinoshita et. al. 1993; Killen et. al., 2000).

The Israeli cultural context encourages kindergarten children to resolve their conflicts without the intervention of an adult, even when the interactions typically have a high level of verbal and physical violence (Forman, 1994). Forman (1994) explains this in the context of the ethos of the New Jew that seeks to cultivate an Israeli child devoid of symptoms of the Diaspora, liberated, honest, spontaneous, confident and assertive. According to Forman (1994), this aspiration causes children to be intolerant of others who are different or weak, they are inconsiderate of others, selfish and aggressive. Other studies describe Israelis (adults and schoolchildren) as less tolerant towards polite behaviour, and scornful of anyone displaying sensitivity to others or consideration for them (Margalit & Mauger, 1985; Bloch, 1998).

The explanation of these differences is probably based on the values deriving from different life circumstances for different cultural communities. The constant exposure to existential threat and the discourse of threats and war have caused the Israelis to be more tolerant of expressions of aggression and to be more suspicious of anyone who seems different or threatening (Bar-Tal, 2007). Another explanation relates to the fact that most of the Jewish population has undergone displacement and emigration and hence experiences the lack of community support. The need to survive and endure encourages neither a very sensitive treatment of others nor the learning of non-aggressive methods of conflict resolution (Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001). Accordingly, findings that describe the ability to resolve conflicts pro-socially in this study will be particularly prominent

following this cultural context and will perhaps underline even further the importance of the educational setting.

The setting effects

The setting plays an important role in providing children with a number of play options with many partners (and/or friends) which may lead to conflicts and resolutions. Laursen et. al. (2001) insisted that in order to understand children's competencies, researchers should take the physical context into account. Environmental psychologists have maintained that smaller and more restrictive play spaces may increase the number of conflicts. As a case in point, conflicts are more likely to occur in spaces with only a single doorway which may imply that poor accessibility to play space contributes to various types of conflicts (Wheeler, 1994).

The organization of one's environment is, in fact, not random. It can be understood only within the context of a culture's practices and values (Toelken, 1996). Sims et. al. (1997) compared dyadic conflict among 3-year-olds in nine educational settings which differed from each other in terms of staff philosophy, strictness of routine and structure. There were significant differences between the various settings and the number of conflicts that arose and in the children's conflict resolution strategies. The lowest rate of conflict was found in two settings where the ages were mixed, the children remained in the same small group over time and the day's schedule was flexible, i.e. the staff adapted themselves to the needs of the moment.

Similarly, data from a comparative study of three kindergarten classrooms (DeVries et. al., 1991) show that when the classroom atmosphere was predominately low in level of negotiation, with little shared experience, children's levels of interpersonal understanding were low. When the atmosphere was characterized by higher levels of interpersonal understanding and more shared experiences, children engaged in higher levels of interpersonal understanding and resolved twice as many of their conflicts. Like Lewin (1951), who stresses the impact of the environment on human behaviour, these studies emphasise the significant impact of the characteristics of the educational setting on the children's social competence and conflict resolution abilities. Accordingly, one may

assume that a Reggio Emilia inspired educational approach will create an educational environment that might positively affect children's conflict resolution.

This chapter concludes the theoretical perspectives of this research study by providing an overview of the concept of early childhood conflict resolution in the educational setting. Peer conflict occurring during play interaction has an important developmental and social role in conflict resolution. Handling conflicts in the educational setting creates a situation in which there is an adult who can support the children in a manner that will help them develop constructive resolution abilities. Although the children have a toolkit containing a variety of conflict resolution strategies, the mediating intervention of a third party is important when the conflict escalates or when the children request help. In contrast, intervention programmes that focus on teaching conflict resolution skills but do not take into account the culture of the educational setting are not effective in the long-term. Also, an atmosphere of sharing, flexibility and adaptation to the needs of the children indirectly constitute involvement that promotes constructive conflict resolution. Hence, one may assume that a Reggio Emilia inspired educational approach, which stresses the importance of relationships and sharing, will support the creation of an atmosphere in which conflict resolution among the children will be pro-social.

The next chapter will present the conceptual framework of this research which conceptualises the specific bodies of knowledge related to the focus of this study – the support that an educational setting inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach gives to interpersonal conflict resolution among 3-4 years old children in an Israeli kindergarten class. This chapter critically describes the various theories related to conflict resolution among children that underpinned the current study.

Chapter 9: The Conceptual Framework of this Research

The conceptual framework that underpinned this research draws on the theoretical perspectives presented in the previous chapters. The study was conducted from the perspective of socio-cultural theories of learning, influenced by the works of Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff (1990; 2003) and Corsaro (2005) who assert that learning is a cultural and historical construct that emerges from social relationships. According to this view, young children's development is produced by their participation in their own unique peer culture (Rogoff, 1990; Corsaro, 2005) and their behaviour is a direct outcome of the environment in which they live (Lewin, 1997).

Extant literature relates to the learning of pro-social conflict resolution among children mainly through direct intervention in the conflict by the teachers. Skills are taught in an intervention programme that teaches desired rules of behaviour and discourse during conflict through preset and pre-planned structured formats (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Gillespie & Chick, 2001) unrelated to the kindergarten's educational approach and culture. Nevertheless, the literature offers limited knowledge about the learning of the ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts in early childhood in an educational setting without any structured, extra-curricular intervention programme.

This study perceives conflict resolution as a behaviour influenced by the context and learned within the peer community via negotiation within social interactions. Negotiation takes place while playing within the educational setting and through the mediation of adults and peers. Accordingly, the support the educational setting might offer for the learning of pro-social conflict resolution will relate to direct and indirect intervention through the pedagogical practices deriving from the teachers' educational approach (MacNaughton, 2003).

An educational approach that enables children to participate within their community is 'democratic experimentalism' (Moss, 2007, 2009). This approach gives value to the place of the children within the setting as participants in its decision making process and interpersonal dialogue. This ideology is expressed in the Reggio Emilia approach.

Therefore, an approach inspired by Reggio Emilia is perceived in this study as supporting the children's ability to improve their conflict resolution skills using pro-social strategies.

Consequently, the conceptual framework of this research pertains to three interrelated areas: theories of learning, educational ideologies and early childhood curricula. Four implicit theories that are related to the main concern of this research are socio-cultural theories, the Reggio Emilia approach, the 'democratic experimentalism' model and conflict resolution.

The theoretical foundation of the conflict resolution

The theoretical foundation of pro-social conflict resolution of this research involves four main components generated by the overlap of three broader areas. This study sees conflict resolution as a learned behaviour. It is therefore underpinned by early childhood learning theories. Of these various learning theories, the study has chosen to focus on **socio-cultural learning** theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Corsaro, 2005). These theories stress the fact that cultural context is dynamic and that children are affected by processes of social reproduction and contribute to this process at the same time. Learning takes place through apprenticeship involving the active participation of the individuals with others in an organised cultural activity (Rogoff, 2003). This research examined the learning process within an Israeli kindergarten, and addressed the features of this context (Levin, 1998; Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010a, 2010b; Sapir et. al., 2010).

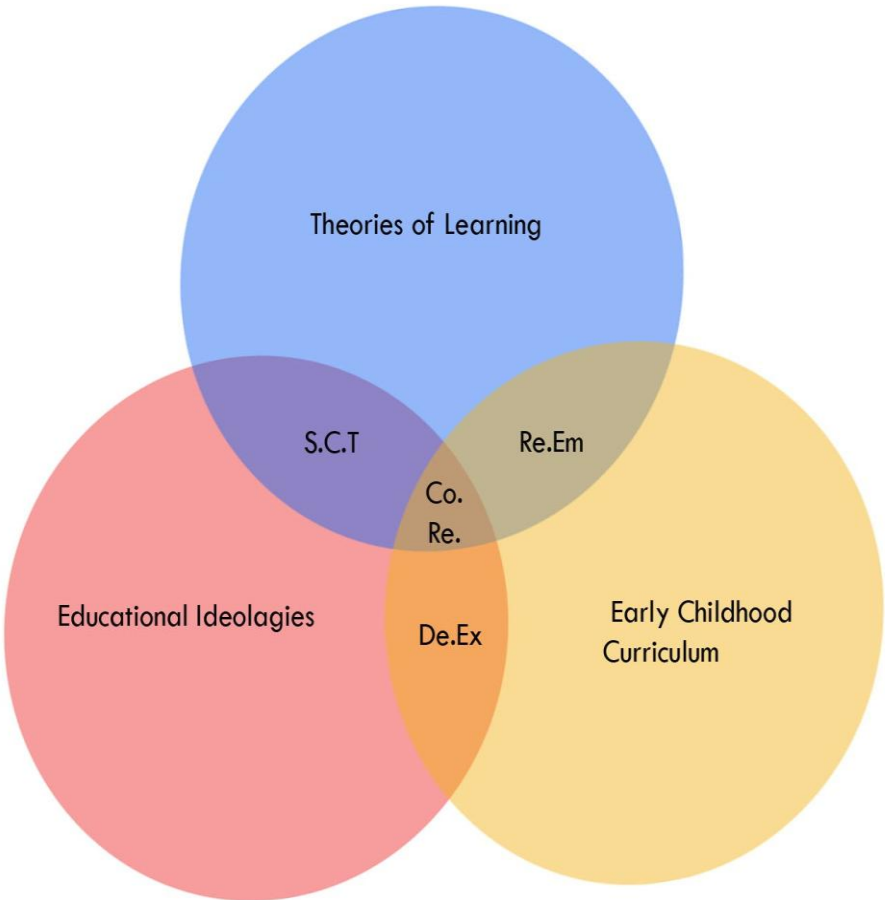
The teachers' educational ideologies derive from their social and cultural values and from how they perceive the role and implementation of education in society (Bruner, 1996). Accordingly, **educational ideologies** were chosen as a component in the conceptual framework because they guided the characteristics of the educational setting and its praxis (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 2005; Rogoff, 1990, 2003). In addition to the educational ideologies used and implemented in early childhood that are described in the theoretical perspectives, **'democratic experimentalism'** (Moss, 2009) is presented as an educational theory that guides this study. This approach did not emerge initially from the thesis topics but it emerged from the research data gathered and analyzed inductively using grounded theory methodology as a guide. The data revealed that democratic practices constitute a highly prominent feature of the Reggio Emilia inspired approach.

Another component of the conceptual framework relates to the **curriculum in early childhood**. The curriculum is the application of the educational ideology and guides the daily running of the educational setting while relating to content that is important for children to learn, the children's learning process, the role of the teacher and how children participate in the learning (Goffin, 1994).

The **Reggio Emilia** approach is an early childhood curriculum that implements 'democratic experimentalism'. It constitutes an example of a quality educational approach whose components might contribute to the enhancement of the social-emotional component (Malaguzzi, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006) and therefore of pro-social conflict resolution. The Reggio Emilia educational approach is part of the gap in knowledge which justifies this research. The literature about Reggio Emilia addresses mainly the description of the educational approach, its values and practice, but there is hardly any research on the contribution of this educational approach to interpersonal conflict resolution among kindergarten children.

Conflict resolution constitutes a component in the conceptual framework because this is the focus of this study. The theoretical perspectives also focus on theories dealing with conflict resolution (Lewin, 1997; de Waal, 2000; Deutch, 1949, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2005) as well as characteristics of this process in early childhood (Shantz, 1987; Dunn, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Stevhahn et. al, 2000; Chen et. al, 2001; Gillespie & Chick, 2001; Arcaro-McPhee et. al, 2002). Children's conflict resolution behaviour within a Reggio Emilia inspired kindergarten context that has not been exposed to any extracurricular intervention programme constitutes the gap in knowledge identified by this study. A visual representation of the conceptual framework is introduced in Figure 1.

Figure 1: <u>The conceptual framework of this research</u>



S.C.T – Socio– Cultural Theories
De.Ex – Democratic Experimentalism
Re.Em – Reggio Emilia
Co. Re – Conflict Resolution

A Venn diagram was selected to provide a visual representation of the components of the conceptual framework and their reciprocal connections. Socio-cultural theories emphasize learning as the outcome of children's participation in their social-cultural context and that of their environment. Likewise, the approach employed in the educational setting affects the choices the teacher makes and thereby affects the environment and the learners. Accordingly, an educational approach based on the values and ideas of 'democratic

experimentalism’ supports active participation of children in the social framework and the values of dialogue, listening and participation. In addition, the curriculum in the educational framework is affected by the teacher’s approach and beliefs regarding how children learn. Therefore, the Reggio Emilia approach, with its values and practices, implements principles through a democratic educational approach.

According to Figure 1 'conflict resolution' is located in the centre of the diagram, because it is a competence learned within the context of the other three components. Hence, pro-social conflict resolution can be learned within an educational setting that perceives the learning process as socio-cultural and that has an approach and practices which implement the values of **'democratic experimentalism'.**

Additionally, Figure 1 shows that the Reggio Emilia approach appreciates and enables children’s participation in dialogue with their peers and teachers and stresses the importance of these relationships. Thus, this approach might support the learning of pro-social conflict resolution competence through the daily lifestyle of the kindergarten. In the same manner, the visual representation of the conceptual framework reflects a process in which the components interact and complement each other. Moreover, it can be said that the combination of all the components fosters the conflict resolution among children.

Ultimately, the research advanced an informed and evidence-based understanding of the support that Reggio Emilia inspired approach gives to interpersonal conflict resolution among 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class. In addition, the study is presented here as an approach that may be a viable way for children to learn pro-social strategies that is not only empowering and morally sound, but also an economic approach for training teachers within the global context. The study was based on socio-cultural theories, and presents a different way to achieve improvement in children's negotiation abilities. The goals of this research were achieved through the use of qualitative research traditions, while employing qualitative research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and will be presented in the following chapters.

PART III: RESEARCH APPROACH

Preview

This part will provide an overview of the considerations and the perspectives through which choices were made regarding the design of the research approaches adopted for this study. Chapter 10 starts with the research aims and questions together with the purpose underlying the research and its limitations. Chapter 11 goes on to explain the considerations for choosing a qualitative research paradigm as a theoretical framework for investigation. Later on, the research strategy of a case study is described according to how the procedure was actually carried out. Chapter 12 offers a critical description of the methods of data collection and analysis as arising from the chosen research strategy. This part presents four main methods of data collection: observations, interviews, field notes and documents. Following this, the chapter presents the method of data analysis which is both inductive and deductive. Chapter 13 contains sections critically discussing aspects of the research quality: its validity and reliability, and the generalisability of its conclusions. Finally, Chapter 14 discusses the ethical considerations accompanying the research. Thus, Part III presents a critical view of various aspects of the research and describes its procedures.

Chapter 10: An Overview of the Research

This chapter begins with the aims of the research and the research questions deriving from those aims. This is followed by the limitations of the research and an explanation of how they were addressed. Finally the research population is introduced and described.

Research aims

The research aims were to examine how a Reggio Emilia inspired kindergarten supports interpersonal conflicts, and to highlight the dimensions for implementing a pedagogical model for democratic practice with young children, and for managers, policy makers, and teacher trainers. There have been studies (Chen et. al., 2001) designed to describe and understand how 3-4 year old children resolve conflicts on their own. Most of those studies related to the individual features of the children or their ability to resolve conflict following a structured intervention programme delivered over a specific period of time. Therefore, a gap in knowledge exists in the current literature regarding the Reggio Emilia educational approach as an intervention to support the development of children's social competence that can enable them to resolve interpersonal conflicts using pro-social strategies. Hence, the educational approach of the Israeli kindergarten case study might be perceived as a way to support the attainment of pro-social strategies to resolve conflicts. Thus, this study illustrates how one cultural context interpreted the Reggio Emilia approach towards promoting pro-social strategies for young children to resolve their own conflicts.

This is a qualitative research approach, since it aimed to understand conflict resolution processes as a phenomenon of early childhood from the participants' point of view (Shkedi, 2003). It is a case study since it describes this phenomenon within one kindergarten class (Yin, 2003). The contribution of this study to knowledge would be a new construct of understanding an educational approach facilitating pro-social conflict resolution among 3-4 year old children. Moreover, the research may highlight pointers to facilitate pro-social conflict resolution that might be transferable across cultural contexts.

Research questions

The study addressed the following main research question:

To what extent might a 'Reggio Emilia' inspired approach support resolution of interpersonal conflicts among 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class?

Secondary research questions:

1. What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?
2. What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change over the year?
3. What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?

Research boundaries

The research was undertaken in one kindergarten during a single school year that began in September 2006 and ended in June 2007, during which the group of children remained in the educational setting. This case study was located in a kindergarten class belonging to Israel's official education system, in a large town in the centre of the country near Tel Aviv. The rationale for delimiting the research within this location was that this kindergarten declared itself to be working according to the Reggio Emilia approach and had received recognition to do so. The study was conducted on 3-4 year old children since this was the age assigned by the local municipality to the studied kindergarten. However, it is actually the opportunity of investigating 3-4 year olds who are perceived as having difficulty with grasping the perspective of the 'other' (Piaget, 1968) that makes it possible to highlight the changes that might occur in the ability to resolve conflicts during the period of one school year.

Since the study deals with interpersonal conflict resolution among kindergarten children, it will not relate to children's personal conflicts or conflicts between groups of children. Although the research provides conflict examples illustrating individual conflict resolution theory and strategies (in Part V), it was not so relevant to consider the individual child's action because conflict resolution was conceptualized as a function of the group context

(Corsaro et. al., 2002). Hence, the study relates to the whole group of children and not to the features of a child's personality such as temperament, self image, gender, socio-economic features and so forth that are known to affect the behaviour of the individual and thus also his or her conflict resolutions.

Research location

Since most of the data was collected through observation, collection took place within the educational framework chosen to be the case study. The interviews with the children were also conducted at the kindergarten in order to adapt the nature of the interviews to the age of the children. The interviews were conducted during the kindergarten activities. In this manner, they were an integral part of a variety of experiences and the children were able to feel safe and even to choose whether to join in or not. The complexity of the interviews with the children will be elaborated on later.

In contrast, the interviews with the educational staff were conducted in the afternoon away from the kindergarten building itself. As a naturalistic research study, it would have made sense to conduct the interviews with the kindergarten staff in the kindergarten (Shkedi, 2003). However, since teachers do not have an opportunity to be available for interviewing while they are working with the children in the kindergarten, the location was changed in order to provide a quiet and pleasant setting for the discussion with the respondents.

Research population

Since this research was a case study, the research population comprised one kindergarten class. Creswell (2007) claims that the researcher should select people or sites that can best help him or her understand the phenomenon. My many years of experience and familiarity with advising and supporting within educational settings permit me to claim that the chosen kindergarten fits the research according to the research questions. On a critical note, my familiarity with the research arena could create researcher bias (Shkedi, 2003). Additionally, this kindergarten was chosen because the kindergarten teachers stated in a document describing the rationale of the kindergarten that their work is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Since this research wished to focus on a kindergarten inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, it was extremely important to choose one that declared itself

as such. In 2006-2007, the year the data were collected, it was the second year the kindergarten had approval from the Ministry of Education to function accordingly to a Reggio Emilia inspired curriculum. The **kindergarten staff** includes two teachers whose features are described in Table 2

Table 2: Teachers' features

	Rivka (pseudonym)	**Yafa (pseudonym)**
Education	BA in early education In-service: Reggio Emilia inspired approach	Qualified caregiver diploma In-service: Reggio Emilia inspired approach
Experience	25 years experience as a kindergarten teacher	25 years experience as an assistant kindergarten teacher
Age	47	47
Job definition	Kindergarten manager, include: • Project leader • Mediates between children during conflict • Solves problems • In contact with parents • Plans learning • In contact with external bodies	Assists kindergarten management, include: • In charge of organising art materials • In charge of nutrition • In charge of cleaning
Special job		Project leader Mediates between children during conflict and resolves problems with the children
Implementation of Reggio Emilia approach	✔	✔
Handling children's conflicts	Emphasis on clarification-mediation conversation	Emphasis on clarification-mediation conversation

Although Rivka and Yafa work in the kindergarten as a team, Rivka is officially the kindergarten manager and is in charge of all the bureaucratic and educational business, while Yafa's role is defined as "assistant". However, unlike in other kindergartens, where the assistant only does her official job, Yafa also takes part in educational roles. This

change in role is possible due to Yafa's willingness to have an influence and deal with educational issues, and also due to Rivka's willingness to allow her to do so. The joint attendance at the course on "Reggio Emilia approach" created a situation in which they both learn and apply a new way of working, deliberate on how to do this and find the right implementation path together. Although when questioned in her interview, Yafa was not so articulate over her worldview as Rivka, nevertheless there was considerable similarity in the way they interacted with the children during conflict mediation. Hence the findings in this research relate to both Rivka and Yaffa as teachers without distinguishing between them. Miles & Huberman (1994) note that the selection of a research sample must determine the boundaries of the research. In this research, the definition of the boundaries of the case study is as follows: a. it refers to the main educational staff present in the kindergarten only on the days the researcher comes for observations. b. it refers to the behaviour of the children only within the educational setting and not to their behaviour outside the hours of activity at the kindergarten.

The **kindergarten class** consists of 35 children (15 boys and 20 girls) aged 3-4 (39-49 months). For all the children it was the first year in this kindergarten but not the first year in an educational setting. All the children except one were born in Israel and the parents of nearly all of them were born in Israel or came at a very young age. The group of children in the kindergarten was typical for a state kindergarten: children that are not identified as having special needs. However, the research population is not a representative sample (Shkedi, 2003) of the entire kindergarten children population in Israel since its population is relatively homogeneous and from a middle to high secular socio-economic background. Further description of the educational setting is provided in Appendix 1 (p. 300).

This chapter reviewed the research aims and questions and the considerations in the formation of the research boundaries and its participant population. The next chapter critically discusses the paradigm and methodology of the research and the various methods used in order to attain the research aims.

Chapter 11: Research Methodology

The research paradigm

This chapter provides the rationale for the methodological choices made for this study. This study is grounded within a naturalistic-interpretive and qualitative approach. This paradigm was adopted since it suits the research aims. The qualitative paradigm suits the conceptual framework of the research and the theoretical concept of social-emotional development in that this concept of reality is holistic, relative, developmental and context-dependent. "Qualitative research was an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helped us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

According to this approach, research is conducted in its natural setting and the researchers try to find meaning or interpret the phenomena in terms of how people use them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The understanding of human society is achieved by studying the individuals who interpret their daily routine and give it meaning. Accordingly, the study of society must create a connection between these interpretations and the daily situations of people's lives (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Since the qualitative paradigm wishes to understand phenomena as they are understood by those participating in them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), this research tries to understand how the children and educational staff interpret the conflict resolution process within the educational setting. The research does this by analysing observations, semi-structured interviews, documents and the children's interviews by relating to the conflict situations.

The qualitative approach assumes that understanding the context is essential to understanding the reality of the phenomenon (Patton, 1980). In other words, this approach stresses the understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique environment and situation (Stake, 1995). Thus, this research was conducted within a kindergarten during the natural progression of the day's activities. Furthermore, the qualitative approach claims that the 'reality' that we attribute to the 'worlds' we live in are created through construction (Bruner, 1996). Experience is the basis upon which we structure meaning and the meaning depends closely on our ability to create links with the world we live in. (Simons, 1996). This approach suits the research aims since this study sees the children as

social actors, in other words, as active in their own process of socialisation (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000; Mishna et. al., 2004), and as constructors of the meaning of their interactions in the context of their educational setting. Thus, the research documents the participation of the children in their negotiation of social relationships, and the process through which they come to make their social and cultural worlds meaningful.

The role of the researcher in the naturalistic interpretative paradigm

Qualitative research assumes that the most powerful way to understand people is to observe, talk, listen and be part of their natural environment (Shkedi, 2003) and so the qualitative researcher chooses to use him or herself and other people as the main tool of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence the researcher and the subject have an inextricable reciprocal influence on each other (Shkedi, 2003).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain the advantages that exist for the researcher who knows the field of research:

> "Throughout years of practice in a field, one acquires an understanding of how things work in that field, and why, and what will happen there under certain conditions. This knowledge, even if implicit, is taken into the researcher situation and helps you to understand events and actions seen and heard, and to do so more quickly than if you did not bring this background into the research." (p. 42).

However, Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress that "this kind of experience can also block you from seeing things that have become routine or "obvious" (p. 42).

They suggest detaching the thoughts of personal experience, focusing on what is happening, listening attentively to what people say, making sure what they mean and focusing only on the existing data in order to maintain theoretical sensitivity and openness. The researcher in this study deals with in-service and pre-service training of kindergarten teachers to work with the Reggio Emilia approach at the college and in other in-service courses and runs workshops for kindergarten teachers on handling conflicts in educational settings. Thus, the researcher has tried to follow the above recommendations during the interviews and observations. The lack of objectivity that characterises qualitative research is strengthened by the researcher’s professional background. Hence, particular care was taken during the research to collect data from various sources, namely, the staff and the kindergarten children, and to maintain transparency in the description of the research, and

in critiquing the process. The researcher's role as participant observer (Gold, 1958, cited in Cohen et. al., 2003) is discussed at greater length later on.

However, conducting research with children is more challenging in many respects. A primary challenge is the role of the researcher in relation to the children studied, particularly due to the general authority adults typically hold over children (Christensen, 2004). Christensen (ibid.) describes the role of an adult researching children's perspectives "as an ongoing balance between being recognized as an 'adult' and at the same time avoiding the preconceived ideas, practices and connotations associated with 'adulthood' or specific adult roles such as teacher, member of staff or a parent" (p. 174). Thus, the researcher positioned herself as a person who is interested in the children's play, taking a "reactive approach" and waiting for the children to react to her (Corsaro, 2003). She observed, but tried to remain unobtrusive. Since other adults who are not there every day (a supplementary teacher or assistant, students) come into the kindergarten, the presence of the researcher could be less out of the ordinary for the children.

The case study research strategy

Considering the purpose and research questions, a case study design was employed. According to Stake (2005), a case study is the observation of human activity at a certain time and place. This research related to the educational setting, the staff and all the children in it as the "case". This strategy was chosen based on the literature, which maintains that the case study is an operative strategy for researchers seeking to conduct studies where the paradigm is naturalist-inductive-interpretative (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). This is because the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003).

Although the concept of 'case study' is defined differently by different researchers, they all see the 'case study' as an observation of human activity at a defined time and place from which one may learn about human or organisational behaviour (Stake, 2005). According to Yin (2003), a case study is preferable when investigating a contemporary phenomenon in a real environment, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not entirely clear, and the researcher has little control over events. Similarly, Creswell (1998) describes case study research as "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time

through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in content" (p. 61). Since the late 1960s, there has been increasing use of case studies in educational sciences. In this approach, the research focuses on the researcher's desire to understand the educational and social reality inside the classroom or the school, as well as the processes and their meanings and the interpretation given this reality by those participating in it (Yosifon, 2001). The case study can cater to the need to promote knowledge in education by conceptualising phenomena and helping decision makers (Jackson, 1990).

Walker (1993) explains that in a case study, the researcher is involved in selective gathering of information on biography, personality, intentions and values – a collection that enables him to draw a portrait of those elements of the situation which give it meaning. Miles and Huberman (1994) define 'case' as any kind of phenomenon that takes place within a defined context. The phenomenon might be an individual acting in a particular context or an organisation, process, programme or even events (Stake, 1995). Although a case study is the observation of a specific instance, it invites a broad, comprehensive view and the use of several methods such as interviews, observations, field work, document analysis and so forth (Yin, 2003).

This study uses all these methods in order to deepen and expand the information about the phenomenon in question. Cresswell (2007) claims that occasionally researchers use the concept of 'case study' together with ethnography, although it is not the same.

> "Case study researchers may focus on a program, event, or activity involving individuals rather than a group per se (Stake, 1995). Also, when case study writers research a group, they may be more interested in describing the activities of the group instead of identifying shared patterns of behavior exhibited by the group." (p. 476)

At any rate, 'case study' researchers will be less interested in identifying cultural themes to examine and will focus on in-depth examination of an actual case (Cresswell, 2007). Stake (2005) identified three kinds of case study: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study and the multiple case study. In this research, the case is an educational setting inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. The case was chosen because it was an instrument from which one may draw analogies with other cases in which the environment and

conditions will be similar to the educational setting under study and thus this research is an instrumental case study.

Critique

The main claim against the case study approach is that like other qualitative research methods, it does not allow for sufficient theorisation (Platt, 1992) and one cannot reach broad social generalisations and predictions. Similarly, Harvey (1990) claims that generalisations about broad social views based on a case study are problematic, since each study relates to a specific case and its particular circumstances. The conclusions one may draw from a single case are limited and defined by time and space. Other critique claims that this approach does not refer to causal factors or the understanding of actions originating outside the case under study such as behaviours fed by macro-social and cultural contexts, or those of historical origin (Yosifon, 2001). Another aspect of the critique relates to the approach that attaches equal importance to the experienced researcher and the subject during the research on the assumption that any version is as valid as any other (ibid.).

In the light of the critique made on case studies, it needs to be said that they provide in-depth insights regarding the issues under study, and enable exploration of those issues in other similar contexts (Yosifon, 2001). The aim is to learn about a case very thoroughly, with all its particularities and not how it differs from other cases. By studying the uniqueness of the individual case we can learn to understand the universal (Simons, 1996). Moreover, this research takes place within a framework of scientific reference. The researcher has dealt with methodological issues and is aware of the subjective limitations (detailed in the chapter on ethics). The next chapter will describe the various methods deriving from the research design and methodology.

Chapter 12: Data Collection Methods

This chapter describes the various methods deriving from the research design. These methods complement each other and make it possible to understand the data through the eyes of all parties to the educational setting and the research. The complexity of the case study and its holistic nature require a variety of methods of data collection in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research (Charmaz, 2005). Within any qualitative/interpretive study, multiple methods are used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Multiple methods should be used, or triangulation, the researcher is able to support salient points, themes, or concepts by showing their origins in multiple sources of data.

Observation

The main tool of data collection in this research is observation. "Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site" (Creswell, 2007, p. 221). Observation in qualitative research is the methodical recording of events, behaviours and objects in the social environment chosen for the research (Marshal & Roseman, 1989).

Data collection in this study was performed through written observations of the educational setting and the functioning of the staff and children as well as filmed observations of the children's activities. Observations were conducted throughout the 2006-2007 school year. The first three observations were documented in writing, while the 15 remaining observations were documented by filming. Observations were adopted because they facilitate the recording of information as it occurs in a setting, the study of actual behaviour and of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, integration into the environment under study enables the researchers to hear, see and begin to experience the reality as the research participants do (Marshal & Roseman, 1989). Observational roles vary along a continuum, depending on the place and the role of the observer-researcher - from the observer being perceived as completely external to the object of study, to being perceived as an internal factor involved and participating in the object of study (Spradley, 1980). The role most suited to the purposes of this research is that of 'participant observer' (Cresswell, 2007). "A participant observer is an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe" (p. 222). This kind of observation enables the

observer to experience the daily world "from the inside" and augments the possibility of authentic observation (Shkedi, 2003). The level of the researcher's participation could be identified as "moderate participation" - participation that maintains "a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation" (Spradley, 1980, p. 60).

In this study, the researcher spent about 85 hours in the research setting and participated to a certain extent in the kindergarten's activities. This participation refers to her reactions to the children when they asked her to take part in their activities, to stop dangerous behaviour when the teacher was not around and to answer questions the teacher asked. The researcher's training as an early childhood teacher and her work as an educational advisor for the educational approach under study (in other kindergartens) led to a certain familiarity with the culture under study and therefore to be a participant observer. Although the role of complete observer is typified in the video cassette, there was also participation in the video films. The location of the filming was inside the play area, following the children's activity. Since the children are used to having adults film them, they tended to talk to the researcher and ask her for help when necessary. Thus, the researcher was an internal factor involved and participated.

On a critical note, it needs to be acknowledged that the familiarisation with the children may have influenced their behaviour to some extent. Also, by selecting what to film, the researcher selected out a part of the kindergarten life that might have be viewed as a bias. However, the thick description (Geertz, 1973) and the considerable amount of time spent in the studied kindergarten allow the researcher to present the findings that emerged from the data collected (Yosifon, 2001).

Observation of the functioning of the kindergarten: Most of these observations took place on the first three days of observation at the kindergarten. During these days, the researcher moved from one activity corner to another and documented the observations in writing. The objectives of the observation were a. to identify areas in the kindergarten where there were conflicts; b. to document the daily functioning of the kindergarten; c. to document the physical and social environment of the kindergarten that creates the context for the conflict resolution behaviour. These observations enabled the researcher to become familiar with the environment under study and plan the rest of the study in a manner

appropriate to a qualitative approach. (Shkedi, 2003). Other observations of the functioning of the kindergarten were made during the year but were written up during a break from the filming or as field notes during or following the filming.

Video film observations of the children at play: The main part of this research is data collection by filming the children at play. The observations were based on the conceptual framework and on the researcher's experience of working with kindergarteners. Since the objective was to investigate how children resolve conflicts among themselves, the spontaneity of the documentation and capturing everything said and done by the children in real time was of the utmost importance. From the observations conducted before the filming began, it was found that most of the conflictual interactions were generated during free play time, mainly in the play area. Moreover, previous studies also showed that peer conflicts often take place during free play in the classroom (Laursen & Hartup, 1989; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990). The use of video suits the qualitative approach since it allows one to relate to the complexity of interactions between people, objects and their surroundings (Plowman & Stephen, 2008). Moreover, video filming enabled experience-based research and the interpretation and re-enactment of the cultures (Pink, 2007). However, the use of video as a tool does not purport to represent an objective reality but rather to present a version that describes a reality that strives to be loyal to the context in which the cultural knowledge is created (Pink, 2007).

The advantage of video over written observations is the ability to return to the data easily for further investigation and to show it to others (Plowman, 1999; Walker, 2002) as was done in this study for the children's interviews. The video may be accessible to others within the ethical limitations. Similarly, within those same limitations, others can critique or corroborate the researcher's interpretation. Furthermore, the video allows for triangulation and strengthening of the data (Walker, 2002).

On the other hand, video technology is sensitive to noise and also makes it hard to capture a number of simultaneous events such as those occurring in a kindergarten. This means that the researcher has to make decisions while filming (Suchman, 1987). Moreover, the video might provide partial information since in the educational setting, adults intervene from a distance with a look or a gesture which the video might not always catch (Plowman

& Stephen, 2008). Thus video, like written observation, is a tool open to the interpretation of the researcher (Banks, 1995).

The filming was conducted in this research as a data collection tool (Pink, 2007). Although video filming has the potential to present a visual outcome (Walker, 2002; Pink, 2007), this research does not follow this path. The video was transcribed because it was language that was dominant in the analysis of the conflicts (Plowman & Stephen, 2008). In addition, as this study employed a variety of data collection tools, such as interviews, field notes, documents analysis and written observations, visual presentation is less relevant here.

Hence in this study, the video filming took place during all the free play times in the playground area. Filming went on from 08:00 to 10:30, stopped while games and toys were collected and during the rhythmics lesson and resumed between 11:45 and 13:00. Thus every day there were between 3 1/2 – 4 hours of filming. In total there were 33 hours of filming. The filming was conducted every time an interactive episode (Corsaro, 1985) was identified. In other words, a sequence of behaviours begin with the presence of two or more participants in the ecology area, and the episode ends with the physical movement of the participants from the area as a result of the termination of the original initiated activity. It needs to be noted that the camera was hand-held at waist level using a mini-screen in order for the filming to be minimally obstructive, and to capture the natural behaviour of the children (Plowman & Stephen, 2008). However, filming went on over time and was not meant to locate conflicts. This was done only during the analysis of data outside the kindergarten.

Although the filming only took place during part of the day, the researcher remained at the kindergarten the whole day. Filming was done with a camera to which a very sensitive microphone was attached with a long wire which made it possible to place it close to the children while the camera remained further away. Thus it was less disturbing to the natural behaviour of the children and the sound was better. Filming began three weeks after the researcher had been present without a camera in order to get to know the educational setting and so that the children would get used to her presence. Observations began about two months after the start of the school year. Previous studies indicate that it takes about six weeks for children to adjust to a new educational setting (Chen et al., 2001; Killen & Turiel, 1991). Postponing the start of the filmed observation ensured that the peer and

child-teacher interaction was more authentic and representative of the dynamics of the relationships. Hence the filmed observations began at the end of October. Observations were conducted throughout the school year from September 2006 to June 2007 one day every two weeks.

Video film observations of staff mediation in conflict resolution: Conflict resolution was mediated either when the conflictual interaction ended in a request for help from the staff or when a staff member initiated intervention in the conflict. 46 instances of mediation were filmed either inside the kindergarten classroom or in the playground. 29 of these were the continuation of a conflict that had been caught on film and 17 were mediations of conflicts that had not been filmed. Following the principles underlying the qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and seeking to understand examined issues through the participants' point of view, these observations were an opportunity to hear the point of view of the children immediately following the conflict they had been part of. The importance of the children's point of view is detailed later on in reference to the children's interviews.

Semi-structured interviews

The other tool used to collect research data is interviews. "A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers" (Creswell, 2007, p. 225). The aim of the interview was to understand the experiences of other people and the meaning they attribute to that experience (Shkedi, 2003). Interviews explain and put into a larger context what the researcher sees and experiences (Fetterman, 1998). In this research, interviews were conducted with the two principal staff members of the educational setting and group interviews with the children.

Interviews with the staff: The interviews with the staff were conducted in order to learn about their educational approach, beliefs and interpretations regarding the conflict resolution process between children and staff involvement in it. There were two interviews with the kindergarten teacher, each of which lasted about an hour and a half, and one interview with the assistant which also lasted about an hour and a half. The interviews began some three months after the observations at the kindergarten. The timing of the interviews was chosen to create a basis for the relationship with the interviewees and to

reduce their anxiety about being "assessed" on their work and also to allow the interviewer to become familiar with the kindergarten environment (Sabar, 2001).

These were semi-structured interviews, which do not follow a series of preset questions, but rather are based on the fact that the researcher is the research tool (Sabar, 2001) and that the interview is not just an information gathering tool but rather a place where partners create shared meaning through conversation (Shkedi, 2003). In a semi-structured interview, an open question is asked and the interviewee is invited to answer freely. The interviewer responds with non-verbal expressions of interest and attention (Shkedi, 2003). The researcher formulated open questions to direct the interviews since open-ended questions enable the participants to voice their experience unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings (Creswell, 2007). The questions formulated were guided by the conceptual framework, the aims of the research, and the research questions. Additionally, the questions were piloted, and then refined as a result

Since the interview was conducted for research purposes, it was important that the researcher should have some idea in advance what topics should be raised (Dey, 1993). However, after the first question in the interview, the questions emerged as a response to the interviewee. Examples of the interviews are given in appendix 5 (p. 313) and appendix 6 (p. 318). The questions related to the teachers personal educational approach, the daily functioning of the kindergarten, her perspective on conflict resolution and the implementation of this perspective in the kindergarten. The questions sprang both from the conceptual framework and the researcher's knowledge of the educational approach.

The interviews were taped so that the researcher was free to focus her full attention on the interviewee and on the topics arising during the interview (Shkedi, 2003). Despite the intrusive effect that a taped interview might have on the participants in their attempts to be seen in a positive light (Shkedi, 2003), taped interviews still help in maintaining the authenticity of the data. In addition, the recording is based on the assumption that every word as it is spoken reflects the opinions, perspectives and feelings of the interviewee and so the recording enables precision (Shkedi, 2003). In order to analyse the data the interviews were transcribed. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher herself into a written protocol. The transcription was performed by the researcher herself in

order to become very thoroughly familiar with the data collected from the interviews and thus be able to conduct a very accurate analysis of it subsequently.

Interviews with the children: The interviews with the children were conducted bearing in mind suggestions made by experts (Gollop, 2000; Parkinson, 2001), by joint watching of a conflict filmed in the kindergarten, followed by conversation. The decision to talk to the children arose from the fact that this research sees the children as social actors, and therefore as worthy of investigation in their own right (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000). From the post-modern perspective, children are looked upon as knowledgeable, competent, strong and powerful members of society (Bruner, 1996; Dahlberg et. al., 1999). Hence, it is best to learn their perspective and interest from the children themselves (Clark & Moss, 2001). Despite their young age (3-4), this research sees the children, in developmental terms, as having the ability to express their ideas.

There were three group interviews, each time with a different group of about five children. The first interview gave the children the opportunity to get to know and feel comfortable with the unfamiliar computer video film. The two other interviews were more relaxed thanks to this preliminary introduction and it was thus possible to focus on the content. Hence, the three interviews provided the researcher with significant information without overly burdening the daily routine of the kindergarten.

A group interview is based on a framework that enables interaction the children are familiar with from their daily activities in the kindergarten. In the group interview, the children can help each other give answers, remind each other of details and keep the answers truthful (Einarsdottir, 2007). Children are more powerful when they are together, and they are also more relaxed with a friend than when alone with an adult (Eder & Fingerson, 2003). Since the children perceive the interview as a search for the right answer that will satisfy the adult who already knows the answer (Graue & Walsh, 1998), the group interview is a format that the children know and with which they feel comfortable talking to other children, and it also constitutes a format that gives children more space for them to set the agenda and content of the conversation (Graue & Walsh, 1998). At the same time, a group interview can be problematic as some participants may dominate by either restricting the topics for discussion or dominating the discussion themselves. Some members of the group may be hesitant to offer a different or alternative perspective. However, since this

part of the research focused on what was said (i. e., the text of the children's responses), rather than the group dynamics, then there was no need to identify individual children or to video record them.

This difficulty is handled by responding positively to everything the children say so they do not become aware of what is a desirable or undesirable answer for the researcher. Similarly, after the free response, the children are asked directly for their opinion. The interviews were conducted during the free play time at the kindergarten in a typical manner, i.e. suggesting a conversation about a conflict clip as the focus of activity chosen by the children. The children interviewed were those interested in the topic and they chose to approach the table where the computer with the film clip was. After the children came over, the teacher also joined the discussion. The fact she joined in when she did follows normal kindergarten procedure in which the teacher talks with an interested group on different topics that she raises or the children suggest, and the children choose whether or not to join in. An interview thus conducted creates a familiar environment in which the children feel comfortable, also because they trust the familiar adult (Einarsdottir, 2007). However, there is some risk in the teacher joining the interview, since the children's responses might be inhibited by the significant adult listening in (Formosinho & Araujo, 2006). In other words, the presence of a familiar adult might alter the dynamic and responses of the children and thus affect the truthfulness of the data.

The conflicts were chosen after the researcher had viewed the videos, so that the interview took place in the middle of the year. The video clips that were chosen differed in the children who participated in them, in the strategies employed (e.g. crying, turning to an adult, negotiating, threatening) and in the kind of children's activity (building games, a theatre performance, playing with dolls). The assumption was that conflicts that differ in these components would expand the repertoire of the children's responses to the conflicts. Selecting the extracts to show the children, was guided by Kassan & Krumer-Nevo's (2010) recommendations of content analysis, in which the researcher decides which segments of the data collected would be used in accordance with the research goals and questions. While it is true that the time that elapsed between the filming of the clip and when it was shown to the children might affect their responses, the viewing of the clip after

this lapse of time enables a reflective review with less emotional arousal that might disrupt the conversation (Hoffman, 1984).

The clips were between 1 -2 minutes long. This was long enough to understand the situation, on the one hand, but not so long that the children might lose their concentration on the other. The conflict clips created an opportunity for the children to reflect on their behaviour and that of their friends and to offer their opinion of the conflict resolution in the kindergarten. Each interview lasted between 10 – 15 minutes where the clip was shown several times at the children's request. The children had a chance to react spontaneously and were then asked questions about the specific clip and questions that related in general to conflict resolution in the kindergarten. The children could join or leave the conversation at any stage. Since the children were free to choose whether to join the interview, some of the participants were children who had not been involved in the conflict, as well as children who did appear in the clip. Children who had taken part in the conflict in the clip were more involved in the discussion and offered more unambiguous explanations of the conflict and its resolution. Children who withdrew from the conversation were ones who were not interested in the topic and they chose to participate in some other activity. It was never the case that children who had been involved in the conflict withdrew from the conversation.

Despite the value of interviewing the children who appear in the clips, the randomness of the groups of children interviewed was appropriate, since the study sees all the children in the kindergarten as one case study. The interviews were recorded on tape rather than on video because the focus was on the content of what the children said and body language would not have added to the understanding of their interpretation of the conflict resolution they were looking at.

Field notes

Bogdan & Biklen (1998) claim that "in participant observation studies all the data are considered to be field notes; this term refers collectively to all the data collected in the course of such a study…" (p. 108). They argue that field notes help the researcher keep track of the development of the project, visualize how the research plan has been affected

by the data collected and add the sights, smells, impressions, and extra remarks that the taped observation cannot collect (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Field notes in this research were written every day of the observations and focused on the comments relating to how the kindergarten conducts itself, the relationships among the staff and with the children and thoughts that arose during the observations. The use of a video camera made it hard to write field notes, so they were written while the toys and games were being collected or during the rhythmics lesson which was not part of the observation.

According to Lofland and Lofland (1995), when the researcher cannot write field notes during the observation, it is possible to take only rough notes, jotting down incidents and affairs that later on would be amplified. Jotted notes are little phrases, quotes, and key words that will be written up later on. Field notes also enable personal reflection. This included dilemmas regarding how the kindergarten or the children functioned, issues worth thinking about in relation to the topics under study, and interpretations of the behaviour of the children and staff. Spending so many hours in the kindergarten provided an opportunity for the researcher to confront and verify assumptions and theories and even re-examine the research questions. Hence the field notes make it possible to take into account who the researcher is, how she or he thinks, and what is actually going on the course of the study (Bogdan & Biklen 1998). Some of the field notes are also part of the data for this research.

Documents

Creswell (2007) claims that documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research. He emphasizes that "they provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them" (p.231). Various documents were collected in order to shed light on the culture of the kindergarten, and the extent to which the Reggio Emilia approach was being implemented. Those documents provided further information and expanded the perspective. These documents were:

1. Kindergarten rationale – written by the staff and their academic advisor (not the researcher)
2. Annual report of the kindergarten’s functioning – written by the kindergarten staff

It is usually hard to collect authentic documents, especially those not intended to be made public (Cresswell, 2007). In this study, the personal relationship created between the researcher and the kindergarten's academic adviser facilitated receipt of the documents.

Data analysis methods

Data analysis is the heart of the research, giving meaning, interpretation and generalisation to the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). However, Yin (2003) notes that data analysis of case studies is especially complicated since there are no clear definitions for analysis strategies and techniques. Every researcher must determine his or her own. Huberman and Miles (1994) add that the problem of data analysis in case studies is the great volume of data which complicates the preliminary analysis phase.

Data analysis is a process of simultaneous, ongoing collection and analysis of data, where the collection is guided by the outcomes and results of the analysis and vice versa (Charmaz, 2006). The analysis procedure allows the researcher to direct the research and to link the findings to theory and to other researchers (Gibton, 2002). In this study, data analysis was guided by grounded theory process as follows.

Grounded theory principles guiding the data analysis process

The main methodology used for analysis and theory construction in this study is based on Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994), a key method of data analysis in qualitative, inductive and interpretative research that combines the perspective of the informants with that of the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). This method is "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507).

Grounded theory is seen simultaneously as an overall heading, a paradigmatic starting point for qualitative methodology, a term for a data collection method, sampling, constructing a research setup, data analysis and even the writing up of the findings and their editing for publication (Gibton, 2002). The method is based on an ongoing process of identifying, naming, comparing and characterising repetitions in the raw material, whilst clearly defining categories according to the themes revealed, and constructing an ideational

hierarchy between the themes and repetitions (Charmaz, 2006). This is all in order to construct a theory that explains the reality under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Grounded theory was used to guide the data analysis process in this research. No pre-determined concepts guided the gathering of data, as the video camera was placed in the kindergarten's play area after an analysis of the initial observations conducted.

According to Shkedi (2003) the analysis method used on all the data collected through all the tools is based on a four-phase sequential process: preliminary, mapping, focusing and theory. Each phase is based on and dependent on its predecessor. The first three phases are really a process of categorisation which gradually structures the data and conceptualises them in a hierarchy that becomes more focused as the process advances.

The preliminary analysis phase is open categorisation. Strauss & Corbin (1990) define this phase as open coding. It is not completely open, but rather constitutes an 'ongoing discussion' between the data and the conceptual perspective of the researcher and the research field (Shkedi, 2003). This stage contains two fundamentals: the first is the process of dividing the data into discrete units, and the second is assigning the units to categories that link the pieces together in a new and different order, and finding the topics that characterise the data (Shkedi, 2003).

In this study, the units of analysis changed according to the research question and the tools used. For the first secondary research question, namely, 'What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?', the unit of analysis was an 'event' that emerged from the observations, a 'statement' from the interviews or an 'idea' from the documents. For the second and third questions, namely, 'What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change over the year?', and 'What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?', the unit of analysis was a 'conflict episode' identified from the observations or a 'statement' from the interviews with the children and with the teachers. All units of analysis underwent line by line coding (Charmaz, 2006), which is particularly appropriate for detailed data and makes it possible to pay attention to nuances and identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements (Charmaz, 2006).

The units were compared with each other to bring to light similarities and differences. Items that had some similarity of ideas were put together in the same category. These sub categories or themes were directly and exactly related to what the informants had said or done. At this stage the categorisation was still meant to be closely tied to the data. The sub category names reflect concepts taken from the research field (Charmaz, 2006). The names were temporary and changed later on, as the research progressed and the issues under study cleared. For example, at the beginning of the analysis, one of the sub categories in the first secondary question was ‘visibility' which later changed to ‘documentation’ since this is a broader concept that contained additional themes besides ‘visibility’. The original categories were inconsistent and lacked uniformity and had no overt connection between them. They were only a temporary basis for the following phases of the analysis.

The second phase was mapping analysis, known as the ‘axial coding stage’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and is based on the preliminary analysis. All the instances studied are sorted into categories that match each other. Each category is compared to another and situated along both a horizontal and a vertical axis. The horizontal axis shows the initial categories that are common to the same ‘family’ of the supra-category and have a similar level of generalisation. For example, 'The role of the teacher' was coded as a vertical category relating to the way that the teachers perceived their role in the kindergarten (Table 3 p. 140). The vertical axis shows the hierarchy of the categories according to the relationship between them and according to their level of generalisation. For example, 'partner in learning', 'facilitator', 'cultural agent' represent some of the vertical categories. During the mapping process, a new set of categories is created that reflects a new view of the data. The analysis is not linear since the researcher returns to the data and to the preliminary categories as needed.

The mapping phase ended when the categories had been verified and the data exhausted. This phase was the basis for the presentation of the significant descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon under study and the clarification of the existing research questions, and even finding new ones (Shkedi, 2003). Despite the inductive approach of this study, part of the data analysis is done by counting and quantifying identified events (Miles and Huberman, 1994). No programme was needed for this quantification, as a simple arithmetic calculation was used. Thus one can relate to the prominence of the

category and comment on its weight in the overall context of the study (Shkedi, 2003). The use of a quantitative method is suited to multiple event research such as this one, which has many conflict events. Counting enables the identification of changes in the degree of prominence during the school year. However, the use of this method does not make this a mixed-methods research, as quantification was used to a minimal extent in this study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Shkedi, 2003).

The third phase was focused analysis. In this phase, the researcher focuses the items of information into a coherent explanation around the key categories and looks for the 'central topic', what the data reveals to be the most relevant (Shkedi, 2003). The analysis moves from manipulation to conceptualisation (Gibton, 2002) and searches for what seems to be the main interest of the informants (Strauss, 1987), with the aim of developing an understanding of the extent to which the studied kindergarten was inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach in relation to conflict resolution. For example, in this stage, once it was possible to see the entire array of categories, the category of 'Solicitation of teacher help' was moved from the findings to the third secondary question to the second secondary question.

The fourth phase was theoretical analysis, the aim of which is to construct descriptions and conceptual-theoretical explanations of the phenomenon under study (Shkedi, 2003). In other words, in this phase there is a process of conceptualisation using literature terminology. It is a process of 'naturalist generalisation' in which inferences are drawn through comparison and contrast, from the case studied for any reader's own world (Stake, 1995). Examples of matching the categories to the relevant literature can be seen in Tables 3 (p. 140) and 4 (p. 156). The outcomes of the theoretical analysis were shared with a critical friend whose academic background is similar to that of the researcher.

In order to enable data analysis according to the grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the conflict events and conversations between staff and children were transcribed. Translation of the data collected on video to another medium for investigation creates methodological challenges during data analysis and when presenting them to others (Plowman & Stephen, 2008). Choosing how to represent the video data is considered significant for the topic under investigation (Pink, 2007; Voithofer, 2005). In this research the video data was transcribed. Nevertheless, body language or behaviour was also

transcribed where necessary. For example, when a child intervened in his friend's conflict without words, by placing his arm into the space between the parties to the conflict. Examples can be seen in Appendix 8 (p. 325) and in Appendix 9 (p. 328).

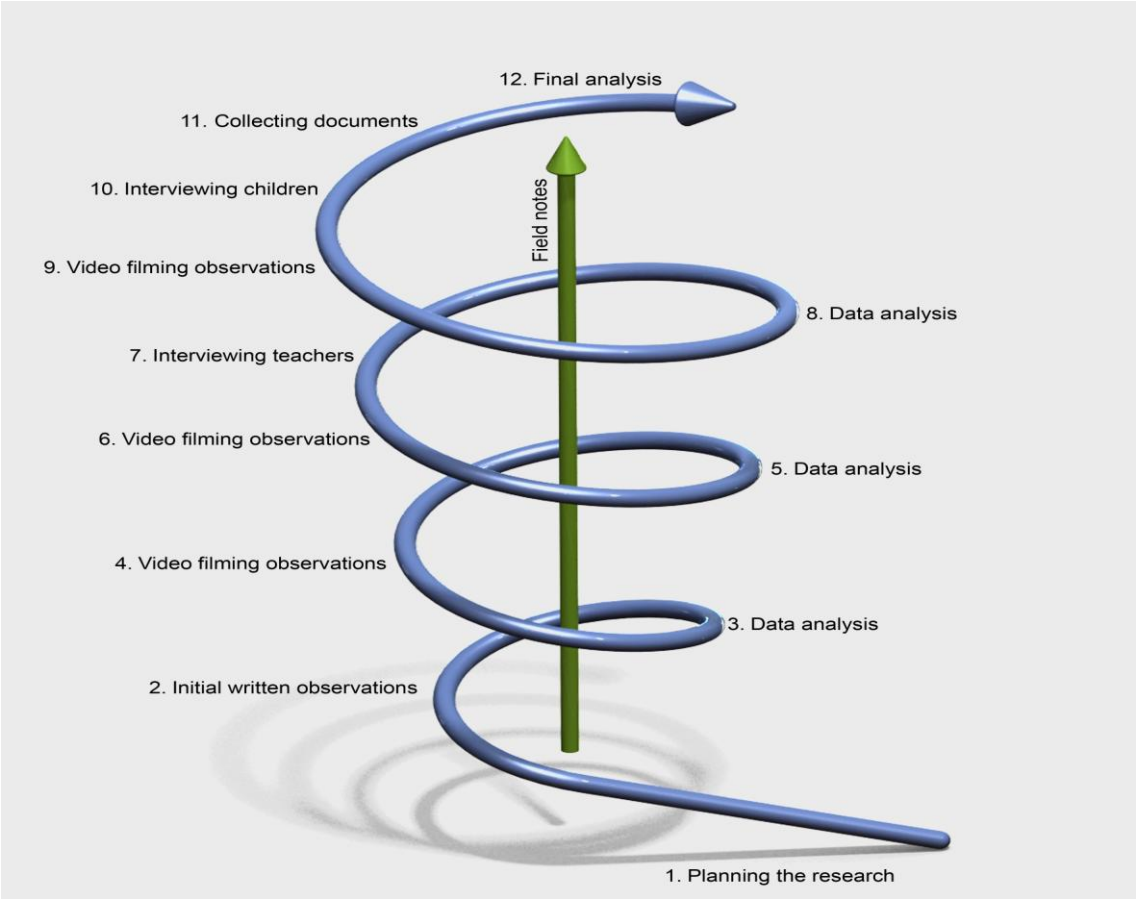
Research employing the socio-cultural approach usually generates a transcript of the speech since language is perceived as the main mediation of learning (Plowman & Stephen, 2008). Representation through transcription which shows preference for spoken language but also non-verbal language, is suitable to describe social interaction such as interpersonal conflict typical of a 'ping-pong' style back and forth conversation (Erickson, 2006). Moreover, a transcript makes the raw data accessible to the researcher or others. However, the transcript reflects an interpretative but incomplete dimension of the event because of how it is generated (Bucholtz, 2000). The transition from one medium to another involves the loss of information and of the exact sense of the experience. Hence, the researcher must choose which phenomena are significant for the interaction and important for the analysis according to his or her perspective (Ochs, 1979).

One can confront the difficulties of representation by creating a thick description (Geertz, 1973) that includes gestures within the transcript (Bourne & Jewitt, 2003; Cole, 1996; Danby & Baker, 2000) and graphic (Plowman, 1992) or pictorial (Kendon, 2004) representation. Another choice is to publish the original video files, which may help to preserve the experience (Walker, 2002). However, this option raises ethical problems, especially in research involving young children whose privacy might be adversely affected, exposing them to abuse (Kaplan & Howes, 2004). Additionally, the video data is presented in Hebrew, and might constitute a difficulty for readers of other languages. Hence this study presents the data through transcript only (translated from Hebrew), but provides thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the findings as well as examples of conflicts (Appendix 8 (p. 325) and Appendix 9 (p. 328)). The extracts and conflicts chosen from all the data best demonstrate the categories. However, the number of examples is relatively limited according to the possible broad scope of this paper.

Research design

This research developed according to a qualitative world view that requires flexibility in research design as expressed in the fact that the venue of the study and the choice of sample may be adapted to research questions which undergo a gradual process of clarification and modification (Shkedi, 2003). The research developed in spiral design, because the data gradually expanded as the research progressed, where the researcher knew the process but not the content. In actual fact, each phase influenced the following one. In this method, the researcher finds the way during the research process. Thus the research design reflects an inductive process in which each phase is based on the previous one. The spiral structure of the research was created as a result of the process of action, reflection, and subsequent redesigning so as to allow methodical but democratic participation in the community studied (Lewin, 1946; Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Dewey, 1966). Figure 2 presents the research design.

Figure 2: <u>Research design (based on Lewin, 1946)</u>



Phase 1 – Focus on the research topic which has emerged from the researcher's professional work. Construction of the primary conceptual framework, formulation of research questions, identification of the gap in knowledge, and setting the research boundaries. Planning the research design, selecting the appropriate method and methodologies, obtaining consent to conduct the research from all bodies involved, except for the children. This design created the starting point for the research even before entry into the field.

Phase 2 – Initial written observations. Three days of participant observation in the kindergarten without video camera in order to build relationships and knowledge of the setting. Writing of field notes began in this phase and continued throughout the process. Getting the consent of the children for the study took place after the researcher had spent time in the kindergarten and the children got to know her as just another person documenting what goes on, like the other staff members.

Phase 3 - Analysis of the observations. The analysis enabled early identification of the areas in the kindergarten where there were more conflicts among the children and thus would be worth observing.

Phase 4 – Video observation - observation based on the previous phase in areas where the children played freely. The observations were conducted throughout the data gathering process.

Phase 5 – Data analysis - primary analysis of the observation. At this stage the researcher conducted a primary analysis of the filmed observation. This is the first stage according to the grounded theory method. The primary analysis enabled identification of the primary features of children's conflict resolution.

Phase 6 - Video observation.

Phase 7 - Semi-structured interviews with the teachers - At this stage the researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews with the teachers of the kindergarten class chosen to the study. The teachers cooperated willingly and provided information about their educational worldview and its implementation in the kindergarten and about children's conflict resolution.

Phase 8 – Data analysis **-** Each semi-structured interview protocol underwent a primary analysis according to the grounded theory method. This analysis was conducted as soon as possible after the interview itself. Here the researcher also used the field notes she had written during the interviews.

Phase 9 - Video observation.

Phase 10 - Semi-structured interviews with the children. The children interviewed were those who joined the conversation of their own free will. The interviews were conducted in the form of a conversation among a group of children as they related to a clip of a conflict shown to them on a laptop computer.

Phase 11 – Collection of documents. The teachers presented documents describing their philosophy and its application in the kindergarten studied.

Phase 12- Main data analysis **-** Analysis of the data collected from all tools (interviews, observations; documents, field notes); building a sound theoretical conceptual framework; structuring of categories and subcategories and re-identifying the research issues, concepts, and the gap in knowledge. The analysis used the first three phases of the grounded theory method including reviews of the previous analyses. The unit of analysis changed according to the research question.

Phase 13 - Final analysis and creation of a model- This was the final stage of the research process. At this stage the data collection and analysis were completed and the researcher turned her attention to the final phase of creating the theory.

This chapter delineated the research process. The basis for the research design is the conceptual framework the literature and the researcher's professional experience. Accordingly, this chapter described the methods of data collection (Shkedi, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2007) and analysis and the research design in a manner compatible with the research paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994; Charmaz, 2006). The following chapter discusses issues related to validity, triangulation, reliability and generalisability of the research.

Chapter 13: Validity, Triangulation, Reliability, and Generalisability

This chapter presents issues related to validity, reliability and generalisability relevant to this study. According to the qualitative paradigm followed in this research, the perception of reality is subjective and thus relates to the understanding of the phenomenon studied within its context. Also the understanding of validity, reliability and generalisability in this study similarly are appropriate to the qualitative paradigm since they are only significant in relation to the declared perspective of the researcher (Shkedi, 2003).

Validity, reliability and generalisability (external validity) are the measures of qualitative research. Various researchers have proposed different concepts by means of which it is possible to discuss the issue of trusting a qualitative research. Some researchers use terms that are particularly suited to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Others use conventional terms that are more typical of quantitative research but assign them meanings that are appropriate to the qualitative approach (Kirk & Miller, 1986 in Shkedi, 2003). This chapter will discuss the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability in this manner.

Validity in qualitative research

Validity is an important key to effective research. It refers to a concern with the integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2004). "In qualitative data, validity is addressed through the honesty, depth, richness, and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation, and the … objectivity of the researcher" (Cohen et. al., 2003 p. 105). In other words, the issue of validity is connected to the question “Does the researcher see what he thinks he sees?” (Kirk & Miller, 1986 in Shkedi, 2003).

A valid explanation is one that can be defended as properly based both conceptually and empirically (Dey, 1993). Thus, empirical validity involves a criterion for measurement during the research process which might change during the analysis. Despite the fact that in a qualitative study one can always analyse a phenomenon in different ways according to the values and particular interests of the researcher, the research findings will be valid if

they are properly based on the researcher's perspective (Riesman, 1993). In this study, the data were also interpreted by the children through the group interviews, and through the mediation process with the kindergarten teacher conducted and recorded right after the conflict had occurred.

Instead of the existing demand for predictive validity in quantitative research, qualitative research demands construct validity (Yin, 2003). Construct validity relates to the researcher's use of a variety of sources, based on a chain of evidence in the data collection and reporting phase. The chain of evidence consists of sections of data in their various formats through to final findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003). This chain of evidence enables researchers to consult with their colleagues to confirm the validity (Merriam, 1998). As stated previously, the data interpretation was shared with a critical friend involved in the same academic field. For example, this critical friend drew the researcher's attention to the 'audience phenomenon' during conflict resolution.

Within construct validity one can make a distinction between internal and external validity (Yin, 2003). Internal validity (Yin, 2003) is the matching between patternisation, building explanations and time series evaluation during data analysis. The validity begins when the observed events can be separated into random and patterned. Further internal validity is achieved when the researcher's interpretation is confirmed by the subjects (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, the children's interpretations shed light on those of the researcher and guided it to some extent, for example, when describing what brings them to ask for the teacher's help in resolving the conflict.

External validity is achieved when the data matches what is found in theoretical and research literature (Yin, 2003). Hence, validity exists when the researcher's interpretations fit the field data and research literature. In this study, the researcher confronted this aspect of the issue of validity with a continuous attempt to match the attitude of the theory in light of the findings emerging from the data, with the aim of expanding existing literature on the issues under study. This refers to the literature on the Reggio Emilia approach (Table 3 p. 140) and on conflict resolution (Table 4 p. 156). External validity is also called generalisability, which will be expanded upon later. In this study, validity was dealt with using a careful process of data analysis and documentation and preservation of the analysis process.

Triangulation

Another method of validation is triangulation (Fetterman, 1989). This is a process by means of which different sources and methods are used to see that a particular phenomenon is actually taking place and in order to clarify its meaning (Stake, 2005). Triangulation makes the researcher examine one source of information in comparison with others and to eliminate interpretations that are not sufficiently backed up by this cross-referencing to validate the explanation, and to fill the gap in knowledge. External validation is achieved when the data match what is found in theoretical literature (Maxwell, 1992) or through cross-referencing with previous studies.

In order to accomplish triangulation in this study, multiple data collection methods (e.g. interview, observation) were employed to access multiple data sources (e.g., people, physical environment, documents) and to raise multiple voices (e.g., children, teachers). Triangulation of multiple data sources and methods was ensured through several strategies such as audio-taping the interviews with teachers and children; video-taping children inside and outside the classroom; video-taping and field notes of the physical environment; collecting documents about the philosophy of the kindergarten. Participants were involved in the interpretation of the data when the children were interviewed in relation to their views regarding the conflict captured in the kindergarten. Accordingly, triangulation of data was achieved both in terms of benefiting from different data collection methods and including different perspectives and data sources in the study.

Reliability in qualitative research

In quantitative research, reliability means that if the same methods are used with the same sample, then the results should be the same (Cohen et. al., 2003). The characteristics of qualitative research do not allow us to speak of reliability in the same manner. Thus Bryman (2001) defines reliability "as the degree to which a measure of a concept is stable" (p. 507). The goal of reliability is to minimise errors and biases in the research as far as possible (Yin, 2003). Reliability is achieved by as much repetitious use as possible of a research tool such as observation (Dey, 1993). In other words, reliability in qualitative research, and especially in a case study, will increase with a longer stay in the field for

multiple observations, which in turn, reveal repeated phenomena. This patterning offers a kind of reliability in this study (Fetterman, 1989).

Further support for reliability is gained by documentation of the data that is as complete as possible and through the use of protocols which detail how these data were collected. These protocols enable other researchers to repeat the procedure of the case study (Yin, 2003). In order to attain reliability in this study, the researcher spent one whole day every two weeks in the educational setting for the entire school year. This enabled the collection of a great deal of data and the identification of patterns within them.

Generalisability – external validity

Unlike quantitative research, which stresses the great importance of the generalisability of the study, critique of qualitative research focuses on the difficulty in generalising qualitative findings about different people in different environments in which the study is conducted (Merriam, 1985). Schofield (1993) stresses that many features of the qualitative approach are not suited to achieving generalisability as it is perceived in quantitative research. The response to this, according to Stake (1995) is that the real focus of a case study is its uniqueness and not its generalisability.

Qualitative research uses the term that Stake (1995) coined "the naturalistic generalisation" or, what Guba & Lincoln (1989) called "transferability". According to Stake (1995), it is the consumer of the research study and not its author who determines the degree of generalisability and which aspects of the case are applicable to other situations. Hence the research findings will not be treated as established conclusions, but as what can be described as empirically developed hypotheses (Merriam & Simpson, 1984), as these hypotheses can be subject to continual scrutiny and interpretation.

In order for the reader to be able to find a basis for generalisation, the researchers support the process by using triangulation as a strategy to create “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) and detailed reporting of the case under study (Eisner, 1979). Thus the researchers include a large variety of background features and rich descriptions of the phenomena examined in their reporting in order for the readers to have enough information to evaluate the compatibility between the situation studied and the one they are referring to (Firestone,

1993). In this research, as discussed above, triangulation was used as a strategy to raise the generalisability level of the findings.

According to Yin (2003) "case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 10) and so the link between the description and theory in qualitative research enables the researchers or their readers to examine the extent to which the new cases can be explained by the proposed theoretical explanation in the study they are reading about (Marshal & Roseman, 1989). In accordance with such suggestions in the literature, and given the research approach presented here, a reading of this study might possibly lead to potential transferability for readers and other researchers. This chapter discussed the considerations that guided the choice of methodology for this study. The next chapter describes the ethical considerations employed in this study.

Chapter 14: Ethical Considerations

This chapter presents the ethical considerations in this study. Ethics in qualitative research deals with the search for the principles, commitment and moral virtues that should guide and characterise the proper behaviour of the qualitative researcher (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001). According to Graue & Walsh (1998), "to act ethically is to act the way one acts towards people whom one respects" (p. 55). When researching children, this is a particularly important stance to keep in mind since in the global society we often do not treat children with respect (Woodhead, 2006). Hence the qualitative researchers must adhere to principles of the beneficence of the study, maintain the dignity and privacy in their behaviour towards the subjects and particularly see to informed consent, the consent of the subject to participate in the study after receiving full information about the research and its implications (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001).

Informed consent

Informed consent (Appendix 13-17 pp. 340-348) seeks to ensure that every subject has considered whether it is worthwhile participating in the project and has consented to do so. The consent of the subject must be based on full, relevant information about the aims and procedures of the research and must be given freely and willingly (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001). In this study, consent was obtained from the staff members, the children's parents and from the children themselves. The preliminary consent to the study was given by the educational staff members following an initial conversation held to examine their willingness. This conversation took place before there were any official procedures in order to prevent any pressure on the staff to consent to the research. The concern was that the inspector would be interested in having the research conducted in a kindergarten under her supervision and would coerce the staff to participate. Once the informal consent had been obtained, the staff was given a formal written consent form and information page explaining the goals and methodology of the research.

Since most of the subjects were 3-4 year old children, it was necessary to obtain the consent of their parents to conduct the research. The parents heard about the request to conduct this research at a parents' meeting held at the kindergarten before the start of the school year. This meeting gave the parents an opportunity to ask questions and get

answers. After the meeting, the parents were given a consent form and an information page. They took this home so that there would be no consent under pressure, and then returned the signed forms at the start of the school year. All the parents agreed to let their children participate in the research.

In addition to the consent of the parents, there was also consent from the children. In order to obtain consent from children who cannot yet read or write, there was a discussion with all the children in the kindergarten where the researcher was introduced to them as a kindergarten teacher educator who wants to learn how they play and how they behave on all kinds of occasions and with all kinds of problems that crop up at the kindergarten in order to know how to train the kindergarten teachers better. The children were asked whether or not they were prepared to participate then and later on. The children introduced themselves by name and said if they agreed. Two girls were not willing to be filmed. They did not take part in the research despite their parents' consent. The children's consent was documented on video as written consent.

During the research there were two occasions where the children felt uncomfortable with the camera and asked not to be filmed. The request, was, of course, honoured. The children's consent was also obtained for the screening of the clips they took part in, and to the recording of the conversation with them following the showing of the conflict clips. Participation in the interview was the children's choice and only those who were interested joined in. The children were free to leave during the interview. The films showed how the children behaved in a conflict and might have caused unpleasant responses from other children watching. However, in this kindergarten the children are used to talking during "circle time" about problems that have arisen among them so that this conversation was nothing out of the ordinary for them. Furthermore, the film clips were shown to the kindergarten teacher, who gave her approval that they were suitable to be shown to the children and discussed. Thus the informed consent of the children was not just a one-time formality, but rather an ongoing meaningful dialogue between researcher and subject (Smith, 1990).

Privacy and anonymity

The qualitative researcher is interested in reaching many levels of the reality under study. For this reason, even when the study revolves around a particular issue, the researcher takes an interest in several aspects of the study site (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001). Conversely the researcher is committed to protect the privacy of the subjects (Deyhle et. al., 1992). The right to privacy in research ethics is implemented mainly by preserving the anonymity of the subjects. This is achieved by concealing the names of the subjects and avoiding publication of any details that might reveal their identity (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001). Despite the importance of anonymity, it comes at a price for both researcher and subject. In order to minimise identifying details, the thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the context of the study (Dushnik & Sabar, 2001) is also reduced, and the confidential details make it hard to judge the correctness of the research findings (Sabar, 1998).

In this study there could be a problem with maintaining anonymity of the educational staff since there are very few kindergartens in Israel that declare their educational approach to be inspired by Reggio Emilia. Nevertheless, details that might identify the kindergarten being studied have been omitted. On the other hand, it was easier to maintain the anonymity of the children. Children usually spend one to two years at a kindergarten and are not identified with any particular one. In order to reinforce the anonymity, the names of the staff and children are false. In addition, the playback of the video films and data analysis were conducted only by the researcher herself so there is no fear of the subject's anonymity being compromised.

Reciprocity and partnership

Another ethical issue in qualitative research relates to the distance between researcher and participants. Sabar (1998) claims that the dialogue about the meaning and interpretation of the reality under study reduces the distance between researcher and subjects, expanding the ethics of qualitative research to reciprocity and partnership. Nevo (2001) even claims that the contribution of a teacher's expertise and practice and his authentic familiarity with the field are perceived as equal to the theoretical contribution of the researchers.

Reciprocity and partnership, caring and loyalty between researcher and subject mean a particularly close commitment of the researcher towards the subjects. This commitment might prevent the researcher from judging the object of the study and revealing realities that are not complimentary to the subjects. In order to avoid this, Rhoades (1991) calls for the expansion of the focus on the interpersonal researcher-subject relations to the social-public context of the study. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) claim that the construction of a research text compiled of multiple voices that do not necessarily blend together into a harmonious whole might contribute to the confrontation of the dilemma. Another primary ethical issue that is particular to children is the decision of researchers to intervene if a child is in danger or harm while also remaining loyal to the researcher's role (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

During this research, reciprocity and partnership with the subjects was created as a result of the many hours the researcher spent in the educational setting in order to create a certain connection with the children so they would feel at ease in her presence. This intensive presence might have caused the staff to see the researcher as responsible for welfare of the children around her during the observations and would expect her to intervene in case of danger. The researcher’s involvement in the prevention of danger is problematic, since it means yielding the role of researcher at a certain point in time and taking on the role of teacher. The topic of research was how the children handle themselves in cases of violence and any intervention would cause the independent process to cease and the children would treat the researcher as an adult around them whom they can involve in their interactions in various ways.

Consequently, it was agreed at the start of the research that in general the researcher would not intervene in children’s quarrels and despite her presence the teacher would act as usual. This agreement made it possible to achieve the aims of the research and learn about the teacher’s involvement. However, during the research there were a few instances in which there was intervention in violent quarrels among the children when they were on the verge of causing each other physical harm, and their welfare was more important than the research.

The researcher had previously known the kindergarten’s academic adviser since they are colleagues in training the college students and were even partners in constructing the

teaching and implementation process of the Reggio Emilia approach in Israel. This familiarity made it possible to choose a kindergarten teacher for the research and even facilitated the approval of the teacher and the inspector to conduct the research in that kindergarten. At the same time, this familiarity also caused problems and might be considered as subjectivity. The subjective I is the collective term for the personal perspective and relationships that are possible problem areas of subjectivity for the researcher and should be clearly indicated in the report of a research study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The kindergarten teacher knew the researcher as an expert in the educational approach. Accordingly, she tried to get support, advice and feedback about how the kindergarten was running. These attempts created a dilemma for the researcher. Since qualitative research perceives the researcher as part of the community it is investigating (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) the researcher made a decision only to respond and support on issues that were not directly related to conflict resolution (e.g. adjustment difficulties of one of the girls at the start of the year).

The researcher’s need to keep intervention to a minimum stemmed from the kindergarten's academic adviser's concern that there might be too much involvement of the researcher. Their close relationship gave rise to fears of competition or over-involvement and so she did not allow the researcher to collect any kind of data at all from the students working in the kindergarten. Hence data were not collected on the days the larger team was working, there were no observations of the staff meetings and the students were not interviewed. Accordingly, the data was collected only from the main staff and via various documents that gave a broader picture. This response from the academic adviser is linked to yet another ethical dilemma – ownership of knowledge. To what extent do the data and interpretations belong to the subjects? Some researchers support the right of the subject to set rules and reservations about the collection and use of data, but leave the research summary and its publication exclusively in the hands of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Sabar, 1998).

In contrast, Schratz (1993) claims that the data belong to the subjects, and so any publication of the data requires their reaction. Other researchers even suggest the researcher should share the profits of the research with the subjects (Lincoln, 1990; Shulman, 1990). This dilemma is relevant to this study since the kindergarten investigated

is one that implements an innovative educational approach in the local education system and the research might obtain some of the credit which should go to the staff members. In order to confront this dilemma, the researcher will suggest to the staff that they waive their right to anonymity in order to publicly take part in the credit for their work.

This last chapter in Part III critically discussed the qualitative features of the research and the considerations used to ensure them against a background of the relevant theoretical perspective. Additionally, the chapters in Part III discussed the considerations that led to the selection of the research approach and methods in compatibility with the research aims and questions. This chapter also discussed ethical issues that arose during the research and describes how the literature proposes handling them and how this study dealt with them. The next part of the research, Part IV, will present the findings that emerged from the various research tools used for collecting data.

PART IV: FINDINGS

Preview

This part presents the findings that emerged from the data. The chapters deal with the continuation of the description of the data analysis process and present the research findings emerging from this analysis. Additionally, this part presents the data analysis according to the order of the research questions, while interweaving the appropriate links with the current research literature in order to strengthen the arguments discussed in part V.

Chapter 15: Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 1

Secondary research question 1 was:

What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?

In order to answer this question, the data were analysed according to the grounded theory principles (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) method. Three research tools were triangulated (Stake, 2005): interviews with the teachers, documents and the researcher's field notes. In addition, the researcher's comparison with the Reggio Emilia approach as it appears in the theoretical literature reinforces the external validity of the findings (Maxwell, 1992).

Table 3 presents the content of the four categories that emerged from the content analysis. It should be noted that the features emerging from the analysis refer to the particular kindergarten class presented in this research as a case study. Additionally, the analysis used the features as suggested by the existing literature about the Reggio Emilia approach (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2000; Edwards et. al., 1998).

Table 3: Features of the Israeli kindergarten

Features of the Reggio Emilia approach kindergarten (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2000; Edwards et al., 1998)	**Aspects evident in the Israeli kindergarten**
The image of the child	Knowledgeable, an active learner, learns in social context, has discourse skills, unique in thinking and its expressions, initiates, is independent, can make choices, collaborator, participator
The role of the teacher	Partner in learning, Facilitator: listens, mediates, Provocateur Cultural agent: imparts norms of behaviour, being a model Relations with the community: participation, modes of communication, transparency
Components of educational environment	Activity areas: children's activities, children's preferences Principle of choice: where to act, how to organise Private and public space: individual belonging, group belonging Daily timetable: flexibility, continuity
Praxis	Curriculum: learning processes, emergence, project, deepening, meaningfulness, investigation and discovery, dialogue Documentation: basis for planning, sharing, assessment, reflection, visibility The hundred languages of children: information processing, expressing knowledge

Table 3 shows how the features of the Reggio Emilia approach are expressed in the Israeli kindergarten class examined as a case study for this research. The following findings suggest how those features are applied in the examined kindergarten class. The excerpts, which are written in italics, were chosen according to the criteria such as salience and relevance to the aims of the study (Shkedi, 2003). Evidently, the excerpts reflect the categories and the themes in the most coherent way. However, selecting the excerpts is part of the winnowing process (Wolcott, 2001) and expresses the researcher's attempt to generate meaning and interpret the data (Shlasky& Alpert, 2007). Each excerpt is marked with where it was taken from, although in the appendices (no. 3-6 pp. 305-321) there are

only partial examples of the raw data because of the huge extent of interviews and documents. Here and throughout the entire research, all the names used are pseudonyms.

The image of the child

The findings show that like the Reggio Emilia approach, the teachers in this study perceive the children as **possessing knowledge** (Edwards et al., 1998; Moss, 2009) that enables them to play a meaningful part in the educational setting. The child is not a '*tabula rasa' or empty vessel to be filled but rather an active learner with an active role to play in creating culture and knowledge*. (document). The children are seen to have knowledge and as such create their own knowledge by doing (Dewey, 1959; Vygotsky, 1978) Thus, the child learns through experience and actions in kindergarten life They see the experiences as enabling the child to acquire skills independently and much more effectively. The experience enables learning that is meaningful to the child

As in Reggio Emilia, (Malaguzzi, 1998) the teachers in the Israeli kindergarten perceived the child as someone who **learns in a social context (**Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990): *Our attitude towards peer interaction as the central arena of learning.* With this perception in mind, the teachers encourage natural social interaction by organising the educational environment as described below. They also direct social interaction in which children teach their peers in the various centres of the kindergarten: *I teach 4 children, and ask that when a new child comes along, they explain how to work.* (Rivka). Social interaction is more meaningful thanks to the children's **discourse skills:** *They know what they want, they explain, they talk and they have the warmth and they are very verbal and very tolerant and explain to their peers that getting annoyed is not the solution to everything* (Rivka). The teachers believe that the children are able to conduct dialogic discourse among themselves and so they encourage this discourse in the children's relationships: *Stav turns to Rivka and says: I want Neta to be my friend. Rivka asks: Have you spoken to her? Stav: But she doesn't speak nicely to me. Rivka: Tell her you want to be her friend (*video 19.3). This finding could be linked to Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural theory, as well as to the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998).

The evidence collected for this study indicates that although the teachers perceive the child as having skills and abilities, the child is not perceived as being like an adult, but as

unique in his or her thinking and expression. The reference to uniqueness does not mean treating the child as lacking in competence, knowledge or understanding but in order to create conditions and mediation paths that will enable children to express themselves: *Create conditions and mediation paths in the kindergarten that will enable children to express (and further develop) their imagination, unique thinking and expression as children (*document).

The teachers perceive the child as an **initiator**. The child initiates social interactions with peers and learning situations so *the daily timetable at kindergarten also reflects the aspiration to leave more room for activities initiated by the children and their interactions among themselves* (document). Furthermore, the perception of the child as **independent** affects how the educational setting organised and functions: *They come in the morning and the kindergarten invites them to the arranged centres so that I do not have to tell the child 'go here' or 'go there'* (Yafa). This organisation enables the children to choose their activities independently. The teachers believe that they do not need directions from them. The structure of the kindergarten and its daily activities are appropriate for independent activity by the children. The teachers encourage them to do as much as they can by themselves: *The food is served buffet style, where children go to eat whenever they feel the need and there is room. Each child chooses what to spread on the bread and makes his own sandwich. Stav asks a friend to make his sandwich. Yafa hears the request and says: Everyone does it on his own* (field note).

Since the teachers perceive the child as **capable of choice**, they arrange the space so that children can choose the kind of activity and the actual activity within each play centre indoors and in the playground: *Children can choose the kind of activity and the actual activity within each play centre indoors and in the playground* (document). The teachers believe that the child can choose what to play and this choice will be the best since it suits his needs. ...*We put out all the games, we rely on them to know what they want and what they need and it is not me who decides* (Rivka). The child's ability to choose is expressed by giving an opportunity to choose even the study content and actually participates in an interest group that is focusing on a certain topic.

Additionally, the teachers perceive the child as a **collaborator**. Collaboration between the children is important to the teachers in order to create dialogue and sharing: *At the*

kindergarten we can emphasise the values of dialogue and sharing (Rivka). The teachers initiate tasks that require collaboration and encourage the children to take part as tidying up the kindergarten. They do not see any need to encourage the children to cooperate during free play time or artwork time because they believe that on these occasions collaboration comes naturally: *They put it together on their own, as if without any need for me to be there, or for me to tell them to go and do something, I don't advise them* (Yafa). In activity that is not play and not artwork, the teachers intervene and initiate collaboration

Finally, the teachers see the child as a **participator** who can and should feel a sense of belonging to the educational setting. They want *to develop a person who is committed to the socio-cultural framework he lives in, and who takes part in realising shared goals* (document). There a range of interactions is generated that creates friendships and develops the children's group culture. In addition, the child takes part in the ongoing functioning of the educational setting: *The children share the organisation of the work procedures in the kindergarten and the decision making in certain areas: For example, the decision about the procedures for tidying up the room, planning the arrangements for a birthday party, planning the Hanukkah party* (document). The initiative to take part in the running of the kindergarten usually comes from the teacher, but when the children recognise situations in which decisions are to be made, they ask to have a discussion ...*The children asked for a conversation and so I called for one. We sat opposite the daily documentation board, we put out chairs and whoever wanted to joined in the talk*...(Rivka). The children have qualities that enable them to act and learn. They initiate, they can choose and collaborate with peers. They are active participants (Rogoff, 1998) in everything that goes on in the classroom, which gives them a sense of belonging to their educational setting.

Since the teachers estimate the child's ability to participate, discuss and make decisions, they create a team meeting with the children in order to enable that*: At the meeting, in which the children will discuss their work on the chosen topics, they will present their discoveries and what they have done and will consult with their peers about continuing their work and investigation. The adults and the children will work as a 'learning community' that investigates, deliberates and creates together around the chosen topic* (document). In this manner they participate in each other's work, make suggestions to their

peers and suggest ideas for the future learning process and solve problems. These findings could be linked to a democratic approach to education (Moss, 2007, 2009) and fits in with the post-modern approach to early childhood (Woodhead, 2005: Smith, 2007).

In conclusion, the teacher's image of the child encompasses both individual and social abilities. The teacher relates to the abilities the children have and not to those they lack. The abilities attributed to the children guide the teachers' behaviour and how they perceive their role and the learning opportunities available to the children. Hence, the findings that reflect the view of the child as a competent being can be linked to the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998).

The role of the teacher

The findings show that as in the Reggio Emilia approach, the teachers in the Israeli kindergarten view themselves as a **partner in learning:** *I learn along with the children, it's interesting* (Rivka)**.** The teachers see learning as mutual and so the role of the teachers is *to place herself at the disposal of the children as part of the learning and creating community* (document). Being a partner in learning relates to the teachers' ability to see themselves as not possessing all the knowledge and thus they can join in the children's investigation of the world (Rankin, 1992; Edwards et al., 1998; Gandini, 2004).

In addition to being part of the learning community, the teachers have roles arising from being an adult and a professional. They **facilitate** the children's learning process. This facilitation is provided through <u>listening</u> to spontaneous activity. That enables identification of their areas of interest and the challenges they wish to confront. Listening is not just hearing what a child says or identifying a kind of behaviour, but rather interpret, constantly trying to get as close as possible to the child's point of view: *The teacher must observe and interpret, constantly trying to get as close as possible to the child's point of view* (document). This kind of listening makes it possible to adjust the running of the educational setting to cater to the children's needs: *It took them a long time, and the dolls were also strewn around the floor. I said to Yafa 'let's listen'… they don't have anywhere to sit so they throw the dolls on the floor. We had a box for the dolls and we suggested they put the dolls in the box when they are done* (Rivka).

These findings could be linked to the way Malaguzzi (1998) and Rinaldi (2006) see listening as a metaphor for openness and the ability to react appropriately to the needs of the children. This kind of listening might be active listening that creates space for cognitive and emotional development Rogers (1973). Relating to the teacher as a partner and facilitator also may be linked to Rogoff's (1998) theory that the learning process is a kind of apprenticeship in which there is side by side learning of the partners to the process. In this view, the findings emerging from this study reflect how the Israeli kindergarten perceives and implements the Reggio Emilia educational approach regarding the teachers' role as a listener.

Another view of the teachers' role as facilitator is mediation. The mediating teachers help the child to externalise thoughts and feelings *to reflect the knowledge and insights the child already has, to help the child define questions and goals, to help the child find ways to locate answers and/or accomplish goals* (document). Mediation in social areas helps to create dialogue among the children and refine behaviour norms: *My role is to strengthen the dialogue, to guide them, in their treatment of friends, to respect their friends and to accept paths to a resolution* (Rivka). These findings may be linked to Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory in which he refers to the teacher as a mediator who helps the student reach the ZPD.

The teachers see their role also as that of **provocateur**. The stimuli they offer create challenges that expand the child's thinking and experiences: *I see my role as providing them with the materials they need...* (Yafa). The challenge is also created by giving the children opportunities to solve problems that arise in the kindergarten or to facilitate encounters with new materials or situations: *During the session Rivka raises a problem she has encountered: the children throw the books in the book corner and damage them. She asks the children what to do, how to solve the problem* (field note).

These findings could be linked to the approach of Bruner (1996), who sees provoking the learner as an opportunity for a process of self discovery and the creation of meaning and even to Vygotsky (1978), who believes that challenge invites the learner to a more intelligent resolution.

Another role of the teacher is to be a **cultural agent**, someone who represents society, its culture, the accumulated its norms of behaviour in the educational setting. The teachers see their role as the person who imparts behaviour norms that are customary in an educational setting. Imparting norms is achieved through conversations following a problem that occurred and created the need to establish a behaviour norm: *Rivka to a Stav: look at the building centre. Who built this? What did you do? What did you write? "Don't take apart". That means putting things back where they belong, doesn't it? No! You only put away what isn't part of the construction* (field note). One of the ways to be an agent of change is to be a role model. The teachers mention that the children learn values such as dialogue, participation and listening by watching and imitating them: *The dialogue and sharing among the staff creates an atmosphere in which it is possible to educate the children in belonging, sharing and dialogue, because we act out these values rather than talk about them* (Rivka). The teacher acts as an example of solving problems through talking: *I say, excuse me, Yafa and I are talking now, please do not disturb us, I will be with you in a moment. But they see us, we are an example, not as an act, but a real example* (Rivka). Supporting socialisation in this way is in tune with the socio-cultural theories of learning relating to the learning of patterns of behaviour through participation and creating a group culture (Corsaro, 2005; Rogoff, 1998).

Finally, the teachers see themselves as committed to cultivating **relations with the community**: *Developing a sense of belonging will also take place in circles that go beyond the kindergarten itself by cultivating relations with the home, the school and the community*...(document). Out of all the community circles mentioned, contact with the parents is the most significant. The teachers are interested in involving the parents in the projects (the topics studied) at the kindergarten: *Our aim… is to have projects where the parents are involved in whatever project their child is working on. We will... invite them to a meeting.* Involving the parents usually occurs around special events by decorating the kindergarten and by involving the parents in planning and attending a party:... *to plan the end of year party I invited the parents... We took notes and at the end we planned the party by listening to the parents and the children, in other words so that everyone was involved.* (Rivka). In order to create this involvement, the teachers communicate with the parents in various ways: *At the end of a topic I sum it up and hang it on the parent's notice board outside… I also write what we learned, what we did* (Rivka). At the entrance to the

kindergarten there is a notice board for parents where the teachers hang reports of what is going on and various announcements. The teachers are also interested in talking to the parents and reporting to them personally about what goes on in the kindergarten. This method is less efficient because not all the parents come to the kindergarten at the end of the day to pick up their children because they stay for afternoon playschool. Parents who do not come to the kindergarten do not read the notice board and so the teachers use the internet and sends the parents emails describing what is going on: *I send the parents project snippets, to describe how things are developing* (Rivka). Another method of communicating is the "parents' meeting". This meeting is meant to inform parents about the functioning of the kindergarten and to give them an opportunity to ask questions and express opinions: *... a parents meeting is planned on the topics of the emergent projects* (Rivka). In order for the parents to feel a sense of belonging to the kindergarten, the teachers maintain transparency and let the parents come into the kindergarten and spend time with the children as they wish: *From the parents' notice board: The kindergarten is open to parents – you are invited to come in your free time to play, read and have fun with the children (please give advance notice so there will not be too many parents on the same day*) (field note). Hence the teachers in the Israeli kindergarten stress the parent's participation as a means to create relationships and the children's sense of belonging to the educational setting. This approach sees the parents as supporting the learning process (Edmiaston, 2002) but not as part of the community of educators (Malaguzzi, 1998). These findings are similar to the perception of the role of the teacher in the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006) and may be linked to the democratic practice (Moss, 2007, 2009).

In conclusion, the teachers are perceived as having multiple roles. On the one hand, they are part of the learning community and on the other, they act as the more experienced other (Vygotsky, 1978), and so their role is to enable learning through listening and mediation and causing provocation. In this sense, their role is also to be the agent of culture, who presents the children with behaviour norms and is a role model for them.

Components of educational setting

The findings show that the purpose of the organisation of the kindergarten environment is to create **activity areas** that enable the child's activity: *Organising the setting to enable*

optimal expression of the children's activity and how they develop it (Document). The space of the kindergarten was extended so that it could contain a number of free play areas allowing the children's preference: *The children love to make up plays. So I broke down another storage area, and gave up a lot of equipment and that's very hard for me, and I created a theatre corner* (Rivka). These findings stress the perception of the children as learners through doing and playing (Dewey, 1959; Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1998) and the importance the teachers attribute to free play (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 1986).

The **principle of choice** underlies the organisation of the space. The children are free to choose where to go at any time designated for free play: *They come in the morning and the kindergarten invites them to the arranged corners so that I do not have to tell the child 'go here' or 'go there'* (Rivka). Even when the teacher suggest a special activity that is not connected to the regular activity areas, the children are not obliged to do it: *Rivka apparently felt that I was surprised by the template work I had not encountered before in this kindergarten and told me 'I do not oblige them to paint it. Those that don't want to, don't* (field note). Although the activity areas are in fixed areas, the children may choose how to arrange them and even move things from one area to another: ...*the kindergarten belongs to the children and they arrange things as they want and move things around as they play*...(Rivka). Allowing choice in the organisation of the environment and activities within it is the outcome of a democratic educational approach (Moss, 2009).

Additionally, the environment consists of **private and public spaces**. The private space includes those areas that only belong to one child and create personal belonging in the educational setting as a drawer for drawings, a locker for personal things, a post box and so on. The teachers respect the private space: *We ask 'May we hang this up?' (a drawing) I also teach them to ask, I don't take and hang up whatever I want* (Yafa). They invite the children to contribute to the public space by decoration or other arrangements: ...*at the team meeting, the children chose how to decorate it. Anyone who wants can help make the decorations. These do not have the child's name on them because they were done for the kindergarten* (Yafa). The teacher sees contributing to the public space as a means of building the sense of group belonging: *In order to build group belonging, ...to help build the kindergarten ethos for example: a kindergarten newspaper, a photo album, a petting zoo or vegetable garden. Groups of children will undertake the roles of organising*

kindergarten life (librarian, postman, newspaper editor...) (document). The combination of private and public spaces strengthen the children's sense of belonging to the educational setting (Rinaldi, 2001) and emphasises the respect given to the child.

Organising the environment also refers to the **timetable** in the educational setting. This timetable is based on two principles: flexibility and continuity. Flexibility relates to changes the teacher makes according to special events or the needs of the children: *I feel, I see that they have had enough of playing and I start to ring the bell, not precisely at 11 o'clock, it might be 11:15 or 11:30* (Rivka). Continuity is expressed in the length and continuity of time the children are allocated for free play without interruption for a meeting, meals etc. : ... *we forego the morning meeting – the children come to the kindergarten and immediately join one of the different activity centres. Eating is buffet style. Instead of activity being determined by the timetable, the timetable is determined by the activities* (Rivka). These findings might be linked to the image of the child as competent and to listening to the child's wishes (Rinaldi, 2006) and to adapting play time to the needs of the children out of the belief that play has learning value (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 1986).

In conclusion, the organisation of the environment reflects the image of the child. It consists of activity centres that enable the children to express their activeness and preferences and to make choices. The environment emphasises the place accorded the children as individuals together with the importance given to the group aspect. The flexible timetable allows for children's preferences in planning the day's agenda.

Praxis

The findings show that the **curriculum** of the kindergarten in this study emphasises the children's learning processes (Rinaldi, 2006) rather than content and knowledge (Kagan & Kauerz, 2006). Thus, content is a means to acquire learning skills and social skills: *The aim is for the children to acquire methods of learning, thinking and problem solving ... the contents are not important, they are the medium through which the social and learning skills are attained* (Rivka). The topics covered in the curriculum emerge from listening to the children and are not decided on in advance by the teacher: *The guiding principle in constructing a curriculum is that it is an 'emergent curriculum'. Dealing with investigation*

topics continues alongside holiday preparations or dealing with seasonal phenomena or current events (document). Dealing with a particular topic is called a project (Gandini & Kaminsky, 2006). During the project, learning is generated around a topic chosen by the teacher after listening to what interests the children. The learning period varies according to how interested the children are in the subject: *A project might last a month, two months, a day, two days, I, I don't come with a plan ahead of time, I lay out the map I see where it will lead* (Rivka).

The project makes it possible to work in depth on one topic: *Working for a long time on one issue or several discrete issues enables learning how to ask meaningful questions, deal intensively with the search for answers and impart habits of perseverance, taking time and effort* (document). The topics are chosen from the children's world and life experience, which allows for meaningfulness of content areas and thus understanding and learning: *Meaningful learning occurs by working comprehensively...(on topics) that have emerged from the children's lives and their spontaneous activity and its investigation using many representations ('multiple intelligences' or the 'hundred languages of the child'* (document). At the heart of the projects lie the inquiry and discovery processes that enable the children to discover knowledge and formulate their own theories about the world: *We want the children to experience the process of creating knowledge on the assumption that later on, the "correct" knowledge will be able to come to light* (document). The curriculum develops through an ongoing dialogue between the children and the teachers around the children's theories, the children's wishes and their areas of interest. The dialogue allows the children to express their thoughts and construct their theories *and fulfil the worldview of the 'midwife' teacher, who allows the children to express their thoughts and constructs children's theories of the world* (document). This finding may be linked to the approach of Dewey (1959), which perceives the learning process and planning of study as learner-centred and also to the socio-cultural theory which perceives the curriculum as the outcome of the interaction within the learning community (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990).

The basis for planning the curriculum is created through **documentation** (Rinaldi, 2006): *From the children's conversation I understand what they already know and what interests them. I will plan further learning according to the documentation* (Rivka). This is done by writing down children's conversations during free play or in response to purposely

provided stimuli. Pictures of the children during free play that are hanging on the walls serve as documentation.

The documentation that appears on the kindergarten walls or in the binders makes it possible to share with parents or casual visitors what goes on in the educational setting: *From the documentation on the walls I can see that the projects are developing. The children are dealing with 'what a lion looks like' 'plays' and 'countries'.* (field note). In addition, the documentation makes it possible to relate and assess a particular child and involve the parents in his or her activities in the kindergarten: *creating individual and group portfolios to document the activity and monitor the various areas of development (cognitive, psychomotor, verbal skills, social-emotional skills)* (document). The documentation is also there for the children so they can go back to their activity, observe it and reflect on the shared or individual actions and think how to continue investigating or acting: *In order to allow the children a reflective monitoring of the development of learning or shared action, events will be documented by a variety of means...and will be presented openly on the boards and in the binders to be reviewed, observed...*(document).

The teachers perceive the documentation as valuable because it enables visibility. The processes and activities performed by the children are written up and posted. This publicity enables the children to notice that they are seen and that what they do is considered valuable: *They asked me 'why are you writing?' I said because it is important to me to remember what you say... To give them a greater sense of value, you are being related to, you are being listened to* (Rivka). In this way, the documentation becomes a way to participate in the learning community (Rogoff, 1998; Bruner, 1996).

One of the principles of the curriculum is the use of the '**hundred languages of children**' (Malaguzzi, 1998). This concept relates to the different ways children process information and the many ways they are able to express their knowledge (Dewey, 1959; Gardner, 1993). Learning a concept will be more effective when the children process it in a hundred languages, in other words, through different media: *Children learn more in depth when they represent the same concept in different media... In moving from one media to another, new questions and new viewpoints arise about the same concept... For a message to be precise one must choose the right medium* (document). Similarly, the hundred languages enable the children to express themselves in different media and in different ways.

In conclusion, the educational approach is implemented through various practices: the curriculum is organised around projects which have significance for the children and grow out of their interests and which stress the processes of investigation and discovery that are constructed out of the dialogue between all parties; the documentation enables the participation of anyone interested in the learning process, and also invites reflection and the visibility of the kindergarten children. The notion of the 'child's hundred languages' is a means for the children to process information and express their knowledge.

Comparing the Israeli kindergarten with the Reggio Emilia approach

Identifying the features of the Israeli kindergarten enables a comparison between the Reggio Emilia approach and an educational approach influenced by it (Appendix 7 p. 322). These findings constitute an innovation provided by this research since no other studies were found to draw such a comparison to Israel.

In conclusion, the research question relates to the features of the Israeli kindergarten and the learning which implements the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998). Analysis of the data revealed four categories that describe the features of the Israeli kindergarten in this study: the image of the child, the role of the teacher, the educational setting and the praxis (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2000). The categories and thematic categories as they emerged from the content analysis make it possible to describe the educational approach of this Israeli kindergarten and to identify that the Israeli kindergarten is similar to the Reggio Emilia approach in implementing the main features in the areas of the image of the child, the role of the teacher, the components of the educational environment and the praxis to a great extent.

However, the Israeli kindergarten does not differ greatly from the Reggio Emilia approach. The differences are in stressing the value-laden aspect of the praxis, in that more space is given (in terms of value and time in the daily timetable) to free play, and in the relations with the community, which involve the community much less in the educational setting. The differences relating to the dimension of values emerge mainly from a lack of findings relating to the values compared to the theoretical literature on the Reggio Emilia approach.

Therefore, the findings that emerge from the secondary research question 1 are:

What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?

1. The Israeli kindergarten is similar to the Reggio Emilia approach in implementing the main features in the areas of the image of the child, the role of the teacher, the components of the educational environment and the praxis to a great extent.

2. The Israeli kindergarten differs from the Reggio Emilia approach in the emphasis the staff puts on the value dimension of praxis and on free play and the relations they have with the community.

This chapter introduced the findings emerging from secondary research question 1. The following chapter presents the findings emerging from secondary research question 2.

Chapter 16: Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 2

Secondary research question 2 was:

What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change over the year?

In order to answer this question, 144 conflicts were identified from the observations. An interaction between children was a defined as a conflict when it involved clear behavioural opposition, which includes several discrete functions, including oppositions and resolutions (Shantz, 1987). The conflict has at least a three-unit exchange (e.g., Laursen & Hartup, 1989; Shantz, 1987): 1. A influences B with an act or a verbal utterance. 2. B resists this influence. 3. A attempts once again to influence B. Not until this third turn does the opposition become mutual. This definition was chosen despite its date of publication since it is worded operatively in a way that clearly enables identification of a conflict.

The 144 items of conflict identified in the observations were transcribed and analyzed according to the grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The large number of conflicts strengthens the internal validity (Yin, 2003) of the findings because it makes it possible to identify patterns. Some of the findings were triangulated (Stake, 2005) with the interviews conducted with the subjects (the children). Since the data included a large number of instances of conflict, they were counted in order to denote changing frequencies during the year (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shkedi, 2003).

Although the findings in this research question are presented through examples of conflicts with different children, the whole group of children is related to rather than the individual children. This approach is based on the socio-cultural theory that emphasises the importance of the group of children and their culture (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990). According to this theory, human development is always collective and within a context (Corsaro et. al., 2002).A dyadic conflict may potentially change the social dynamics of any group of children and so there is value in observing conflict as a social process beyond the individual or the dyad, and its ability to affect others in the vicinity of its protagonists. Hence no personal or developmental features of specific children are examined or

presented, nor are social features pertaining to the relationship between the parties to the conflict. In addition, the conflicts were chosen to represent phenomena and not the developmental history of specific children.

It needs to be noted that some of the components of categories presented in Table 4 emerged from the content analysis employed in this study, through identifying repeated expressions and phrases, and links that were made to the research aims and questions. Therefore, the following categories are presented as innovations: in the category 'level of negotiation': ‘Asking questions to understand the others’ and ‘egocentric alternative solution’ and a ‘considerate alternative solution’. Additionally, the thematic category: Negotiation level and features of levels of negotiation. In the category 'Involvement of peer observer in the conflict' the thematic category 'Results of intervention' is also presented as an innovation.

Table 4 presents the findings in response to the second secondary research question. This is followed by a rich description (Geertz, 1973) of these findings.

Table 4: Features of peer conflict resolution

Categories	Components of Categories
Level of negotiation during conflict resolution	Conflict resolution strategy (Chen et al., 2001; Dunn & Munn, 1987; Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981): verbal resistance, ignoring, withdrawal, asking for help, demanding, threatening, bribing, asking questions, egocentric assertion, logical assertion, play-world assertion, considerate alternative, egocentric alternative, a class rule, a request Negotiation level: power behaviour, power assertion, simple negotiation, elaborated negotiation Features of levels of negotiation: different levels of negotiating of the parties to the conflict, a nonlinear sequence of levels, a rise in the level of negotiations during the year
Involvement of peer observer in the conflict	Intervention strategies (Butovskaya et al., 2000; Fujisawa et al., 2006; Ross & Conant, 1992) Physical separation; supporting one of the parties; suggesting an alternative to one of the parties; clarification and mediation between the two parties. Timing (Butovskaya et al., 2000; Fujisawa et al., 2006; Ross & Conant, 1992): the observer notices the aggression; continued play is at risk Results of intervention: physical separation does not generate change; an alternative solution and support of one of the parties leads to a change in strategy and eventually to separation or reconciliation; clarification and mediation lead to negotiation and continued play interaction
Solicitation of teacher help	How teacher was addressed: whining and crying, making eye contact, direct verbal address Purpose of addressing teacher: emotional support, help with resolution, reporting irregular behaviour and punishing the other party to the conflict Timing of addressing teacher: power behaviour of one of the parties, other strategies did not work, play was disturbed Changes during the year: a decline in the number of times the teacher was addressed

Level of negotiation during conflict resolution

The terms "strategy" refer to “sets of behaviours that seem to subserve a social goal” (Shantz, 1987 p. 283). Encoding of the children’s reactions during conflict revealed the various conflict resolution strategies the children employ. The encoding was performed using line by line coding (Charmaz, 2006) for each of the conflicts. Table 5 presents the strategies that emerged from the data analysis. This table does not reference the transcripts because the strategies appear in many different conflicts.

Table 5: **The strategies identified**

Example	Strategy	Example	Strategy
‘You’re stupid’	Teasing	Hitting, snatching an object, shouting, crying	Being forceful to the other
‘I wanted it first’	Egocentric assertion	No! It’s mine!	Verbal objection
‘How can you turn that into a plane? You’re confused.”	Logical assertion	Omri says ‘shit’ to Sagi, who continues moving pebbles from side to side saying ‘here are more, here are more sausages’	Ignoring
‘But you said you are a lion’	Play assertion	After biting Tal, Stav goes back to his place and carries on jumping on the sofa.	Withdrawal
‘OK. When he finishes, then he will give it to me.’	Suggesting a considerate alternative	Making eye contact with a nearby child or adult, ‘tell him’, ‘let’s hit Tal’	Asking for help from a third party
‘So take this’ (inviting someone to take only a specific object)	Suggesting an egocentric alternative	‘Give me the ball’	Demand
‘Everyone takes part’	Assertion that uses the kindergarten rules	‘I’ll tell on you’	Threats
‘So Stav, only one, OK?’	Request	‘I’ll buy you the best robot’	Bribe
		‘So what will you give us?’	Asking questions to understand the other

The analysis shows that the kindergarten children use a wide variety of strategies to resolve their conflicts (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Shantz, 1987; Chen et. al., 2001). Some strategies are pro-social and enable the continuation of positive relations (e.g. request, assertion that uses the kindergarten rules) and some of them are antisocial that might lead to the cessation of relations (even if this is only temporary) or to violence (e.g. applying force to the other, resistance with shouting).

One of the aims of this research was to examine whether the children would use pro-social strategies even though in this kindergarten there was no structured intervention programme but rather an overall educational approach. Consequently, the conflict resolution strategies identified were divided into four levels of negotiation. Reference to the levels of negotiation is made since negotiation is considered the most pro-social strategy in the conflict resolution process (Gillespie & Chick, 2001). The division into levels followed the model of Robert Selman (1980) who described a model of four levels in the development of interpersonal understanding and negotiation. This model was chosen because it makes it possible to identify the growing ability of the child to take in others' perspectives. Matching the strategies to the various levels was based on DeVries & Zan (1996), who demonstrated the analysis of one conflict according to Selman's model. The principle of levels is maintained in this study too, but the names of the levels and the strategies they represent have been adapted and expanded to the findings of this study. Each children's conflict resolution strategy identified during the data analysis was analysed in terms of the level of treatment of the 'other' and was assigned to one of the levels of the model. Therefore, this study extended the model, and the findings that emerged from this adaptation are presented as innovations of this research. Table 6 presents a description of the model.

Table 6: <u>Model for analysis of level of negotiation (based on Selman, 1980)</u>

Negotiation level	**Negotiation level -definition**	**Strategies**
Power behaviour – level 0	*The other as an object* – the child cannot recognize that the feelings, intentions and ideas of the other person are different from his own. He cannot understand that the other person might have another point of view. The strategies express 'I want' and are usually expressed in physical rather than verbal behaviour.	Applying force to the other (hitting snatching something, shouting crying) physical resistance, resistance with shouting (no!, mine!), ignoring, leaving the scene or the conflict.
Power assertion – level 1	*The other can be controlled* – the child knows that every person has feelings intentions and ideas but cannot relate to more than one perspective at a time. The other is perceived as a figure to be controlled. The strategies at this stage involve the use of language	Asking for help from a third party, demand, threats, bribe, insult, egocentric assertion
Simple negotiation – level 2	*The other can be persuaded* – the child can consider two perspectives at the same time. This stage involves an explanation of the behaviour in order to change the perception of the other person since the other is perceived as someone who can be persuaded. There are obtained attempts to obtain something through the other's agreement so that both sides will be satisfied.	Logical assertion, play assertion, using kindergarten rules assertion, request, suggesting an egocentric alternative
Elaborated negotiation – level 3	*The other understands and can be understood* – negotiation that involves solutions that aim for satisfaction of both parties. The other is perceived as someone who should be understood and who can understand me.	Suggesting a considerate alternative, asking questions to understand the other

In order to identify the children's negotiation levels during conflict resolution, each of the 144 conflicts was analysed according to line by line coding (Charmaz, 2006). The strategy each child used was identified and assigned to one of the negotiation levels. The following examples present the analysis of the conflicts. For each conflict, the various strategies used by the children during the conflict are presented noting their negotiation level.

In this analysis there is a reference to all the strategies appearing in the conflict, not only the final strategy following which the conflict was resolved. This choice was made in the belief that there is value to the entire process of the conflict not only to its result, because a conflict that ends in concession or compromise following power strategies will be less pro-social than a conflict that also involved attempts at persuasion or suggesting alternatives and also ended in concession or compromise. The use of anti-social strategies during conflict, even when the ending is not violent, might constitute a threat to peer friendships (de Waal, 2000) and encourage mental stress (Lazarus, 1966). Table 7 presents a sample of conflict analysis. The analysis is based on the levels of negotiation as presented previously in Table 6.

Table 7: <u>Levels of negotiation in one conflict (7 11.12)</u>

Context – *Stav and Itai are in the kindergarten playground next to the sand table. Stav is holding a spoon and Itai is holding a knife.*

Conflict text	**Strategy**	**Negotiation level (Based on Selman, 1980)**
Stav: Do you want to swap?	Request	2
Itai: No, because I found the knife.	Egocentric assertion	1
Stav: (raises his hand as if to hit) Do you want my spoon? And my mum will bring…. Yes, she comes to take me home… will your mum come too?	Threat	1
Itai: Yes		
Stav: So, so, so, please, give…. Can you give me the knife please?	Request	2
Itai: No.	Verbal objection	0
Stav: … I won't be your friend.	Threat	1
Itai: What?	Ignoring	0
Stav: Give it to me	Demand	1
Itai: In conversation you have to behave nicely when you are playing. *Show how…. Pretend that you, you, that you have the knife. Pretend*	Argument using class rule Suggesting egocentric alternative	2 2
Stav: So, so I …. Give me the knife and I will pretend	Demand	1
Itai: No	Verbal objection	0
Stav: Why not?	Asking question to understand the other	3
Itai: So, so, maybe, so maybe let's pretend that there is…	Suggesting egocentric alternative	2
Stav: Hey, so, so, so, so….		

Itai: But maybe you can pretend that it….	Suggesting egocentric alternative	2
Stav: But, you know, you know that they grab, but, is that a better idea?	Threat	1
Itai: But when they… do you want to pretend you have a knife in your hand, Pretend.	Suggesting egocentric alternative	2
Stav: So take it (hands Itai the plastic spoon he is holding) but the knife too.	Play assertion	2
Itai: Maybe (glances at the spoon in Stav's hand and goes back to playing with the sand)…..	Ignoring the conflict	0
Stav: Do you want to see?	Play assertion	2
Itai: Yes		
Stav: Good (shows how the spoon can be used as a knife		
Itai: …it can't be knife	Logical assertion	2
Stav: No, let's swap…	Demand	1
Itai: No	Verbal objection	1
Stav: But this is also a big knife	Play assertion	2
Stav runs to Sagi waving the spoon and asks him: But this is a big knife isn't it?	Asking a third party for help	1
Sagi: Aaah, it's not a knife at all. *Stav starts playing with Sagi and leaves Itai.*	Withdrawal	0

This description shows that within one conflict there can be several **different levels of negotiation**. The parties to the conflict each use different levels within the same conflict. However, it seems surprising that the high or low level of one party does not necessarily lead to the use of a similar negotiation level by the other party (Brownell & Brown, 1992; Chung & Asher, 1996). The **sequence of the use of strategies by the parties is not linear** but rather changes according to the sense of progress of the negotiation. The **use of negotiation levels 0 and 1** also appear among children who are skilled in the use of strategies at levels 2 and 3. The analysis shows that the level of negotiation might be above

what is expected of children at their age according to developmental psychology models (Chen et. al., 2001; Laursen et. al., 2001; Selman, 1980). In conclusion it may be said that the studied children are capable of employing various levels of negotiation in resolving conflicts, with no regard to their expected developmental skills. Thus the analysis points to the possibility that the Reggio Emilia approach, as adapted by the kindergarten staff, could have facilitated those abilities.

Changes in conflict negotiation level during the year

After all the conflicts were analysed as shown in the example above, the use of the different levels of negotiation in each conflict was counted for each trimester. Each level was counted once even if it was used more than once within each conflict, because the researcher was interested in mapping the levels of negotiation in order to understand the children's conflict resolution abilities. This method of analysis identified the levels of negotiation the children used during the year. It also shows changes in the usage of the different negotiating levels within the entire group of 35 children and in their ability to generate high level negotiation. Table 8 compares the number of times the children used each negotiation level for each trimester. As mentioned previously, this account adds an illustrative aspect that allows capturing the levels of negotiation to which the children used each trimester.

Table 8: <u>Changes in negotiation levels</u>

Trimester		1	2	3
Negotiation level	0 (power behaviour)	**35/38** **92.1%**	**34/47** **72.3%**	**40/59** **67.7%**
	1 (power assertion)	**30/38** **78.9%**	**38/47** **80.8%**	**52/59** **88.1%**
	2 (simple negotiation)	**9/38** **23.6%**	**25/47** **53.1%**	**34/59** **57.6%**
	3 (elaborated negotiation)	**3/38** **7.8%**	**3/47** **6.3%**	**18/59** **30.5%**

The data show significant progress from little use of 23.6% of the level 2 (simple assertion) and 7.8% of level 3 (elaborated negotiation) in the first trimester, to using level 2 for over half the conflicts (57.6%) and a third (30.5%) of them even at level 3 in the third trimester. Even though during the year there was a rise in the use of levels 2 and 3 during conflict resolution, there is still a great deal of use of levels 0 (power behaviour) and 1 (power assertion) in the third trimester.

These data are surprising since they indicate a development in the ability of 3-4 year olds to use high level negotiating strategies even though they did not participate in any structured learning of these skills (Allen, 2009; Gillespie & Chick, 2001; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007; Vestal & Jones, 2004; Stevahn et. al., 2000; Pickens, 2009).

Intervention of the peer-observer in conflict resolution

Children who were observers but not part of the conflict itself take part in some of the conflict resolution processes. These are children who were previously involved in the play or children who were nearby and noticed the conflict that arose. The observers get involved in the conflict in different ways and on different occasions. Table 9 contains examples of each peer-observer intervention strategy, the timing and the result of the intervention. The full description of the conflicts appears in Appendix 8 (p. 325).

Table 9: <u>Intervention of peer- observer -conflict extracts</u>

Intervention strategies	Timing	Results of intervention
Physical separation strategy: *he pulls Ran in an attempt to release his hold on it*(11 16.4)	**Power behaviour:** *They push each other crying and screaming and pull the cardboard box* (11 16.4)	**Ineffective solution**: *Doron leaves the scene and leaves Ran and Yosi and screaming and crying.* (11 16.4)
Supporting one of the parties strategy: <u>Physical support</u>: *Itamar tries to push the pram towards Lia and Hadar...* (6 21.3) <u>Insult or threaten the party:</u> "*Tal is stupid*" (7 27.11). <u>Play assertions:</u> "*Sagi, you should know that I remember that the dragon was kind-hearted*" (5 22.1).	**Power behaviour:** *Tal sees this and begins to scream and punch Itai* (7 27.11) **Continued play is at risk:** *Sagi, Yosi and Dan are in the house corner playing dragons. Suddenly Sagi begins to shout at Yosi and hit him* (5 22.1)	**Disengagement:** *"Tal, let's leave them alone* (6 21.3) **Changes strategy:** *Itamar decides to stop the struggle, puts his arm around Tal and says* (6 21.3) **Reconciliation:** *"Maybe we will both be the show operatores*". (19.3 14)
Suggesting an alternative solution to one of the partners strategy: *Itai turns to Tal and suggests: "A little jump".*(4 30.10)	**continued play is at risk:** *"Doron, Itai, Sagi and Tal are playing in the building blocks corner* (4 30.10).	**Ends by agreement:** *"Then Itai goes to him, holds his shoulder and says: "Come, sit there." Tal follows Itai.*"**(** 4 30.10)
Mediating strategy: *Nurit turns to Maya "So, so, so… Maya, stand here. Stand here and then….*(11 22.1) *"*	**Power behavior:** *sitting on chairs in the playground, squabbling and hitting each other over who will be the train's 'engine'*(11 22.1)	**change in the strategies:** *Maya to Nurit: "Me first and then we'll swap". Nurit to Maya: "Yes, come on, so…"*(11 22.1)

This description shows that the intervention of an observer of peer conflict occurs on several occasions (Ross & Conant, 1992). When the observer identifies that there is **power behaviour** (Butovskaya et. al., 2000) going on he can possibly decide to try and stop it. The way he chooses to do this is through **physical separation** between the two parties to the conflict and the object they are fighting about. For the parties involved this is **not an effective solution** because neither of them want to concede and this behaviour offers neither of them any alternative. When the intervening observer understands that this has not succeeded in creating a change in the parties' behaviour he or she usually leaves the scene. Hence, intervention by physical separation without verbal intervention does not create a change in the conflict resolution process. Nevertheless, this finding seems significant and innovative because of the value of the initiative to prevent power behaviour.

When an observer sees **power behaviour** between peers or identifies that **continued shared play is at risk**, he or she might choose to **support one of the parties to the conflict** (van Hoogdalem et. al., 2008). The support might be **physical** – helping one of the parties get what they want or verbal power means such as **insulting or even threatening the other party**. Intervention might also be more pro-social when the observer **brings an argument that emerges from the pretend play** that might support one of the parties and help them get what they want. This kind of observer involvement usually creates a **change in the earlier strategy** used by the parties to the conflict. Sometimes this kind of observer intervention can lead to a **disengagement** from the conflict and the shared play of the parties to the conflict or alternatively, to a **reconciliation** between them. In other cases, mainly when there is a risk to **continued shared play**, the observer might **propose a different resolution** to those raised by the parties themselves. Proposing this alternative usually enables reaching an **agreement** that allows the shared play to continue.

The difference between an alternative suggestion and the support of one party is that in order to suggest an alternative, the peer-observer has to listen to the conflict process and identify the problem so that the solution offered derives from an understanding of both parties and what will cater to their needs.

Another type on peer-observer intervention is **mediation** (Klien, 2000). Choosing this option usually occurs when the parties to the conflict display power **behaviour**. In such

instances, the peer-observer generates a conversation in which there is **clarification** of what happened and an attempt to **mediate** the differences between what each party wants. This intervention usually leads to a **change in the strategies** used by the parties and this to an end of the power behaviour. Sometimes even before the mediation starts, the clarification enables disengagement from the conflict. The clarification enables one party to withdraw and distance itself from the uncomfortable interaction. Sometimes the clarification and mediation actually lead to negotiation. The parties explain the cause of the conflict and there is an attempt to find a resolution that suits both parties. In this manner it is possible to **continue the play interaction** (de Waal, 2000) and cooperation.

Hence, we may assume that the peer-observer's intervention creates a change in the conflict and is thus positive. However, not all strategies chosen by the peer-observer will lead to the continuation of the preceding social or play activity disrupted by the conflict. Table 10 presents the changes in peer-observer involvement in a conflict during the year.

Table 10: Changes in peer-observer involvement in a conflict

Conflicts with peer-observer intervention	**Trimester 1**	**Trimester 2**	**Trimester 3**
No. of conflicts	**5/38**	**7/47**	**15/59**
Percentage of conflicts	**13.15%**	**14.89%**	**25.42%**

Throughout the year, peer-observers initiated involvement in their peers' conflicts. In the third trimester, the number of conflicts in which peers intervened doubled that of the first or the second trimester. Despite the great value in mediation intervention, the conflicts were not counted according to the mode of intervention because there is value in the very fact of intervention in whatever form. Even when the intervention takes the form of physical separation or support for one party, one can see the commitment in taking a stand and influencing the conflict and not just standing on the sidelines watching. Hence it emerges that the children doubled their interventions in their peers' conflicts during the third trimester.

Solicitation of teacher help

This component refers to situations in which the children ask for the teacher's help in handling an interpersonal conflict. The examples in Table 11 describe how the teacher was addressed, the purpose of addressing the teacher and timing of addressing. It shows the various categories but does not indicate any continuum or correlation between how the teacher is addressed or the purpose and timing. The full description of the conflicts appears in Appendix 9 (p. 328). As noted previously, 'the teacher' refers to the two members of staff working in the kindergarten class who had the same training about Reggio Emilia inspired approach.

Table 11: <u>Solicitation of teacher help- conflict extracts</u>

How teacher was solicit	Purpose of soliciting teacher	Timing of soliciting teacher
Whining and crying: *" Avivit calls loudly, whining: "Rivka, Rivka, Rivka"* "(4 11.1).	**Emotional support:** **1.** *We go to the teacher to tell her* "*what happened to us*". (children's interview 3) **2**. "*Avivit looks up at Rivka and wails: "They called me 'little'* (4 11.1) **3**. "*you can calm them down*". (children's interview 3)	**Power behaviour of one of the parties:** **1.** Insult - *Dafna and Naomi say to Avivit "You're little"* (4 11.1) **2.** Physical power - *"He slapped me on the foot"* (9 13.11)**.**
Direct verbal address: *" Tamar comes up to the teacher and says: "Yafa, she took my place."* **"**(12 26.2)	**Help with resolution:** **1**. *Maya approaches, Neta and says: "No, I was here. Get uuuupppp!!" Neta keep sitting* (12 26.2) **2.** "*teacher can explain to them*" (children's interview 3)	**Other strategies did not work:** **1.** *"No, I was here. Get uuuupppp!!"* (12 26.2) **2.** *"Now I will tell on you"* (12 26.2)
	Reporting irregular behaviour and punishing the other party to the conflict: *"She does not notice that there is already a plate there with a slice of bread, indicating that the seat is taken.* "(12 26.2)	**Play was disturbed:** *"Katya and Shelli A are playing with each other in the building block corner. Tal approaches, watches, gets onto the blocks the girls are playing***...** " (9 13.11)

This description shows that asking for teacher help occurs in several ways, on different occasions and for different purposes (Ainsworth et. al., 1978; de Waal, 2000). The children approach the teacher with **direct verbal address.** They go to her to tell her what happened or call her from a distance when they do not want to leave the play area**.** Calling the teacher by name or their presence near her clearly indicates to the teacher the intention to ask for her help. On other occasions the children **cry or whine** to let the teacher know they need her help, particularly when she is far from the play area. The teacher's help is sought for various reasons. Children might be looking for her **emotional support** (Lazarus, 1966; Noddings, 1992; Roseth et. al., 2008), mainly after they have been emotional hurt by their peers. This can be seen mainly when the conflict arose around an emotional issue and there was no other event that needed to be resolved immediately. So it may assume that this was the purpose of turning to the teacher. Support for this supposition could be found in the interviews with the children, when they said that they go to the teacher to tell her "*what happened to us*". The **sharing** or **reporting** is important to them. Another answer was that the teacher "*can calm them down*". The children attribute the quality of **calming down** (Pramling, 1983 cited in Pramling & Johansson, 2009) to the teacher and go to her when they need **emotional support**. The children often turn to the teacher when they need help with a conflict they unsuccessfully tried resolving on their own. From the descriptions of the conflicts we can see that turning to the teacher is not usually the first attempt at conflict resolution.

In the interviews, the children say that the teacher "*can explain to them*". They mean explain to the parties the essence of the problem between them because they supposedly were not able to do so and in this way they can get **support for the resolution** from the teachers. Another reason for turning to the teacher is when children identify a **violation of kindergarten rules** such as **violent behaviour**. In example 9 13.11, we can see that although the main cause of the conflict was **disruption of play** (Corsaro, 2005), when Katya went to the teacher, she related to the fact that Tal "*slapped me on the foot*." The 'slap' on the foot was negligible and occurred at the start of the conflict, but the way they know how to handle the conflict and involve the teacher is to **report power behaviour** that **violates kindergarten rules** and norms. The threat made before they went to the teacher emphasises that going to her also involves **punishing** the other party to the conflict. In most cases, asking for the teacher's help is not the first option the children

choose for conflict resolution. Since in order to address the teacher the child has to stop play and leave the play area, involving the teacher very often happens only after **other strategies have not brought about a resolution** (de Waal, 2000).

This analysis might suggest that the request for teacher intervention is a strategy that children use to resolve interpersonal conflicts. How the teacher is addressed changes according to the playing conditions and the location of the teacher. The children do not ask for help in every conflict, but rather only on those occasions when they cannot cope with the emotional experience or reach a resolution on their own. The purpose of addressing the teacher changes according to the conflict incident itself. Table 12 presents the changes of solicitation of teacher help in a conflict during the year.

Table 12: Changes during the year of solicitation of teacher help in a conflict

Conflict in which the staff are asked to intervene	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
Number of conflicts	**15/38**	**7/47**	**7/59**
Percentage of conflicts	**39.47%**	**14.89%**	**11.86%**

The data collected through the observations during the school year show that in the first trimester, the teachers were asked to intervene in 39.47% of the conflicts. In the third trimester, there was a significant decline in requests for teacher intervention – in only 11.86% of the conflicts. This finding is supported by data emerging from interviews conducted with the teachers. Rivka' the kindergarten teacher said in her interview:

> "…(*in the past), however much I tried to have them [resolve their conflicts] on their own, they always had to come to me, but now with this method they manage… the little ones still come, but the older ones, don't need us at all, not at all.*"

The teachers perceive the children's ability to solve their conflicts on their own without asking for help as a success. It emerges from the Table 12 that during the year there is a significant decrease in the number of times the children turn to the staff for help with the

conflict. Thus it is possible to conclude that the children have learned to resolve most of their conflicts on their own or with the help of their peers.

Therefore, the findings that emerge from the secondary research question 2 are:

What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change over the year?

1. The range of strategies – during the conflict the children use a variety of anti-social and pro-social strategies, not necessarily those matching the strategies of the other party to the conflict.

2. Level of negotiation during conflict resolution - as the school year progresses and as the children employ their negotiation skills, they develop those skills and move upwards in levels of negotiation used.

3. Intervention of the peer-observer in conflict resolution - as the school year progresses the children increase to a large extent their intervention in their peer's conflicts by various forms of all levels of negotiation.

4. As the school year progresses there was a significant drop in the number of times the teacher was asked to intervene in resolving conflicts.

This chapter presented the findings as they emerged from secondary research question 2. The next chapter introduces the findings that emerged from secondary research question 3.

Chapter 17: Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 3

Secondary research question 3 was:

What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?

To answer this question, four research tools were triangulated: observation of the conflict clips, observation of the teachers' interactions with the children following the conflict, interviews with the children and interviews with the teachers. In this manner the tools also complemented each other and made it possible to view information from different perspectives. The data were analysed according to the grounded theory method principles (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Shkedi, 2003). The content analysis included a four-phase sequential process: preliminary, mapping, focusing and theory (Shkedi, 2003) which enabled the creation of the categories. This will be followed by a rich description (Geertz, 1973) of the findings. A rich description adds more value to the findings and raises the validity level of the conclusions based on those findings. Table 13 presents the findings answering secondary research question 3 as they emerged from the content analysis of the data collected for this study.

Table 13: The role of the teacher in the children's conflict resolution process

Category	Components of Categories
The teacher's response to the intervention request	Type of intervention and timing of choosing it: Conflict broke a kindergarten rule → judging No violence involved → empowerment Conflict involves violence → Conversation
The clarification-mediation conversation	Parts of conversation: Start of conversation –focusing (regulating behaviour , way of sitting, location of the talk, removing distractions) Body of conversation – identifying essence of conflict, seeking solution End of conversation – attempt to create agreement Features of conversation: Anyone can initiate a conversation, parties to conflict talk to each other, teacher gives both sides space to express themselves, teacher recalls kindergarten rules if necessary, audience is invited to take part in the conversation.

The teacher's response to the intervention request

This component refers to situations in which the teachers agree to the children's request for help in handling the interpersonal conflict. The examples in Table 14 describe how the teacher intervenes in the conflict and how the type or progression of the conflict guides her intervention. As for the previous questions, 'the teacher' refers to the two members of staff working in the kindergarten class who had had the same training about Reggio Emilia inspired approach and whose responses to the conflicts were shown in these findings to be similar. The full description of the conflicts appears in Appendix 9 (p. 328).

Table 14: <u>The teacher's response to the intervention request</u>

Timing of choosing the intervention	Type of intervention
After broke a kindergarten rule: *" Neta goes to the dining table with an empty plate and sits down smiling next to Ayelet. Neta does not notice that there is already a plate there with a slice of bread, indicating that the seat is taken.*" (12 26.2)	**Judging:** *Yafa (teacher) answers: "Who did?" Tamar answers: "Neta". Yafa turns to Neta and says: "Neta, get up. You can see she has bread in her hand with the plate. Get up sweetie."* (12 26.2)
No violence involved: *Dafna and Naomi say to Avivit "You're little". Avivit is looking offended and says to her friends angrily: "I'm not little, No."* (4 11.1)	**Empowerment :** *"Rivka (teacher) goes on: "And are you little?" Avivit: "No" (shaking her head.) Rivka: "So tell them."* (4 11.1)
Conflict involves violence: *Katya says to Rivka (teacher): "He slapped me on the foot".* (9 13.11)	**Conversation :** *"Rivka call Tal over: "Tal, Where's Tal, come here, sweetie, Katya wants to talk to you." Rivka goes to Tal's hiding place with a document binder. She addresses him: "No, No, sweetie. We are talking about the problem."* (9 13.11)

The findings indicate three main responses of the teacher to requests for her to intervene in the conflict. The type of response is suited to the features of the conflict in question. When children report on a conflict at the heart of which there has been a **violation of a kindergarten rule**, the teacher's response is usually **judgement** (Rogers, 1973). In this case, the teacher decides how the conflict will be resolved. This response might also be chosen if the teachers were not present during the conflict and do not know exactly what happened but in the conversation with the children after the conflict, they identified a violation of kindergarten rules.

When children turn to the teacher to intervene and describe a conflict that **does not involve violent behaviour** but rather a situation in which the children did not get want they wanted either physically or emotionally, the teacher's response is usually **empowerment** (Sadan, 2008). With this response she caters to the children's need for emotional or other support that might lead them to resolve the conflict themselves. This is usually the case when the conflict arose around an emotional issue and there was no event that needed to be resolved immediately. So the teacher may assume that this was the purpose of turning to the teacher. Support for this supposition could be found in the interviews with the children, in which they describe reasons for turning to the teacher, as described in the findings to secondary research question 2. Empowerment relates to strengthening the child's sense of efficacy and even suggests how she might deal with the problem that has arisen ("*so tell them*"). The teacher empowers the child when the conflict is socially-oriented or resource-oriented without violence. In such cases, she offers the child a variety of strategies such as talking, persuading, ignoring the other child, not threatening, giving the other child time to calm down or find a friend to help him or her.

When one of the parties to the conflict tells the teacher that one of the children has **behaved violently** she invites the parties to a **clarification-mediation conversation**. The teacher will also initiate a conversation when one of the parties asks for it: "*I want to invite Yosi for a conversation*" (21 13.11). In other words, he wants to use the teacher's help in resolving the conflict. Often if one child **cries loudly**, the teacher arranges a clarification conversation with whoever caused the crying.

In the interviews, the teachers describe the connection between the conflict issues and the children's resolution strategy and their intervention strategy:

> "*If it is a conflict about an object or a role or a way in, I am like the child's prompter…*". "*When they hit each other, once I would judge, but now I invite them to a conversation*".

Following **violence**, the teacher initiates a **clarification-mediation** conversation, while for a **resource-oriented** or **socially-oriented** conflict without violence they prefer to **empower** the child and suggest solutions. The teachers note that they prefer to assist conflict resolution through dialogue:

> "*In the past, they would argue, I would jump right up, intervene, separate them and then everything got worse.... It was always the case that one side got hurt…. When they sit and talk ... the solution doesn't matter. As soon as they sit down they talk and converse through listening and dialogue*."

The teachers claim that the children prefer the teacher to judge and make a ruling between the parties to the conflict:

> "*All their lives they have been accustomed to having an adult solve their problem. At the beginning of the year, it was very hard for them, but we didn't give up either, we were patient and we sat down (to resolve the conflict)".*

Despite the children's wishes, the teacher felt that the most effective approach was to hold a clarification and mediation talk with the parties to the conflict **so that eventually the children would learn how to negotiate on their own**: . Hence it may be concluded that the teachers' responses to requests for intervention are not automatic but rather suited to the children's needs. Intervention in conflict is an opportunity to empower the children and to model negotiation following conflict.

The clarification-mediation conversation as a means of supporting conflict resolution

Two tools were used to analyse the clarification-mediation conversation: observation of 46 conversations between the class teachers and the children involved in the conflict and interviews with the teachers. As no research was found relating to this issue, this study focused on this strategy as a unique phenomenon. It seems that this is a unique response to the children's conflict and the teacher presents this strategy as a meaningful way for her to intervene in the conflict. Some of the observations were made only of the conversation and not of the conflict itself, with the aim of ascertaining the features of the conversation. These observations do not harm the understanding of the conversation since the teacher

also does not know what happened before the children came to ask for help. Analysis of the conflicts in which the teacher intervened with a clarification-mediation conversation revealed certain feature elements of this strategy. A script of a conversation appears in Appendix 11 (p. 333).

Parts of conversation

From these findings it emerges that the clarification-mediation conversation has three parts. At the start of the conversation, the teacher used various means to focus the children on the conversation (Klein, 2000). The examples in Table 15 illustrate this.

Table 15 : Start of conversation – extracts

Part of conversation	Extracts from data (conversation in appendix 11 p. 333)
Start of conversation - focusing	Regulating behaviour: *Rivka: "Go and get a drink of water, calm down and come and talk. Go and drink some water" (turns to Sagi and places her hand on his head).* Way of sitting: *David appears behind Rivka's back and sits on the sofa to her left, beside Yosi… Rivka takes a chair and puts it in front of her…* Location of the talk: "*I don't want to isolate or designate a corner. I want it to be meaningful so they can carry on playing. When hitting is involved I intentionally take (the children) to the centre to separate them. My goal is that they children should continue playing*" (Teacher interview). Removing distractions: '*Let me have the spoon for a moment, until you decide.*'(from another conversation)

This focus is created by **regulating the children's behaviour** according to the physical and emotional arousal of the parties to the conflict. The teachers also create focus through **how everyone sits** during the conversation. The children have to get organized for the conversation and are asked to sit in the area where the conflict took place or bring chairs if

there is no place to sit. The children sit next to or opposite each other and the teacher creates a third vertex.

Sometimes the children bring the object of the quarrel and in order for the children to concentrate on the dialogue, the teacher asks to hold onto the object until there is a decision about what should be done with it. **By removing distractions**, the teacher can focus the children more on the talk. The **location of the talk** depends on the procedure of the children's conflict resolution. The talk is usually held where the conflict occurred so that the children remain in the play area and there is a good chance they will go back to playing. When children have behaved violently to each other, the teacher prefers to move them away from the conflict area to give them time to calm down and focus on the talk.

The body of the conversation relates to identifying the source or essence of the conflict and the attempts to find a suitable resolution. Table 16 shows examples from the conversation in Appendix 11 (p. 333) and from another conversation.

Table 16: The body of conversation - extracts

Part of conversation	**Extracts from data (conversation in appendix 11 p. 333)**
Body of conversation:	Identifying essence of conflict: *Rivka: "I don't know what happened. Let's find out what happened. I can't know, this one is crying and that one is crying".* *Omri: …"Yosi – because he hit Sagi (points at Sagi) because Sagi wanted to sit here and I took Yosi's seat (pointing to the place next to Sagi, where he had just been sitting) so he began to cry, and then he hit him" (pointing to Yosi).* .Search for resolution: *Itamar: "Do you want to sit on top, higher than him?" (pointing to the corner of the blocks).* *Doron (observer) suggests: She should say to her 'Please give it to me'. Rivka: Please give it to me. And does Nurit want to give it to her? Nurit shrugs her shoulder and indicates she doesn't want to. Rivka (teacher): She doesn't want to. Does she have to? Doron: Yes. Rivka: No! She doesn't have to give it. Maybe later. Maybe there is another idea?..*". (from another conversation)

At first there is an attempt to **identify the essence of the conflict** (Rogers, 1973). This is the clarification phase in which the teacher tries to understand what happened. She does this by asking each child to give his or her perspective of what happened and where. When it is hard to understand the conflict topic and the position of each party, the teacher continues to ask clarifying questions so that all parties to the conversation understand what happened.

After everyone involved has understood what the conflict is about and presented their point of view, the **search for a resolution begins**. The way to find a resolution is by suggesting a variety of solutions. These suggestions are put forward by the children involved in the conflict, the teacher or anybody observing the process. Once a suggestion has been made, the teacher checks to see if it suits the parties. Sometimes the children's suggestions go against kindergarten rules and culture and then the teacher explains why the suggestion is not suitable.

The end of the conversation is the attempt to reach **consensus regarding the solution (**Buber**,** 1973). Table 17 shows examples from the conversation in Appendix 11 (p. 333) and from another conversation.

Table 17: End of conversation- extracts

Part of conversation	**Extracts from data (conversation in appendix 11 p. 333)**
End of conversation:	Attempt to create agreement: *Rivka to Yosi (at the same time as the exchange between Itamar. and Omri): "So do you want to tell me what happened? Did they take your seat? Did they take your place?" Yosi keeps on crying. Rivka: "OK Yosi, when you calm down, come and speak to me. I can't help you"* *Yafa:" Do you hear what Tal is saying, are you listening? Pity! Wait, Tal. Listen to what he says, or are you going to fix it for him?" David: "I'll fix it." Yafa: "Ah, he's fixing your bike. Tal smiles." Yafa:" Good, I see that you are getting along. I can get up. Well done. I am pleased"* (from another conversation) *"… (the talk generates) disengagement and an exit. They come (to the talk), sit down and distance themselves from the conflict… sometimes there is no need (to reach a solution) as if I detached them, they forgot what happened, and just carried on. Sometimes we adults blow things up and don't forget…"* (Rivka, teacher interview)

In order to generate agreement, the teachers ask and check whether the proposed solution suits all parties to the conflict. When there is dissatisfaction with the suggestion, they try to find another resolution. Sometimes, even though an agreed upon resolution has not been reached, the children are calmed down by the conversation itself and are ready to carry on playing.

The findings indicate that the conversation has a set structure. However, this is not a template the teachers learned but rather a dialogue which has flexibility in accordance with the conflict events and the parties to it. It may be concluded that the structure of the conversation reflects the values of dialogue and listening, which is also part of the conversation.

Features of conversation

The clarification-mediation conversation has certain consistent features. Table 18 gives examples of the features of the conversation from the one in Appendix 11 (p. 333) and from additional data.

Table 18: Features of conversation- extracts

Features of conversation
Anyone can initiate a conversation: *Rivka(teacher): "Let's get chairs and find out what happened."* *Eli to Rivka: "I want to invite Yosi to a talk". Rivka: "Go ahead and invite him." Eli: "Come for a talk, Yosi, come for a talk…"* (another conversation)
Parties to conflict talk to each other: *David (crying): "I want the building block." Teacher: "So don't tell me, tell him. I am not the one playing with the block. Tal is playing. Tell him 'I need the block'…"*(another conversation) *"They always talk to me, not among themselves. So I taught them to talk to each other. They are important enough. It is not only me who is important here. As if we moved aside."*(Rivka, teacher's interview).
Teacher gives both sides space to express themselves: *Rivka: "I understand. So now I … I want to see if I have understood properly…"… Rivka to Yosi (at the same time as the exchange between Itamar. and Omri): "So do you want to tell me what happened? Did they take your seat? Did they take your place?"*

Teacher recalls kindergarten rules if necessary: *Rivka gets up and turns to David who is holding a stethoscope: "David, put it away, it belongs to the doctor. Put it back," (pointing to the stethoscope, holding David's arm and seemingly directing him towards to doctor's corner).* *"He doesn't have to give it to you. He found you another spoon. He is playing with it now."* (another conversation)
Audience is invited to take part in the conversation: *David appears behind Rivka's back and sits on the sofa to her left, beside Yosi, while looking up at Rivka… Rivka: "No. Because here crying solves nothing. Nothing. ..Right, what do you think, David?"*

The conversation can be **initiated by anyone in the kindergarten** (Moss, 2009; Rogoff, 1998): a child involved in the conflict or one of the teachers. Sometimes a child comes to the teacher following a conflict and asks to invite a friend to talk. Although the teacher plays an important role in creating the conversation, she sees to it that most of **the talking is done by the parties to the conflict** (Buber, 1973). In other words, when they present their point of view they will look at and speak to the other child: The teacher ensures that **both parties express themselves** (Buber, 1973). She asks for each child's version and makes sure to help those who have trouble expressing their feelings and thoughts. When the teacher encounters behaviour that deviates from kindergarten rules and culture **she reminds the children of the rule or the norm** which provides a gauge for the rest of the conversation and the conflict resolution. The teacher encourages **involvement of audience** (Rogoff, 1998; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2011) in the conversation. Each time there is a conversation, children who are not part of the conflict sit around and listen and even intervene at the teacher's suggestion. Members of the audience are included when they ask to suggest possible resolutions to the conflict. Hence <u>it may be concluded</u> that the clarification-mediation conversation as the main means of a teacher's direct intervention in conflict resolution is the way to impart a culture of listening, dialogue and participation.

Therefore, the findings that emerge from the secondary research question 3 are:

What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?

1. The teacher serves as an evaluator of the type of the conflict or the children's needs, and then adapts her intervention accordingly by: judging, empowerment or a clarification-mediation conversation**.**

2. The clarification-mediation conversation is the teacher's preferred mode of intervention and it implements the kindergarten values of listening, dialogue, participation.

This chapter presented the findings as they emerged from secondary research question 3. The next part will discuss the findings that emerged from the three research questions in relation to the research aims and to the conceptual framework that underpinned the study.

PART V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Preview

This part of the thesis develops a narrative that interprets and evaluates the findings, and discusses the main results pertaining to how the Reggio Emilia approach has inspired the uniqueness of the context that informed the approach of the Israeli staff in supporting conflict resolution. The interpretations and evaluations are supported by links to the theoretical perspectives which underpin the conceptual framework of this research. Part V suggests an interpretation of the role of the educational setting and its support for children's conflict resolution and develops the foundations of an argument as a basis for the Conclusions in Part VI.

The aim of this research was to examine how a Reggio Emilia inspired kindergarten supports interpersonal conflicts, and to highlight the dimensions for implementing a pedagogical model for democratic practice with young children, as well as implementation for managers, policy makers, and teacher trainers. Accordingly, the main research question in this study is:

To what extent might a 'Reggio Emilia' inspired approach support resolution of interpersonal conflicts among 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class?

The Discussion part contains three chapters which deal separately with the findings that emerged from each secondary research question. The findings that emerged from the data analysis are interpreted with reference to existing social-cultural theories, conflict resolution literature, to features of early child development and to educational approaches in general and that of Reggio Emilia in particular.

Chapter 18: A Discussion of the Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 1

What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and how does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?

This section discusses the findings relating to the features of the Israeli kindergarten and the extent to which these features are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. The main insight emerging from the findings is that the Israeli kindergarten studied and the Reggio Emilia approach are both characterized by democratic practices (Moss, 2007). Underlying these practices are the values and tools that guide the management of the educational framework and the activity within it. The discussion will attempt to show how the features of the kindergarten studied as presented in the findings express these values. Furthermore, the discussion will relate to the similarities and differences between the Israeli kindergarten and the Reggio Emilia approach with links to the literature in order to show how the Israeli kindergarten implemented the Reggio Emilia educational approach. Additionally, the findings that emerged from secondary research question 1 relate to the indirect intervention of the staff in resolving conflicts via creating a democratic kindergarten culture.

The comparison between the Israeli kindergarten studied and the Reggio Emilia approach yielded two main findings:

1. The Israeli kindergarten is similar to the Reggio Emilia approach in implementing the main features in the areas of the image of the child, the role of the teacher, the components of the educational environment and the praxis to a great extent.

2. The Israeli kindergarten differs from the Reggio Emilia approach in the emphasis the staff puts on the value dimension of praxis and on free play, the relations they have with the community.

First, a discussion of the similarities will be presented, and then the differences between the Israeli kindergarten and the Reggio Emilia approach.

Similarities

The image of the child

The findings (Table 3 p. 140) in the category of the image of the child describe how the members of the educational staff at the kindergarten studied perceived the young child. The image of the child is meaningful in this context because it directs the practices of the educational setting. The evidence shows that the staff perceives the child as ‘rich’ (Moss et. al., 2000). In other words, the reference point to the child is through his or her present abilities and not through what still needs to be achieved in order to be a complete person. This perception of the child differs from the conventional perception of the ‘child in need’ (Moss et. al., 2000) which emphasizes what the child is not and does not have.

The findings show that the staff attributes various qualities to the child, e.g., an active learner, a learner in context, an initiator, independent, collaborator and participant as Rivka (teacher) said the child *"...is a whole world, a world of knowledge, insights and thinking abilities*". This finding supports the views of Dewey (1959), who looks at the child as living in the present rather than a citizen-in-waiting. The child learns through action and so needs to be part of the society in which he lives in the present.

This perception of the image of the child is embedded in a democratic approach to education and fits in with the post-modern approach and with the changes regarding the rights of the child as expressed in the documents of the United Nations Convention (1989) and in the writings of various researchers (Woodhead, 2005; Moss, 2007; Smith, 2007). Moss (2009) describes a model of "democratic experimentalism", which also sees the children as agents and rights-bearing citizens in the here and now, whose views and experiences need full expression in the processes of democratic participation. Evaluation of the children’s abilities and of their viewpoint without basing oneself on the stereotype of abilities according to age makes it possible to relate to the child’s abilities in new ways (Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005). This image may make it possible to perceive the child as competent to resolve interpersonal conflicts independently and even to participate in peer conflicts to help resolve them. This perception might support the creation of an environment that enables children to experience independent conflict resolution and even directly support their attempts to do so. Thus, <u>it can be concluded</u> that the staff's perception

of the child as a competent participant contributes to the children's abilities to employ pro-social skills in resolving conflicts.

The role of the teacher

The research findings (Table 3 p. 140) indicate that the educational staff sees its role as being responsible for the whole child. The staff is committed to enabling the child to construct disciplinary and cultural knowledge, but also to extend emotional and social skills. The role of the teacher is a direct outcome of the image of the child, the perception of early learning and a democratic educational approach.

According to the findings, the teachers see themselves as figures who facilitate learning, challenge the children, and act as agents of culture. The teachers see themselves as partners in the child's learning process. It is true that their role is to create the conditions that will enable the child to learn, but since they see themselves as part of the educational framework, they also learn and develop. The literature supports this finding. This perception is part of the democratic approach that believes it is very important to create the conditions for reciprocity within the educational setting (Moss, 2009) and the socio-cultural perspective that refers to reciprocity in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). The participation of everybody in the learning process creates a certain degree of equality between teachers and children (Freire, 1972). The children learn from each other and from the teachers, but the teachers also learn about and from the children, and expand their knowledge in order to enable both them and the children more significant learning (Corsaro et al., 2002). The reciprocal processes in learning create a learning community in which children and adults support and direct the shared effort (Rogoff, 1998). Accordingly, it may be concluded that the teachers' perception of themselves as partners in the children's learning process enables them to promote a culture of equality for all participants in the educational setting and thereby support the creation of a community in which there is reciprocal learning of pro-social conflict resolution.

According to the findings, the staff considers listening to the children as a tool that enables learning. It involves profound observation that makes it possible to understand the manifest and sometimes even the covert behaviour of the child. The teachers interpret what they have heard and seen in an attempt to get as close as possible to the child's point of view

and to cater to his or her intellectual and social-emotional needs as they wrote in the kindergarten rational: " *the teacher must observe and interpret, constantly trying to get as close as possible to the child's point of view*.". Listening is a tool for the teacher's dialogue with the children because it makes it possible to encounter them with no external prejudice or objectives. The literature supports this finding. This kind of listening shows respect for the child's ability regardless of normative developmental assumptions and thus it enables meaningful participation (Rinaldi, 2006).

Additionally, listening to the children enables the staff to bring their thoughts and preferences to light and let their voice be heard as citizens who have rights. At the heart of this viewpoint lies the assumption that practitioners and researchers cannot understand how the experience is perceived by the child and so they must listen to the children and allow their voice to be heard (Rinaldi, 2006). This increases their visibility thus empowering them, their self image and their learning abilities (Rogers, 1973; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Furthermore, Freire (1972) claims that listening is the gateway to dialogue that enables the liberation of the oppressed, helping them to name their world and begin to shape it. In this view, listening emerges as a significant component of the practice in the kindergarten in general, and in conflict resolution in particular.

Furthermore, the findings emphasise that learning is also facilitated through the kindergarten teachers' mediation of the child with himself and of the child and his peers as Rivka said: "*My role is to strengthen the dialogue, to guide them, in their treatment of friends, to respect their friends and to accept paths to a resolution.*" This personalized attention helps children externalise their thoughts and desires through listening, reflection and asking questions. This kind of mediation helps the child use language or gestures when he has difficulty expressing his insights, emotions or needs on his own. Similarly, the teachers help the children to adapt their skills or existing knowledge to cope with the tasks they consider complex. The literature supports this finding. According to the socio-cultural approach, mediation is important because learning is a process that occurs in an interpersonal space between the learner and the significant others in an area in which the learner wishes to develop abilities and knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). In this approach, the teachers provide the children with a vicarious form of consciousness. The teacher mediates between the existing skills and knowledge and those required for the new activity. They

know what the children know through listening and know what knowledge will be required to perform the more complex task ahead (Rogoff, 1984).

Mediation is also performed between children and their peers particularly around conflicts or other problems that arise in the classroom. According to the findings, the teacher sees the mediation process as reinforcing the dialogue between the children. Following a conflict involving strong emotions, there is sometimes a need to mediate in a way that will help create dialogue, even though the necessary communication skills already exist. Thus, it can be concluded that facilitation by listening and mediation create room for the personal voice and support for self expression, thereby helping in the acquisition of social and emotional skills that enable dialogue, which, in turn, contributes to the children's abilities to resolve conflicts.

The findings also indicate that the teaching staff perceives provoking the children as part of their role. This is done by setting cognitive challenges and providing room to relate to social challenges. The literature supports this finding. Seeing the role of the teacher as provoking is based on the theory of Vygotsky (1978), who claims that when children face a provocation, they make an effort to reach a less automatic solution, in other words, a more intelligent one. Challenging the learners might encourage them in their own process of discovery in which their cognitive efforts enable them to make meaning and learn (Bruner, 1996). A teacher who generates provocative situations is actually inviting the children to guided participation (Rogoff, 2003) which is the active role of children in both observing and participating in the organized societal activity of their teachers and peers.

Consequently, a teacher who provokes children creates opportunities for them to learn, thus enlarging the latter's repertoire of ways of coping and resolving conflicts by employing their pro-social skills. A teacher who sees provocation as part of his or her role might see interpersonal conflict as a provocative opportunity to learn. This kind of attitude towards conflict might lead to a response that encourages children to think about conflict and negotiate around it. Hence, it may be assumed that the teachers' perception of their role as provocateurs creates opportunities in the kindergarten to cultivate pro-social conflict resolution skills.

Another finding relates to the role of the teachers as cultural agents (Rogoff, 1998; 2003) in developing behaviour norms within the kindergarten. These norms relate to ‘do's and don’ts’ within the educational setting during the children’s social interactions and the interactions with the objects around them. Shared norms are essential in order for a group to live together in harmony. The findings stress the method in which these behaviour norms are developed. The teachers help the children construct them in an ongoing manner. In other words, the staff does not decide in advance what all the rules of behaviour are in the kindergarten and so does not present them in advance. The construction of norms occurs when a group of children and the staff encounter a problem or a conflict. During the resolution of the problem they think together what norm or rule might help them avoid a similar problem in the future.

Constructing norms of behaviour together with the children takes into account the socialization in which the children are involved and actively generate meaning within their culture as Corsaro (2005) describes. These findings contradict the behaviourist approach (MacNaughton, 2003) which develops behavioural norms through reinforcement and punishment and advanced dictation of how to behave. These techniques were designed to control the children in order to obtain high scholastic achievement and harmony in the educational setting.

Moreover, Rogoff (1990) claims that children naturally appropriate the rules and values of their culture as part of their participation in the relationship with their carers. Norm creation is achieved through a dialogue between the adult and a group of children and reinforces the democratic participation of the children in the construction of the culture of their own educational setting. However, there are behaviour norms about which there can be no discussion, such as ‘no hitting’. The educational staff reinforces and issues reminders to internalize these norms only at a moment that will be meaningful for the children, in other words, when there is a problem and not beforehand.

It follows then that the educational staff behaves as if the sharing dialogic mode is a role model for the children within conflict resolution and decision making. Rivka, the teacher said: "*When I have a conversation with the assistant and consult with her about things the children see.*" Thus, rather than learning a specific behaviour, the children are exposed to the general behaviour of the educational staff on different occasions. In this approach,

there is a certain element of apprenticeship (Gardner, 1993), by which the master-teacher is the model for the apprentice who observes and through imitation acquires the art, in this case, the norms of democratic behaviour. It can be concluded, then, that perceiving the children as participants in constructing the behaviour norms through dialogue within the kindergarten empowers the children to deal with conflicts by negotiation.

Components of the educational environment

The findings (Table 3 p. 140) relating to the components of the educational environment include the activity area, the principle of choice, private and public space, flexibility and continuity of the daily timetable. The research findings show that the teachers organise the educational environment according to their image of the child and according to democratic values as Rivka said: "*...the kindergarten belongs to the children and they arrange things as they want and move things around as they play, they are allowed to"*. The teachers perceive the child as an active learner and organise the environment accordingly so that the child is able to act. The child's activities are possible, so they believe, because of the spaciousness that makes room for actions and social interactions, and through the wide variety of accessories organized around different focal points. This finding supports the literature. Being active is important since the learners actively inquire and participate and therefore develop skill in and understanding of the valued approaches of their cultural community. (Rogoff, 1990; Bruner, 1996). Consequently, the environment contains stimuli that arouse the children's inquisitiveness and encourage them to act.

However, in addition to the typical educational setting, since stimuli are known to encourage children to act, the teacher listens to the children and observes their activities and tries to identify their preferences. Consequently, the staff changes the organisation of the environment by adding or removing stimuli or activity centres to cater to those preferences. The democratic values of listening and dialogue (Moss, 2009) are thus expressed. The reciprocity created between the professional knowledge of the teachers and what they learn from listening to the children affects the organisation of the environment. The environment is organised so that the children may choose an activity or even choose how to organise it. Thus the teachers organise the environment, present challenges, encourage activity but do not oblige the children to act. This approach differs from the behaviourist approach that does not believe in the child's ability to choose, and sees

learning as the transfer of knowledge (MacNaughton, 2003). Thus it obliges all the children to do the same things in the educational setting in order to acquire the same knowledge. On the other hand, the staff at the kindergarten studied, like in the Reggio Emilia approach, show their trust in the children's ability to choose an activity that is most suitable for them (Edwards et. al., 1998) out of the variety on offer. The possibility to choose is a democratic principle (Moss, 2009) that reflects the idea of participation (Rogoff, 1990) and the rights of the child (United Nation Convention, 1989). Children's participation in adapting the environment to their needs and enabling choice of activity might reinforce children's possibility of understanding that they can influence their situation and express their thoughts and views (Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001) during any activity in the educational setting. Hence, it may be concluded that dialogue with the children about the organisation of the environment they are learning and playing in and providing options might support their willingness to handle interpersonal conflicts on their own and even reinforce pro-social conflict resolution skills.

The findings indicate that the environment in the kindergarten studied included a private space for each child and a public space for the whole group. The private space refers to those areas where the individual child keeps things brought from home or made in the kindergarten, whereas the public space includes all the activity areas belonging jointly to the entire group of children. In the educational setting, one can find more areas designated as public space than private space because of its group nature. The private and public spaces give the children a sense of group belonging as a result of the joint activities of the members of the group (Rogoff, 1998; 2003) and because of the contribution the children make to create that public space, for example, by decorating it together (Gandini, 1998). The contribution of each child to the public space and the need to share it with friends strengthen the democratic value of participation. At the same time, the possibility of keeping a private space within that public space reinforces individual freedom which is also a feature of the democratic ethos (Moss, 2009). Hence, it may be concluded that participation in the private and public spaces might reinforce the children's sense of belonging and responsibility to the group and thereby support the children's intervention in the conflict resolution of their peers as well as the need for pro-social conflict resolution.

The organization of the environment also relates to the organisation of time within the educational setting. The findings show two principles that guide the organisation of time, i.e. flexibility and continuity. Although the timetable for the day is organized in structure and is fixed, the teachers are open to changes emanating from the children's activities and from special events. The flexibility of the timetable follows listening to the children and relating to their needs and this reflects the fact that the organisation of the environment is children-centred.

Continuity relates to the long continuous period of time the children are given without a break for unguided activity. The teachers follow this principle because they value the children's play activities (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 1986). Moreover, familiarity with the children's culture shows that they invest a great deal of energy in organising socio-dramatic play (Corsaro, 2005), and so it is important to give them a long enough uninterrupted time to enable this play activity. (Discussion about play appears later on in the section on differences.) Moreover, flexibility and continuity enable children to delve deeper into their activities (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and creates the room necessary for the children to participate and learn (Rogoff, 1990) and build social relationships (Corsaro, 2005). Recognition of the children's needs and their sense of empowerment and visibility stemming from the experience of listening (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006) encourages the value of the viewpoints and interpretations of others.Thus, it may be concluded that organising the environment with flexibility and continuity according to the needs of the children reinforces the children's sense of their ability to influence their own lives and strengthen their relationships, and hence cope with interpersonal conflict and its resolution by pro-social strategies.

Praxis

The research findings (Table 3 p. 140) indicate that the praxis of the Israeli kindergarten relates to the curriculum, to documentation, and to the 'hundred languages of children'. The findings indicate that the curriculum emphasises learning processes rather than content and knowledge as Rivka said:*" The aim is for the children to acquire methods of learning, thinking and problem solving, so… the contents are not important..."*Consequently, the curriculum does not adhere to predetermined content set by the state or even by the teachers themselves, but it is directed by the topics that the staff identifying from listening

to the children. The dialogic emerging curriculum typical of Reggio Emilia is not common in other kindergartens in Israel. While the Ministry of Education allows kindergarten teachers to choose learning content, the choice is usually made from a framework curriculum and developed according to predetermined objectives and not according to areas that are of interest to the children (Teubal & Wolf, 1997). However, this approach does not contradict the standards-based approach of the Israeli Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2009). The standards do not deal with content and teaching methods but rather with the outcomes of the learning process. Hence the differences between the Israeli Ministry of Education curriculum and one inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach are not such that would make it impossible to implement the latter in Israeli kindergartens.

This finding supports the literature. According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978), such planned learning activity creates changes within the learners through processes that change their ability to learn. Likewise, Dewey (1959) sees the role of the teacher as being responsible for adapting the curriculum to the children's present experiences. Children are perceived as having autonomous, independent personalities and as knowing better than anyone what is good for them and so they are at the centre of the learning process. Through suitable stimuli, the teacher enables the exposure to knowledge by the children themselves. In this manner, the teacher helps the children develop naturally and reach self actualisation.

According to the findings, the curriculum grows through democratic principles such as listening, dialogue, and shared inquiry. Listening to the children is not just about interpersonal relations but spills over into the learning processes and the choice of learning topics. When the curriculum is set in advance by the authorities, it becomes a tool for using force (Freire, 1972). In contrast, listening to the children's areas of interest and preferences strengthens the visibility of the children, allows them to participate in their curriculum, and increases their involvement in the educational framework.

Thus, it can be concluded that when children are viewed as participants in building the curriculum, they have the opportunity of taking part in negotiation and of influencing others and their own lives using pro-social skills. It may be concluded that dialogue with the children about the curriculum might support the development of pro-social conflict resolution skills and the children's belief in their ability to resolve conflicts on their own.

Another tool that helps connect the theory to practice is documentation. According to the findings, documentation is a demonstration of the listening expressed in writing or pictures. For the children, the documentation becomes a basis for reflection. When the child, either as an individual or part of the group, sees or hears the documentation, he can revisit the activity and create a dialogue with the written or pictorial text (Bruner, 1996; Malaguzzi, 1998). When parents and visitors come to the kindergarten, they can learn about the learning processes taking place in the kindergarten from the documentation. For all the partners in the educational setting, the documentation becomes a collective process creating a culture of interpretation, critique and evaluation involving dialogue, listening and reflection.

Hence, it can be concluded that documentation reinforces the democratic ethos since it enables transparency of the educational setting and dialogue that strengthens the connection between the community and the setting. According to the literature, the documentation is found in the public space and constitutes a cause of pride, identification and a sense of collectivity and solidarity for those taking part in it (Bruner, 1996). Furthermore, the documentation of the actions of the individual within the group and its presentation on the walls of the kindergarten is perceived by the staff as strengthening the children's visibility and attributing importance to what they do. Thus it becomes the practical expression of the image of the child as 'rich' (Moss et al., 2000). In conclusion, documentation contributes to the children's sense of belonging to a culture of dialogue, which, in turn, facilitates pro-social skills in resolving conflicts.

The findings show that one of the principles of the curriculum is the use of 'the hundred languages'. This concept reflects the perception of the educational staff that children have different modes of processing information and of demonstrating their knowledge. The staff in the Israeli kindergarten studied enable the children to use their 'hundred languages' during project work when new concepts are learned or so that the child will be able to express existing knowledge about concepts or processes.

This finding supports the literature. Learning through 'the hundred languages' is directed towards experiential learning as proposed by Dewey (1959) and by the theory of *multiple intelligences* proposed by Gardner (1993). Encouraging the children to learn and express what they have learned in different ways emphasises the teachers' understanding that

processing a concept in 'the hundred languages' will deepen its understanding (Gardner, 1993; Forman & Fyfe, 1998). In addition, the option to express oneself in different ways reflects a respect for individual freedom and the ability of each child to choose the most appropriate form of self-expression. It can be concluded that 'the hundred languages' as an expression of acknowledging diversity contributes to a culture of dialogue, listening and respect for the needs of the other which, in turn, enables the children to employ pro-social abilities in resolving conflicts.

These features create the indirect intervention of the educational staff in peer conflict resolution by creating a democratic culture within the educational setting. As emerges from the findings, the features of the kindergarten studied differ for the most part from those of other kindergartens in the Israeli public education system in which the image of the child is that of the ‘poor’ child (Moss et al., 2000). This image is expressed in the demand that the children meet the standards that dictate the curriculum (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010b). Children are not see as partners and are not usually involved in decision making pertaining to either the curriculum or the organisation of the environment. The role of the teachers is manly to emphasise the individual development of each child and not the importance of belonging and membership in the group (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010a). The kindergarten studied is similar in its physical arrangement to other Israeli kindergartens but is more open to change according to the needs of the children. Furthermore, in the kindergarten studied, more time is allocated to free play than in the other kindergartens. While the Ministry of Education encourages the use of documentation, this is mainly for purposes of learning assessment (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010b) and not as part of the learning process. At the same time, from my vast experience as a trainer in Israeli kindergartens, the education system’s attitude towards listening to the children and mediation relates mainly to the children’s social and emotional issues (Haddad-Ma-Yafit, 2010a) and not to their learning process. Hence, the kindergarten studied is unique in its features and worldview in the Israeli education system. Nevertheless, since this kindergarten is part of the Israeli education system, it may be assumed that appropriate training will enable educational change. Hence, it may be concluded that a praxis featuring a democratic culture of listening, dialogue, and participation supports pro-social conflict resolution.

Differences

The Israeli kindergarten differs from the Reggio Emilia approach in the emphasis put on the value dimension of praxis and the teacher's role, in the emphasis put on free play and the relations with culture and community (Appendix 7).

Value dimension

The most prominent difference is the attitudes of the teachers in the Israeli kindergarten mainly to the praxis of this approach and the teacher's role in the practical dimension, while in Reggio Emilia it is mainly the values underlying the approach. For example, the kindergarten teachers see listening as possibly the most important role of the teacher, the basis of learning and relationships among the children themselves and between them and the adults as Rivka claimed that*" from the children's conversation she understands what they already know and what interests them. She will plan further learning according to the documentation*". It is a tool through which the teacher can get to know the children and manage the educational setting for them. In contrast, the Reggio Emilia approach treats listening first and foremost as a value and only then as a tool. Rinaldi (2006) describes it thus:

> "The word 'listening', not only in the physical sense but also in the metaphorical sense, thus becomes no longer just a word but an essential approach to life…listening is a metaphor for openness to others, sensitivity to listen and be listened to…" (p. 114).

Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach relates to documentation, the idea of the child's one hundred languages and so forth. The Israeli kindergarten, on the other hand, gives value and meaning to these practices, but treats them mainly as tools and strategies that help to implement the image of the child and create meaningful education.

These differences might stem from the fact that the people writing about the Reggio Emilia approach are senior educators who have read, studied and written about educational approaches at the academic level (Edwards et. al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2006). In contrast, the Israeli kindergarten teaching staff is less educated and has less verbal and academic proficiency, and so they describe their world view at a more concrete level. It is likely that underlying the activity there is a world of values that these teachers still have difficulty

conceptualizing. Furthermore, the observations and interviews with the staff were conducted about two years after they had begun to learn about and experience the new educational approach.

From the researcher knowledge of the academic adviser (my colleague) who taught the approach, the learning process began through technique and only later on expanded to the values underlying that technique. In documents written with the help of the kindergarten's academic advisor, concepts such as listening, sharing and dialogue are mentioned as values, and so it could be that in interviews conducted later on, this staff will also initiate the expression of the values underlying how they work.

The values mentioned in the Reggio Emilia approach are not the accepted ones in the Israeli educational system. The staff at the Israeli kindergarten worked for many years according to an individualist worldview. Hence, the process of change had to be profound and enable internalisation of the values. This kind of change process takes a long time (Fullan, 1999). Thus the staff at this stage can only relate to its strategy and less to its underlying values. Value-based educational activity may be treated as more meaningful than that based solely on techniques, since values provide teachers with justification for and assessment of their choices of action. Still, it is possible for different and even contradictory values to exist within the same person's scheme of values (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995), which might make it hard to choose and implement an educational approach. Rokeach (1973) distinguished between terminal values relating to the final goal as an ideal state of experience and instrumental values which are modes of behaviour constituting a means to attain the goals of other values that are terminal in nature. In contrast, Kleinberger (1961) suggests not attributing exaggerated importance to the distinction between intrinsic (terminal) and extrinsic (instrumental) values. In his opinion, many issues might simultaneously be valued by the same person as both an end in themselves and the means to attain something else. Hence, it can be said that the Israeli kindergarten studied attributes instrumental value to its educational activity while the Reggio Emilia approach stresses the terminal value of the components of its educational activity. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that the educational approach of the Israeli kindergarten teachers is directed by values.

Moreover, like Vygotsky (1986), Bruner (1996) claims that we can often do things long before we can explain conceptually or normatively what we are doing or why we should do it. Thus the theory only contributes when it connects to habit or practice. The Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1980) professional development model demonstrates this approach. Dreyfus & Dreyfus (ibid.) note that a novice bases decision making on rules and principles while experts or masters, who have a broad repertoire of experiences, can function intuitively and create the appropriate perspective and its associated action. The teachers in the kindergarten studied might be considered masters in early childhood teaching, but novices or just competent in a Reggio Emilia inspired educational approach. Hence, it might be that the team's lack of skill in the educational approach causes them to place more emphasis on the practical and principled aspect of their work than on its value-laden aspect. Thus, according to Rinaldi (2006) "…practice is not only a necessary field of action for the success of the theory, but is an active part of the theory itself: it contains it, generates it and is generated by it." (p. 75).

Thus it may be concluded that while it is worthwhile integrating the aspect of values with practical work in training for the Reggio Emilia approach, there is also great value in starting the training with a reinforcement of the practical skills of the approach. In addition, it may be concluded that the practice of implementing democratic values might support pro-social conflict resolution even when the conceptualisation of the values underlying the teachers' practices is muted. In other words, pro-social conflict resolution can be supported by a practice that implement democratic values.

Free play

The findings of the research indicate that Reggio Emilia emphasises inquiry and discovery and respecting the time the children need to learn in depth, while in the Israeli kindergarten this in-depth time is actually given over to free play. In the Israeli kindergarten, the socio-dramatic play corner has a particularly prominent place in the organisation of the environment. Furthermore, in the Reggio Emilia approach, a lot more time is devoted to activities initiated by the teacher than to play time, whereas in the Israeli kindergarten the ratio is reversed. The teachers in the Israeli kindergarten do not mention explicitly how important they consider playing, but the physical organisation of the environment and

allocation of time indicate the great importance the Israeli kindergarten attaches to free play.

Both free play and the inquiry processes conducted in a group create the social context in which learning is generated (Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro, 1986). Hence, the emphasis the Israeli kindergarten places on free play matches the socio-cultural theory which claims the learning occurs in context (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1995; Bruner, 1996). Furthermore, free play matches the democratic values that encourage choice and initiative (Moss, 2009) since children choose what to play, who to play with and how long to play. Free play creates many conflicts among the children, but at the same time constitutes an arena for the practice of dialogue (Rubin, 1980; Rubin et. al., 1983; Stockinger-Forys & McCune-Nicolich, 1984; Bretherton & Beeghly, 1989) and in the construction of logical and emotional processes (Sherratt & Peter, 2002). However, giving such a lot of room to play might also stem from the pendulum swing so typical of processes of educational change (Perkins, 1992).

The accepted educational approach in Israel leaves plenty of room for planned teacher-led activities and so emphasising free play is an innovation in the kindergarten studied. It could be that the attempt to move away from the previous educational approach led to a reduction in inquiry activity that was not part of the project and an expansion in free play time. Hence it may be concluded that the length of time given to free play contributes to the children's ability to resolve conflicts pro-socially.

Relationships with the community

The findings of the research indicate significant differences regarding community ties between the Reggio Emilia approach and the Israeli kindergarten. In the Reggio Emilia approach, the concept of community is perceived in its broader sense and relates to all residents of the town (Fontanesi et. al., 1998; Spaggiari, 1998). In contrast, for the staff at this Israeli kindergarten, the concept of community relates only to the children's parents. The residents of the town, or even the parents of the nearby kindergartens are not at all involved in what goes on there and the children are not involved in what goes on in the town. Moreover, according to the Reggio Emilia approach, parents are perceived as an important educational factor and as partners of the staff in the education process (Fontanesi

et. al., 1998; Spaggiari, 1998). In contrast, according to the findings, in the Israeli kindergarten studied, the involvement of the parents is appreciated, but they do not play a significant part in the education process. This approach is consistent with the Israeli education system, which perceives the parents as partners in the pedagogical experience of the kindergarten, but consider the staff alone to be the central pillar of that experience (Fridman, 2010). Nevertheless, there is significant sharing with the parents in the Israeli kindergarten studied, particularly when compared with other kindergartens in Israel. According to the findings, the Israeli kindergarten views sharing with parents as a way to reinforce participation and the sense of belonging. This approach caters to the view of development and learning as systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). However, the application of other democratic values such as joint decision or choice making (Moss, 2009) by the parents such as exists in the Reggio Emilia approach (Fontanesi et. al., 1998; Spaggiari, 1998) only occurs in the Israeli kindergarten on special occasions such as for Jewish festivals and national ceremonies.

The differences apparently stem from the cultural differences between Italy and Israel. In the Israeli educational culture, the value of individuality is dominant (Ackerman et. al., 1985; Ezrahi, 1996). The values of this kind of culture are privacy, autonomy and lack of involvement out of respect for the professionalism of another (New et al. 2000). These values lead to a distinction and separation between the home and kindergarten environments and to a limitation of the parents' involvement in participation via receipt of information about what is happening at the kindergarten and sharing decision making only on special occasions. The Reggio Emilia approach, on the other hand, grew out of a collectivist culture in which partnership and solidarity between parents and the kindergarten and shared responsibility are perceived not merely as shared responsibility for the child but also for the entire educational setting (New et. al., 2000).

Despite the differences between the Israeli kindergarten and the Reggio Emilia approach, the parents' involvement in the kindergarten studied is significant, particularly in comparison to Israel's public education settings. Hence, <u>it may be concluded</u> that parental involvement in the kindergarten studied contributes to pro-social conflict resolution among children as it reinforces the sense of belonging and participation by creating a shared culture of dialogue and expanded influence to the children's other living environments.

Thus, it may be concluded that the Israeli kindergarten was indeed influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach to a great extent, but that the Israeli educational approach and practices are not identical. The Israeli kindergarten is characterised by democratic practices that constitute support and indirect intervention in interpersonal conflict resolution.

This research innovates in the very fact of investigating the extent to which the Reggio Emilia approach is implemented in the Israeli kindergarten. In recent years, in light of the great publicity and esteem for the Reggio Emilia approach throughout the world, it is now being taught in teacher training colleges in Israel too. However, since the Ministry of Education in Israel cultivates an approach that fits discrete standards, it is the municipal kindergartens that declare implementation of this approach. Furthermore, there has never been any research in Israel to examine the match between the declaration of the use of the Reggio Emilia approach and its actual implementation. On the other hand, in various places around the world a number of articles and books have been written to describe how this approach has been implemented in different countries and cultures (Stålnacke, 2002; Kroeger & Cardy, 2006; Hughes, 2007).

Most research studies and articles relate to one facet of the approach rather than overall. Moreover, they mainly emphasise the processes undertaken to adopt the educational approach rather than describing how things are done after the adoption process. The few studies relating to the transfer of the Reggio Emilia approach from one culture to another note the difficulties which arise. These difficulties relate to the fact that Reggio Emilia's practices are used in a manner that does not match its values (Firlik, 1996 ; Nyland & Nyland , 2005) and to the high costs involved of implementing this educational approach (Lee Lai Wan & Tsang Kam Shau Wan, 2005).

Unlike these studies, this one identified a great deal of compatibility between the values and practices of the Reggio Emilia approach and the Israeli kindergarten studied. Similarly, beyond the investment in teacher in-service training and the guidance of the academic adviser, there were no additional costs untypical of the Israeli education system. Despite that, in this research, reference to the implementation of the approach made it possible to understand the process of conflict resolution in the context of the culture of the kindergarten and not to describe how an educational approach migrated from Europe to Israel and what happened to it in this cultural transition. However, the research

demonstrates that despite the difficulties in transferring an educational approach from one culture to another, it is possible to implement the Reggio Emilia approach in Israel. In order to do this, one needs the consent of the authorities and the willingness of the teachers to learn about and examine the gap between their manifest and covert values and their educational practices. It is reasonable to assume that the values and practices that will be adopted from the Reggio Emilia approach will be those that are compatible, to a certain extent, with features of the local culture. From this study it emerges that the image of the child is the main factor affecting practices. Hence, the training efforts must begin with the creation of an image of the child as competent. Since it is hard to create educational change (Fullan, 1999), it is worthwhile introducing the study of the educational approach into pre-service training in order to increase the chances of its application. Therefore, it can be concluded that teacher training according to the Reggio Emilia approach might be a possible intervention in conflict resolution since it involves no additional costs above the norm and it can be effectively implemented in the Israeli kindergarten.

From the discussion on the similarities and differences between the Reggio Emilia approach and the kindergarten studied, it may be concluded that a democratic educational culture is being implemented in the Israeli kindergarten which constitutes indirect intervention in interpersonal conflict resolution by means of pro-social strategies. This chapter presented a discussion of the findings emerging from secondary research question 1. The following chapter discusses the findings as they emerged from secondary research question 2.

Chapter 19: A Discussion of Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 2

The features of interpersonal conflicts and how they were resolved during the year

This section discusses the findings relating to the features of the interpersonal conflicts among the children and how they were resolved during the year. The main insight emerging from the findings is that how the children resolve conflicts during the year reflects the democratic culture (Moss, 2007) of the educational setting. In other words, the democratic values and the image of the children as competent are expressed in their pro-social abilities when resolving interpersonal conflicts. The discussion will attempt to show how the features of the interpersonal conflicts and how they changed during the year are an expression of the democratic practices and thus reflect the direct and indirect intervention in interpersonal conflict resolution.

The findings relating to the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how they change over the year:

1. The range of strategies – during conflict the children use various anti-social and pro-social strategies that do not necessarily match the strategies of the other party to the conflict.

2. Level of negotiation during conflict resolution - as the school year progresses and as the children employ their negotiation skills, they develop those skills and move upwards in the use of levels of negotiation.

3. Intervention of the peer-observer in conflict resolution - as the school year progresses the children significantly increase their intervention in their peer's conflicts in various forms of all levels of negotiation.

4. As the school year progresses there was a significant drop in the number of times the teacher asked to intervene in resolving conflicts.

Levels of negotiation in conflict resolution strategies

This category deals with the level of children's negotiation strategies during peer group conflict resolution. The findings of this research (Table 7 p. 161) indicate the use of a broad range of strategies during peer conflict resolution. The range of strategies emerged as a significant toolbox that 3-4 year old children possess in order to resolve conflict in different ways. Some strategies, such as using force or threatening someone, disrupt the social relationship while others, such as suggesting an egocentric or considerate alternative, might help maintain the relationship despite the conflict (Perry et al., 1992). The two strategies of 'asking questions to understand the other' and 'suggesting a considerate alternative' found in this research differ from the other strategies identified because they involve an attempt to understand the needs of the other in order to find a suitable solution. These strategies require perspective-taking and dialogue between the parties to the conflict. In order to use them, children need the ability to understand that people might have different points of view or different beliefs regarding the same reality. This ability relates to the theory of mind (Ziv, 2009).

The development of theory of mind enables children to distinguish between behaviour and a mental state such as emotions, and grasp that they can affect the mental state of another through their behaviour (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992; Nelson et. al., 1998; Foote & Holmes-Lonergan, 2003). Hence, it may be concluded that an educational setting that enables a great deal of social interaction might support the development of theory of mind and hence also pro-social conflict resolution.

The findings of this research show that during conflict resolution, children indeed apply strategies that indicate social understanding and an ability to understand complex situations that require embracing two different points of view at the same time. Hence it may be concluded that the considerable and flexible amount of time the children have for social interaction in the Israeli kindergarten is reflected in the socio-cognitive competence as expressed in conflict resolution through negotiating strategies that indicate social understanding.

In order to distinguish between the pro-social and antisocial strategies the children employ, the strategies were divided into levels of negotiation according to the model of Selman

(1980) similar to the way they are presented in DeVries and Zan (1996). The model relates to negotiation as one of the elements of interpersonal understanding. The findings (Table 7 p. 161) show that different levels of negotiation can be used within a single conflict by one or more parties. In other words, even though a child might first use a high level negotiation strategy, later on in the same conflict that child might use a lower level of negotiation strategy and vice versa. Changes in negotiation level may derive from the children's need to improve their bargaining position during the conflict. Relating to negotiation between adults, Galin (2005) claims that displaying negative emotions such as anger during negotiation may signal how one feels, and allow the other party to draw conclusions and modify attitudes before a point of crisis is reached.

The findings of this research also indicate that children lower the level of negotiation to one in which there is aggression and expression of negative emotions in order to signal to the other side the seriousness of their intentions and how they feel, thereby improving their position during the negotiations. The changes in negotiation level may derive from a sense of failure to attain an objective and the attempt to use force to obtain what could not be attained using less forceful methods, in other words, a higher level negotiation strategy. According to the relational model (de Waal, 2000), children use aggression in the negotiation process as long as they believe that they will be able to maintain the relationship.

The findings further show that sometimes children begin with a low negotiation level and move to a higher one. This might enable the continuation of good social relations between the parties to the conflict. Corsaro (2005) notes that maintaining interaction and making friends are demanding tasks for kindergarten children but are an important part of their culture. Accordingly, there is a difference in the intensity of conflicts between friends and between children who are not yet friends (Hartup et. al., 1988). Hence the rise in the level of negotiation might occur for fear that interaction and friendship will cease following the use of a lower level of negotiation during the conflict (de Waal, 2000).

The findings indicate that the parties to the conflict use different levels of strategy within the same conflict. In other words, if one child uses a high level of negotiation, it will not necessarily bring the other party to use the same level. The difference might derive from individual differences in social competence or in the ability to take the stand of both parties

(Selman, 1980). High social competence is expressed in a clear emotional utterance which tends to be positive, and in the emotional understanding that enables children to relate attentively and sympathetically to the situation of another. They also have the ability to regulate emotions flexibly and effectively even in situations of distress or frustration (Denham et. al., 2003) such as one finds in a conflict. The harder it is for children to regulate emotional arousal because of the difficulty of distracting them from a stimulus that arouses anxiety or because of their tendency to evaluate and interpret different events around them as threatening (Fox & Calkins, 2003), the greater the chance they will use low level strategies, regardless of the strategy employed by the other party. The understanding that children can use different levels of negotiation within the same conflict and even that parties to the conflict use different levels is important for the image of the child and the direct intervention of the teacher in the conflict. These findings might improve the image of the child as competent by virtue of the understanding that even children who use power strategies have a diverse repertoire of negotiating strategies that are not always visible to the teacher and which are perhaps less expressed than they should be. Such an image might encourage the teacher to support mediation processes and dialogue among the children to enable them to employ all their strategies and even expand the use of their pro-social ones. Hence it may be concluded that the direct intervention of the teacher in a conflict can take into account that children possess a variety of strategies and can encourage them, as far as possible, to make use of the pro-social strategies.

The most meaningful finding (Table 8 p. 163) in this category notes that while the children used all levels of negotiation to resolve conflicts during the school year, there were significant differences during the year in the frequency of use of the different negotiation levels. There was a significant decline in the use of power behaviour and power assertion, and a rise in the use of simple and complicated negotiation. In other words, the findings emphasise a learning process during the year which apparently caused the children to use more pro-social strategies during conflict.

This progression can be explained by the improved social abilities that enable more negotiation. According to the socio-cultural theory of Rogoff (1990, 2003), this kind of learning is the result of transformation of participation due to both active learners and more skilled partners who provide leadership and guidance. Children's active learning takes

place during social interactions that lead mostly to interpersonal conflicts. The more skilled parties who help the learning might be peers or the other party to the conflict who has better social skills and can demonstrate the use of pro-social strategies and even mediate between other peers (as will be demonstrated in question 3). The teachers may also be the ones more skilled through conflict mediation among children (as will be demonstrated in question 3) and through modelling of negotiations (as demonstrated in question 1).

Furthermore, according to the relational model (de Waal, 2000), the use of peacemaking strategies is highly likely when the parties to the conflict share the common interest of maintaining the relationship. In the kindergarten studied, the length of time allocated to play interaction creates a situation of mutual interest in maintaining good relations that enable continued play. The children's attempts to resolve conflicts help them understand the value of negotiation as something that enables continued joint activity.

Hence, the findings indicate significant progress in the children's negotiating abilities and in the use of pro-social strategies during conflict. This improvement in the mode of conflict resolution in early childhood is a supreme value in an educational system in general, and in intervention programs in particular which claim that resolving conflicts with low level negotiation strategies may escalate and lead to violence within the educational setting.

Since in the kindergarten studied there was no extra-curricular intervention program on conflict resolution, the improvement may be attributed largely to the educational approach which guided the indirect and direct intervention of the teachers. The indirect intervention relates to the democratic culture as described in the discussion on question 1, while the direct intervention relates to that described in the discussion on question 3. Hence it may be concluded that Reggio Emilia inspired educational setting greatly influences the ability of children to resolve conflicts through pro-social strategies.

The conflict resolution strategies emerging from this research support those found in earlier research studies (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Dunn & Munn, 1987; Chen et al., 2001). Nonetheless, this finding is presented as an innovation by identifying the strategy of 'asking questions to understand the others' and in distinguishing between an 'egocentric alternative solution' and a 'considerate alternative solution'. Nevertheless, the research presents this analysis of negotiation-level as an innovation because the various levels of

negotiation have been named and the strategies within each level have been detailed. Furthermore, this research model was used by Zan (1996), to describe a laboratory study of one pair of children throughout an entire year. No comprehensive naturalistic research was found using this model to identify the levels of negotiation in groups of children throughout a school year.

Other studies that related to conflict resolution strategies described the variety of strategies that children of different ages use (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Dunn & Munn, 1987; Shantz, 1987; Chen et. al., 2001) and to the strategies that are less egocentric and more sharing as helpful for resolving the conflict (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Laursen & Hartup, 1989). This research innovates in that it identifies the range of strategies that appear during the conflict and stresses that children might employ both anti-social and pro-social strategies during the same conflict.

Furthermore, previous research found a correlation between the strategies of both parties to the conflict (Brownell & Brown, 1992; Chung & Asher, 1996). It found that physical strategies arouse physical responses and verbal strategies lead to verbal responses (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981). Unlike these studies, this research relates to the parties' levels of negotiation and found that during the conflict they use different negotiation levels. Since the methodology of this research was qualitative, there was no statistical analysis to identify any correlation between the negotiation levels of the parties to the conflict.

Prior studies related to the children's developing ability to resolve conflicts through negotiation (Chen et. al., 2001; Laursen et. al., 2001). They compared different ages and identified negotiating ability as developing with age. Despite these findings, intervention programs were devised to develop negotiating and conflict resolution ability on the assumption that the natural development of negotiating skills is insufficient. These studies (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Gillespie & Chick, 2001; Vestal & Jones, 2004; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007; Allen, 2009; Pickens, 2009) found improved negotiating ability in children following an intervention program. However, this study detected a significant improvement in negotiating ability during the school year itself without any external intervention program but with the indirect intervention of the Reggio Emilia inspired

approach and the direct intervention of the teachers which is an outcome of this educational approach. Hence it presents this finding as an innovation. A similar finding appeared in one study (Arcaro-McPhee et. al., 2002), relating to a single subject as opposed to this study, which examined conflict resolution in an entire kindergarten class.

Intervention of the peer-observer in the conflict

Another feature of conflict resolution that emerged from the data analysis in this study is the intervention of observers in their peers' conflicts. The findings (Table 9 p. 165) indicate an improvement during the school year in the initiative of observers in intervening in a conflict they are not involved in. In the third trimester, observers intervened in 25.42% of the conflicts. Such intervention occurs in two situations: when the observer notices power behaviour or feels that the conflict endangers previous play activity. From a socio-cultural perspective, the behaviour of the observer can be explained by de Waal's (2000) relational model, which suggests looking at the conflict within a social context and seeing expressions of violence during a conflict as a threat to social relations. Accordingly, the intervention of the observer is aimed at maintaining useful relationships within the group and enabling continued play. Furthermore, we can see the initiative to intervene in peer conflict as the children's expression of participation in the educational setting and taking responsibility for what happens to their friends. 'Participation' (Rogoff, 1998) in this case reflects one of the principles of democracy and its expression within the educational setting (Moss, 2007). The increasing participation of the children in peer conflict resolution shows 'participation' to be a value within the culture of the educational setting.

The findings (Table 9 p. 165) indicate certain strategies children use to intervene: physical separation, supporting one of the parties, suggesting an alternative to one of the parties, clarification and mediation. Of all these strategies, only physical separation unaccompanied by words was unsuccessful in bringing about a change in the conflict process. Each of the other strategies did lead to a change in the strategy of the parties to the conflict and to a pro-social resolution. Even though there had been no specific extracurricular intervention programme or teaching of mediation the children managed in some cases to create a clarification-mediation conversation requiring a high level of social understanding, the ability to listen, and creative thinking. According to Rogoff (1998), in addition to

participation in interactions, learning also takes place through the observation of others. The teacher in this case serves as a role model for the children in conflict resolution. Since she intervenes in conflicts through a clarification-mediation conversation, they emulate her behaviour and act in similar fashion, thereby acquiring skills that enable them to mediate in peer conflicts. Furthermore, the teacher encourages the children to take part in the resolution of other children's conflicts even when she is the mediator (as demonstrated in question 3). Learning and development of the children's ability to intervene occurs through their participation as the audience or as they are active during the conflict or in other social interactions so that there is a transformation of their understanding, their roles and their responsibilities as participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995). This responsibility of the children to intervene in their peers' conflicts is highly important for handling violence and bullying (Butovskaya et al., 2000) in the educational setting and in society in general. Their ability to intervene through mediation of other pro-social strategies turn the children into more skilled partners (Rogoff, 1990).

The findings relating to peer-observer intervention in conflict resolution support prior research studies which also claim that the peer-observer can become a third partner, supporting or opposing one of the parties (Ross & Conant, 1992). Similar to this study, it was found that observers intervene during or following violent interaction (Butovskaya et. al., 2000). However, another study stresses that this kind of intervention appears mainly among 5-year olds (Fujisawa et al., 2006). One study found that 2-3 year-olds intervened in 21% of the conflicts mainly through support and taking the side of one of the parties (van Hoogdalem et. al., 2008). Hence, it can be concluded that the educational approach is reflected in the responsibility the children take for their peers in their involvement in peer conflict resolution through various intervention strategies.

This study innovates in its treatment of the results of 3-4 years old peer-observer intervention, mainly in that it shows a significant change in frequency during the year from 13.15% of the instances of conflict in the first trimester up to 25.42% in the third trimester. In addition, the research innovates in identifying the involvement of the peer-observer in the mediation-clarification conversation as well.

Solicitation of teacher help

The evidence collected for this research shows that soliciting the teacher's help is one of the strategies children use in the interpersonal conflict resolution process (Table 11 p. 169). Apparently, the kindergarteners understand the legitimacy of the authority of the non-parental adult and so they can use this authority to support their position in a peer conflict (Laupa, 1994). However, the findings from the videoed observations indicate that turning to the teachers happens mainly following power behaviour or after the children have tried unsuccessfully to use other strategies or when play has been disrupted and they have nothing to lose. In other words, the children do not use this strategy regularly or as their premier strategy, apparently because turning to the teacher usually means moving away from the area of play and from the children playing, and they are afraid it will not be possible to return to play (Corsaro, 2005).

This finding can be explained by the social-cultural perspective. According to the relational model (de Waal, 2000), the child estimates the short term gain of getting help from the teacher, against the long-term damage to the social relationship because play is stopped or because of the involvement of an authority figure. The children, who are aware of the power of the adult, often use the threat of turning to the adult during the conflict. Despite the threat, actually turning to the teacher happens only when one of the children feels unable to cope with the conflict alone. According to Lazarus (1966), coping is a calculated, non automatic process of assessing its effectiveness which is influenced by how one assesses a situation as opposed to how one assesses internal or external resources. This assessment eventually leads to the choice of the coping strategy.

The findings further indicate that children solicit the teacher's help when one of the parties to the conflict displays power behaviour, after they have unsuccessfully tried several other strategies to resolve the conflict, or when the conflict has caused the cessation of play for one of the parties. Apparently, power behaviour of one of the parties to the conflict appears to be perceived as painful. The pain is accompanied by the understanding that using physical force is not a normative behaviour and must be stopped. Turning to the teacher in this case happens because the aggressive behaviour appears to be "toxic" to

kindergarteners' relationships (Roseth et. al., 2007, p. 1606), thus reducing the ability for peacemaking (Roseth et al., 2008) and for preserving friendship.

As noted previously, children use teacher solicitation only as a secondary strategy, not as a primary one. The explanation could be that the adult is perceived as a reliable source of help since children have been dependent on an adults' gratification since infancy. Turning to the teacher also occurs when one of the parties was playing before the conflict started and the conflict itself endangers the continuation of play. A request for intervention is made because the children care about play and try very hard to keep it going (Corsaro, 2005), while the conflict might disrupt this.

In this study it was found that the teacher's help was solicited for various aims. One of these was to obtain emotional support (Noddings, 1992). Often during conflict, one party uses bullying strategies that scare or insult the child. In addition, the unsuccessful attempts to resolve the conflict make children feel frustrated and inadequate and they need help in coping with this pressured situation. Another aim is to get real help from the teacher in resolving the conflict. Sometimes the children cannot reach an understanding on their own and they need skilled, objective external intervention. The children perceive the teacher as an adult whose abilities are better than theirs and so they turn to her for help (Pramling 1983 cited in Pramling & Johansson, 2009).

The findings also indicate how children solicit the teacher's help when kindergarten norms are violated before or during the conflict. For example, violent behaviour or taking some of the play accessories will entail teacher solicitation. In such cases, the child who is party to the conflict is interested in reporting this deviation from the norm to the teacher, as the authority responsible for the kindergarten, and also because they think the other child will be punished. This behaviour might be interpreted, as it is by many teachers, as deriving from unkindness or the desire for the other child to be hurt and his or her negative behaviour to be recognized (Dunn, 1988). However, according to the relational model (de Waal, 2000), this behaviour is part of the responsibility of the child and of his participation (Rogoff, 1998) in the educational setting. The children understand the kindergarten rules and behavioural norms and they understand what kind of behaviour is acceptable and what kind of behaviour might harm social relations or children as individuals. It is only when

they are unable to stop this behaviour on their own that they turn to authority and solicit help in maintaining the fabric of relations by ensuring normative behaviour within the kindergarten. Accordingly, soliciting the teacher's help is an effective coping strategy, the objectives of which may change according to the conflict the child is dealing with.

The findings that emerged from this study show that turning to the teacher for help during a conflict can be through whining and crying, making eye contact, or leaving the site of the conflict and making a verbal request for help. These communicative behaviours exist within the child from birth and are used in the process of bonding with a significant adult (Ainsworth et. al., 1978). This finding can be explained by theories relating to children's behaviour in times of distress (Barnas & Cummings, 1994; Denham et. al., 2003). Crying is the code through which the child indicates discomfort and the need for help (Fogel, 1993). Usually crying brings the worried teacher quickly over since she perceives crying as a sign of distress. On the other hand, making eye contact is a less convenient method since the child has to be simultaneously at the conflict site and outside it, looking for the teacher. Often the teacher is busy with other things and does not notice the attempts to catch her attention or she misreads the child's communicative behaviour. Directly addressing the teacher is the most effective way to gain her attention because it requires leaving the scene of the conflict and expressing the need verbally. From this research it emerged that requesting the teacher's help declined during the year.

The findings (Table 12 p. 171) show that at the beginning of the year, the children solicited the teacher's help in 39.7% of the conflicts, while in the third trimester this percentage dropped to only 11.86%. This finding may be an indication of the children's improved ability to resolve conflicts effectively on their own or with the help of their peers in the second and third trimester, so they did not need the teacher's help. As has been noted previously, turning to the teacher is not the primary strategy because it might harm play and might also harm peer relations. At the beginning of the year, there was no fear that turning to the teacher would harm friendships, because the children had only just begun creating such relationships and as yet had nothing to lose. Similarly, their negotiating skills were as yet undetermined, which made independent conflict resolution difficult. In the second and third trimesters, the children had forged strong friendships that they wanted to keep, and their negotiating skills had been enhanced, enabling them to resolve conflicts without the

help of the teacher. It may be concluded that the educational setting, which encourages the building of relationships through giving a lot of time to free play, participation listening and dialogue, supports pro social conflict resolution. The children abilities to use pro-social strategies may reduce the need or the desire to turn to an adult for help in resolving conflicts.

This research innovates in its treatment of the children's request for teacher help since most earlier studies related to teacher intervention in conflict (Killen & Turiel, 1991; Roseth et. al., 2008), but did not distinguish between intervention initiated by the teacher and intervention following the children's initiative. This study related only to teacher intervention following a request from the children and also to children's indirect requests through crying or eye contact. This finding is in accord with the world view of the teacher who believes in the child's ability and who sees her role as that of a facilitator of learning (Malaguzzi, 1998) as the teacher said in the interview: " *I tried to have them [resolve their conflicts] on their own, they always had to come to me, but now with this method they manage… the little ones still come, but the older ones, don't need us at all, not at all*." As such, the teacher is reactive, responding only when children approach her, although she will be proactive if she sees violent behaviour.

This study innovates also in its identification of the change in the scope of children's requests for help. Another study claims that children solicit teacher help in less than 1% of the conflicts (Rourke et al., 1999), while this study found that at the beginning of the year children asked for help in 39.47% of the conflicts in the first trimester, and for 11.86% of them in the third. In other words, this study innovates in identifying a greater percentage of requests for teacher help in a kindergarten inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. The relatively high percentage of approaches to the teachers might be thanks to the teachers' positive reactions to the children's requests and to the receiving of assistance which does, indeed facilitate conflict resolution.

Since previous studies hardly related to children's solicitation of teacher help in conflict resolution, this study innovates in its identification of the reasons and timing of these requests and how the number of requests changed during the year. While it is true that previous studies stressed the teachers' mode of intervention and its effectiveness,

understanding the aims for the request is important in order to adapt the mode of intervention to the children's needs.

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings emerging from secondary research question 2. The following chapter discusses the findings as they emerged from secondary research question 3.

Chapter 20: A Discussion of Findings Emerging from Secondary Research Question 3

The role of the teacher in children's conflict resolution

This section discusses the findings relating to the features of the teacher's role in children's conflict resolution. The main insight emerging from the findings is that the teachers directly intervene in the children's conflicts as they see fit or in response to a request from the children. Their mode of intervention usually reflects the democratic culture (Moss, 2007) of the educational setting. The discussion will attempt to show the features of the direct intervention and how it reflects democratic values and supports the children's pro-social conflict resolution.

Teacher's role in the process of conflict resolution:

1. The teachers serve as an evaluator of the type of the conflict or the children's needs, and then adapt their intervention accordingly by: judging, empowerment or a clarification-mediation conversation**.**

2. The clarification-mediation conversation is the preferred mode of intervention and it implements the kindergarten values of listening, dialogue and participation.

Teachers' response to a request for intervention

According to the research findings (Table 13 p. 173), the teacher responds to a request for intervention in three main ways, namely, judgement, empowerment or a clarification-mediation conversation. If what the children describe and what the teacher understands about the conflict indicates that one of the parties has violated one of the kindergarten rules, the teacher's response will be 'judgement'. For example, *"Yafa turns to Neta and says: "Neta, get up. You can see she has bread in her hand with the plate. Get up sweetie."* In this response, the teacher clearly determines which of the children is right and how the conflict should be resolved. The teacher does this because she sees a conflict created following a violation of a kindergarten rule as an opportunity to remind children of the kindergarten rules or even to clarify ones that were not sufficiently understood (Rogers,

1973). Her aim is not to reinforce the child who is right, but rather to clarify what constitutes desirable or undesirable behaviour. Despite this seemingly positive objective, such a response leaves the power to resolve the conflict in the teacher's hands and does not give the children an opportunity to resolve it among themselves. According to Rogers (1973), a response that leaves control in the hands of the teacher harms the teacher-child dialogue that helps learning because there is no attempt by the teacher at empathic understanding or acceptance of the party to the conflict. Rogers (ibid.) sees empathic understanding as something that creates a climate enabling independent experimental learning. Such understanding exists in the teacher responses described below.

Furthermore, the findings show that when one of the children addresses the teacher following a conflict that does not involve violence, the teacher's response is one of 'empowerment'. For example, *"Rivka asks: "What did they say to you?" (she pulls up an empty chair next to Neomi, and leans over to help Tamar with the dough). Avivit answers: "Little". Rivka goes on: "And are you little?" Avivit: "No" (shaking her head.) Rivka: "So tell them." Avivit turns to Dafna and says: "I am not little."* From a socio-cultural perspective, this response includes supporting the child's sense of efficacy and suggesting tools for independent coping with the conflict. When the resolution of the conflict does not involve violence, the teacher sees no need for a rapid response or active intervention. Turning to the teacher in this case reflects the helplessness of one of the parties. Accordingly, the teacher chooses to help the child cope with the sense of helplessness through empowerment. This empowerment is a process signifying the transition from a state of helplessness to a state of relative control over one's life, fate and environment. This transition may be expressed in an improved sense of the ability to control and in concrete abilities to activate that control (Sadan, 2008). This is achieved by listening to the child, expressing faith in the child's ability and suggesting a variety of strategies to resolve the conflict, such as, talking, persuading, ignoring the friend, not threatening, giving the friend time to calm down or looking for friends who can help. The teacher thus equips the child with the belief that he/she is able to resolve the conflict on the one hand, and with operative suggestions of how to do so on the other.

The findings further suggest that when the teacher is approached about a conflict that does involve violence, she initiates a talk with the parties. According to Rogers's (1973) learning

theory, violent or power behaviour is unacceptable in the educational setting and in society in general. Ignoring such behaviour gives it tacit approval, and so the teacher feels obliged to act in order to stop it and de-legitimise it. The choice of conversation as the tool for dealing with violent conflict indicates the teacher's belief that she is a role model (Rogoff, 1998) for the children *'... the moment we pass the baton on to them, they talk, they see that they don't always have to run to us…. And they don't always need to hit, they can speak, they can listen, and they can invite each other to a conversation…'* Here there is actually an expansion of personal empowerment in which the teacher gives the child theoretical alternatives for coping while the conversation is not just a theoretical suggestion but rather practical training. The conversation, unlike the teacher's other responses, involves all parties to the conflict. The teacher is not in a position of power to determine the outcome, but rather transfers this power to the children and gives them space to resolve the conflict while she acts as a facilitator (Rogers, 1973).

Thus, the conversation enables group empowerment as opposed to personal empowerment. The conversation is used to clarify the conflict and sometimes also to mediate between the parties. This conversation has unique elements which will be detailed later on. According to the socio-cultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978), the teacher's response and intervention creates the zone of proximal development for the children involved in the conflict. In this zone, teachers help children act in a more progressive manner to resolve the conflict than they would do on their own. In addition, the teacher's various responses to the conflict are important because they constitute a model and a way to acquire conflict resolution skills (Vygotsky, 1978; DeVries & Zan, 1994), through mediation processes.

Conflict situations the teachers intervene in are ones of heightened emotional arousal for the children. These situations are opportunities for social learning (Denham et. al., 2003). During these teachable moments in which emotions are particularly aroused, the children encode the emotional experience, the events connected to it and the verbal and emotional messages involved in their memories. Hence, it may be concluded that the direct intervention through judgement, empowerment and conversation implements listening to the needs of the child and of the group and the dialogic nature of the discourse with them.

Previous studies describe two main types of conflict intervention strategies: cessation and mediation (Bayer et. al., 1995; Chen, 2003). Nonetheless, this research innovates in its

identification of three types of teacher involvement: judgement, empowerment and the clarification-mediation conversation and also in identifying at which point the teacher chooses each different kind of involvement: judgement - when one of the kindergarten rules is violated, empowerment - when the conflict does not involve violence and conversation - when there is violence between the parties.

The mediation strategies mentioned previously range from suggesting words to be used in a conflict to providing adult presence (Bayer et. al., 1995). In addition, there are a few research studies examining the behaviour of the teacher when the conflict occurs in a naturalistic classroom setting which claim that mediation strategies are rarely used (Russon et. al., 1990; Bayer et. al., 1995). This study innovates in that it presents the clarification-mediation conversation, which is considered a mediation strategy, as the principal strategy in the educational setting studied, as will be shown later on.

This research presents the position that sees the teacher's direct intervention in conflict resolution as both positive and important. However, other studies claim that teacher intervention is not always positive. For example, the teacher's absence from the scene of the conflict enables continuation of the interaction (Laursen & Hartup, 1989), increases resolution (Killen & Turriel, 1991) and even increases the likelihood of reconciliation (Fujisawa et al., 2005). The studies do not distinguish between intervention initiated by the teacher and intervention following the children's request. The findings of this study show that the children ask for help when they cannot continue to resolve the conflict on their own, and so it is actually the teacher's intervention in these cases that can help the continued interaction by creating negotiation and the possibility of reconciliation and thus directly supports pro-social conflict resolution among the children in the educational setting.

The clarification-mediation conversation

This research found that the clarification-mediation conversation constitutes the most frequent means of teacher intervention in the children's conflict resolution as Rivka (teacher) said in the interview: *"At the beginning of the year, it was very hard for them, but we didn't give up either, we were patient and we sat down (to resolve the conflict). Do you remember how (often) we picked up chairs and sat down (to talk)?*". The explanation for

this is that the conversation provides a ‘double opportunity arena’ (Blum-Kulka & Taglicht, 2002). One arena of opportunity is socio-cultural (Corsaro, 2005) in which the conversation serves as a space for peer conflict resolution. The second arena is developmental, in which the conversation constitutes a model of negotiation and even an opportunity to practice social and communicative skills such as listening, understanding that the other sees reality differently, self expression and dialogue. According to the socio-cultural approach, the conversation between learners and teachers such as in the clarification-mediation conversation constitutes the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in which learning takes place. Vygotsky (ibid.) sees the role of the teacher as the 'more expert other' in dialogue who can direct the learning process.

The structure of the clarification-mediation conversation has a three parts, namely, **opening**, **body**, and **closure**, which are repeated in each such conversation following conflict. The repeated structure creates a pattern of participation that is familiar to everyone involved. According to Wertsch (1985), the use of a fixed participation pattern during the conversation enables the learner to internalize not only the content of the activity, but also its rules and methods of participation and the importance of relationships that enable learning. Accordingly, the fixed structure enables the children to internalise (Vygotsky, 1978) the structure of a negotiation conversation and use it in on other occasions of peer interaction. According to Rogoff (1995), the conversation is a socio-cultural activity of the kindergarten community and participation transforms the children’s understanding about conflict resolution.

The opening part of the conversation is devoted to focusing the parties on the conversation itself. The participating children come following a conflict that has usually caused emotional arousal. If the arousal is too great, it causes an emotional flood that blocks learning (Hoffman, 1984). Thus it is important to help the children calm down and regulate their emotions. Since the conversation is conducted in the area where there is other children’s activity, it is necessary to help the child filter out the surrounding stimuli and focus on the conversation itself. Focusing is thus the teacher’s attempt to draw the children’s attention to the conversation in order to enable learning (Klein, 2000).

The findings (Table 14 p. 175) show that focus on the conversation is achieved in a number of ways. Regulating emotional behaviour (Katz & McClellan, 1997) the teacher

suggests different ways to calm down and adapt behaviour to the conversation. She does not expect the children to be able to regulate their behaviour on their own since they are still emotionally aroused. Suggestions such as '*go and get a drink of water*', '*calm down and then come back and tell me*' offer the children tools for independent emotional and behavioural regulation they can use in the future when they need to move from a state of emotional arousal to a state that requires focus. Behaviour regulation by the teacher such as '*I don't understand when you shout*' also sharpens the skills needed for interpersonal communication in general. Although the ability to regulate emotion depends on internal competencies that improve with age, external support and guidance are also very important (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004).

Removing distracters – children usually bring the objects of the conflict with them to the conversation. These objects distract their attention because each child wants them. Since the children are afraid that whoever is holding the object will get it in the end, the teacher asks to keep the object of the conflict herself until it has been decided what to do with it. With the teacher's trust, fairness and objectivity, and with her lack of judgement, the children will be willing to give up the object and let the teacher hold onto it. The teacher is careful not to take the object by force if the children at first refuse to give it up, since everything she does is a behaviour model for the children. Removing the distracters is a metacognitive aspect of emotional regulation (Rosenthal et al., 2008) which enables more focused listening and attention (Klein, 2000). Focus on the conversation is achieved through an interpersonal process in which the child is helped by the teacher to regulate his or her emotions (Rosenthal et. al., 2008).

Location– the location of the conversation is chosen according to context. In other words, there is no single fixed venue in the classroom for these conversations, as it varies according to where the conflict occurred. In this way, the message conveys that negotiation can take place anywhere, anytime and not in a specifically predetermined place. When the conversation takes place where the conflict occurred, the children are still in their play area and their friends who were part of the play are nearby. Thus there is a chance that the children will be able to continue to play with their friends (Corsaro, 2005) after the conversation ends. As Rivka said: "*I don't want to isolate or designate a corner. I want it to be meaningful so they can carry on playing. When hitting is involved I intentionally take*

(the children) to the centre to separate them. My goal is that the children should continue playing". Since the friends they were playing with are nearby, there is also a chance they will also take part in the conversation, expressing their opinion and making suggestions. The involvement of the audience will be discussed later on. However, when the conflict ends in violence and the children are very unbalanced emotionally, the teacher prefers to move them away from the place of conflict in order to help them regulate their emotions and behaviour (Rosenthal et al., 2008). This removal is not to a place experienced as 'punishment' but to another area in which children are involved in an activity that the parties to the conflict were not involved in.

Seating arrangements – the conversation takes place when the children and the teacher are sitting on chairs of the same height. Their chairs are usually arranged in a kind of triangle. This structure enables each of the parties to look the other in the eye, talk directly to each one and even lead the conversation at the appropriate time for the speaker and the other participants. The triangle creates an atmosphere of democracy based on equality between the parties (Moss, 2009) to the conversation. The teacher acts purely as a facilitator who enables each of the three to switch roles between speaker and listener.

The second part of the conversation - its body, takes place when all the parties are focused. This is the stage in which there is clarification, an attempt to understand what happened in the conflict, to understand the position of each of the parties, and to seek a suitable resolution. The teacher attempts to reach an understanding by asking questions that guide and focus the children on the behaviour that led to the conflict and to what they felt about it. For example, "*Teacher: What happened? David: He gave me a scratch. Teacher: How? David: With the block. Teacher: Ah, because he pulled it?* ". The teacher refrains from expressing her opinion and tries to remain objective because she was not present at the event and because she wants the children to play a significant role in the process. According to Bruner (1986), the teacher undertakes to manage the conversation and to provide the children with 'scaffolding' with which they learn how to derive meaning from it.

The attempt to understand the essence of the conflict (Table 16 p. 179) involves listening to each of the parties, which creates an opportunity for each to express their feelings and even relive the experience. Since the clarification-mediation conversation usually takes

place following a conflict that ended in violence, it can be concluded that one of the things that children experienced was stress (Lazarus, 1966). Accordingly, the conversation creates an opportunity for each party to vent their emotions and express themselves. In other words, the body of the conversation enables the children to experience a sense of acceptance despite the unnerving conflictual event. Non-judgemental listening makes the conversation as a safe place (Rogers, 1973), which is necessary for meaningful interaction. The safe place helps to empower positive emotions and diminish negative ones and this expands the ability to notice alternatives that might resolve the conflict. Furthermore, the different descriptions of what happened helps the children understand that there is disagreement about what each perceives as the 'facts' and the 'truth', and also to understand that the other side also has feelings. Participation in this experience improves the ability to understand the other, and develops empathic and negotiating abilities. Learning takes place through guided participation in social activity with companions supporting in using the tools of culture (Rogoff, 1990).

Once the essence of the conflict is clear to everyone, the search for a resolution begins. In order to reach it, everyone present suggests different options. The parties to the conflict relate to the suggestions made and they are tested to see how they comply with the rules of the kindergarten. The children may refuse a suggestion or agree to it while the mediating teacher relates to the advantages and disadvantages of the suggestion.

The third and final part of the conversation focuses on the **attempt to reach agreement** (Table 17 p. 180). Sometimes the parties manage to end the conflict and reach an agreement that is acceptable to both parties. However, sometimes the children do not reach such an agreement. Despite this, the children leave the conversation without the stormy emotions with which they entered it because the conversation itself caused them to give up the need to reach an agreed resolution. As Rivka said: *'… (the talk generates) disengagement and an exit. They come (to the talk), sit down and distance themselves from the conflict… sometimes there is no need (to reach a solution) as if I detached them, they forgot what happened, and just carried on. Sometimes we adults blow things up and don't forget….*'. The sense of acceptance that accompanies the conversation and the opportunity for self expression dissipate the negative emotions (Rogers, 1973) and enable continued activity while giving up on continued dealing with the conflict. Even though the parties to

the conflict do not reach agreement, experiencing the conversation in which they listen to themselves and the others and the practicing of negotiating skills is of great value (Buber, 1973; Rogers, 1973).

More than embodying a teaching process, the clarification-mediation conversation is an opportunity to deal with the welfare of the child and the group. The structure of the conversation between teacher and child is similar to a certain extent to the therapist-patient relationship. In both cases, the purpose of the process is the wellbeing of the patient, which is attained through the professional power of the therapist or teacher to embrace process and reflect the child's feelings (Rogers, 1973).

The main part of the conversation and its quality depend on the dialogue created between the teacher and the children. According to Buber (1973), the dialogic I-Thou relationship, even if limited in its egalitarianism, will enable an educational encounter that goes beyond the transfer of information or the development of skills. According to Buber (1973), the dialogue should include: presence, full communication, inclusion and approval. During the clarification-mediation conversation, 'presence' (Buber, 1973) is expressed in the fact that the teacher does not come with any prejudice towards the parties to the conflict. The teacher understands that she does not know what happened during the conflict (Rivka:"*...I don't know what happened*.') and is interested in understanding the actual situation. Furthermore, she helps the children be present in the conversation by focusing them and giving them room for self expression. 'Full communication' takes place when both parties are involved in the dialogue directly and honestly according to the time and place *as Rivka said*:" *...do you hear what Tal is saying, are you listening? Pity! Wait, Tal. Listen to what he says.."* Additionally, the conversation reflects this kind of communication since the teacher does not remain neutral and objective during the conversation but rather expresses an opinion and even makes suggestions about how to resolve the conflict for example: *Rivka to Nurit: Do you want to play with Dafna? Nurit does not respond. Rivka: Play together, OK?* However, the teacher refrains from over-involvement that might harm the children's growth and development.

Buber's' notion of 'inclusion' is a situation in which an educator may see the event shared with the children from two different perspectives at the same time, namely, the teacher's and the children's (Itzhaki & Hertzano-Lati, 1998). The teacher listens to the child's

experiences but at the same time maintains her own perspective, remaining connected to her own world view about norms of behaviour that are considered desirable within the educational setting. 'Approval' relates to accepting others as they are, with all their uniqueness and separateness, without judgement. The child needs the educator's approval and the knowledge that he or she is fully accepted (Itzhaki & Hertzano-Lati, 1998).

During the clarification-mediation conversation, the teacher gives equal room for self expression to the child that has been pointed out as using violence. The attempt to understand what happened and get to the root of the conflict without apportioning blame enables a sense of approval for the person, even if not for the specific behaviour. Accordingly, one can see the clarification-mediation conversation as containing dialogic elements according to Buber (1973) which enable growth and development.

Despite the clarification-mediation conversation, it does not always enable continuation of joint play. In cases where the parties to the conflict do not reach agreement, they are willing to give up the conflict but not always to play together. The non-agreement to play together following conflict seems to derive from the fact that even before the conflict the children were not playing together. It seems that the interaction that brought about conflict was actually the interruption of play by one of the parties, and so even though they have calmed down, they have no interest in playing together. In cases where there are social ties between the children and they usually play together, conflicts may be unresolved without this preventing continued play and friendship (Rizzo, 1992). Hence, it may be concluded that the democratic values, listening, dialogue and participation of the educational setting are expressed through the clarification- mediation conversation.

Features of conversation

This research found that the conversation has some features (Table 18 p. 181). Although in most cases the teacher is the one to initiate the conversation after being approached by a party to the conflict, actually any child in the kindergarten may initiate it. For example Eli turns to Rivka (teacher) and said: "*I want to invite Yosi to a talk. Rivka: Go ahead and invite him…"* The children both potentially and practically have the option to initiate a conversation and this indicates that they see themselves as participants in the educational

setting (Moss, 2009; Rogoff, 1998). They feel responsibility for initiating a process of problem solving on their own without waiting for authority, i.e. the teacher, to do so.

Communication during the conversation consists of a multi-directional flow between the parties and the mediator, who switch back and forth between the roles of speaker and listener. In this conversation there is mutual influence and change. The teacher-mediator makes sure that when the parties speak, they look at each other. In this way the communication is as direct as possible rather than through her. This reinforces the message of creating direct negotiation between peers. The teacher does want to take part in the conversation, but her purpose is to enable the children to develop discourse skills that will help them in all their social interactions. Furthermore, the demand for direct conversation demonstrates her belief in the children's ability to solve problems independently as Rivka said: '*They always talk to me, not among themselves. So I taught them to talk to each other. They are important enough. It is not only me who is important here.* It is true that she is there to provide the scaffolding (Bruner, 1986) when needed, but encouraging direct conversation empowers the children and their right to self expression.

Sometimes there is a gap between the emotional and verbal abilities of the parties to the conflict. In such cases it could be that one party takes up most of the speaking time and does not allow the other to present its point of view. Here, the teacher makes sure to help whoever needs it have room in the conversation by regulating the behaviour of the other and even expressing what she thinks the silent child is thinking or feeling. This mediation role enables each side to express itself and take part in the conflict resolution process. This mediation helps emphasize the skills of navigating discourse that are worthy and respect the other. In this manner the visibility of each child is ensured (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

The findings show that in addition to the parties to the conflict, the audience is also invited to take part in the clarification-mediation conversation ...*the teacher looks at the children sitting around her and asks: What can we do besides snatching?* When the children and the teacher sit down to the clarification-mediation conversation, there are almost always other children standing or sitting near them. Because the conversation often takes place where the conflict occurred, some of the children know what happened. Other children were not present during the conflict, but are interested in how the conversation progresses. The children become an active audience on their own initiative, but also with the

encouragement of the teacher. Some children want to say what brought about the conflict, while others want to make suggestions to resolve it. The teacher encourages this initiative by responding to requests to participate and even by explicitly asking for participation, especially suggestions of resolutions for the conflict. It may be concluded that making room in the clarification-mediation conversation for the observing audience reinforces the democratic atmosphere of the educational setting and enables the children to take part in discussions and decision making processes.

Encouraging the observers to express their opinion during conflict resolution makes the children feel responsible for their friends' behaviour and having the positive attribution to affect their behaviour (Dunn, 1993; Sandy & Boardman, 2000). Attributing this ability to the group of children helps them develop their belief in themselves and in their competence, and prevents an atmosphere of competition in the classroom surrounding the receipt of positive reinforcement from the teacher (Maccoby & Lewis, 2003). The teacher legitimises the observers' desire to express their opinions even on issues in which they were not previously involved, but are interested in because they are part of the community (Moss, 2009). By doing so, the teacher encourages the children to intervene in their friends' conflicts even outside the clarification-mediation conversation. This can be seen in the findings that show the involvement of the peer-observer in conflicts, which doubled during the school year. The observers also have an opportunity to see a model of a mediation conversation and the negotiation process without being part of it (Rosental & Gatt, 2011). At such a time, their emotional arousal is regulated and this enables even more learning than when they themselves are part of the conflict.

The teacher's empathic and listening behaviour is a role model for how to be involved in the conflicts of others, but also in future conflicts in which the children will be involved. Relating to the audience makes it easier for the teacher who might be concerned that devoting time to the clarification-mediation conversation causes her to neglect the group. In this way, the teacher is mediating between two parties, but is also acting as a model to a wider audience (Rosental & Gatt, 2011). The conversation is a process that takes time. The teacher leaves her other activities and focuses on the conversation with the parties to the conflict. The children do not continue playing but need to confront the problem. The process itself of handling accusations, frustration and the need to negotiate is not easy for

them. Nevertheless, the teacher sees the conversation as a highly important means through which the children's negotiating skills can improve, as Rivka said "*By giving them other tools to resolve problems….. that the moment we put them in charge, they talk, they see that they don't always have to run to us…. and that they don't always have to hit someone, talking and listening is also possible, and they invite each other to talk…*"

The conversation as a 'double opportunity arena' (Blum-Kulka& Taglicht, 2002) makes it possible to resolve the unresolved conflict but also to practice the necessary skills of navigating a conversation for effective interpersonal communication. The conversation helps develop 'dialogic competence' (Blum-Kulka& Taglicht, 2002) which includes the ability to integrate into a mechanism of taking turns in a conversation and the ability to be an active and attentive partner making a worthy contribution to the conversation.

<u>It may be concluded</u> that the clarification-mediation conversation is a powerful and democratic tool for the teacher's intervention in peer conflicts. Additionally, it is important to retain a fixed pattern for this conversation in order to assist internalization (Wertsch, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978) of the dialogic elements. The structure and principles of the conversation reflect the democratic principles of the culture of the educational setting. The setting constitutes a safe environment in order to help the parties cope with the stress created following the conflict, and in order for the learning process to be meaningful. The safe environment is created through the dialogic elements of the conversation. <u>Hence it may be concluded</u> that the direct intervention through the clarification-mediation conversation takes place through a set pattern based on democratic principles that support pro-social conflict resolution.

Other research studies emphasised the correlation between the positive response pattern of the teacher in emotional-social situations and the children's social competence. (Zur, 1992; Howes et. al., 1994; Stolarsky, 2000). This research describes a unique response pattern of the clarification-mediation conversation, which offers a safe environment and the acquisition of social competence as expressed in developing the children's negotiation abilities when resolving conflicts.

Similar to this research, there has been earlier research showing that the involvement of the teacher in the group context is highly important for fostering emotional-social skills and in

mediating emotional-social situations between members of the group (Howes, 1990; Howes, et. al., 1994; Howes & Ritchi, 1998). Since this research showed the components of the clarification-mediation conversation within conflict resolution processes, it presents this conclusion as an innovation.

An analysis of the features of the clarification-mediation conversation emphasise that the practice of conflict resolution takes place in authentic situations during the teacher's mediation between the peers. In addition, the conversation stresses the whole group of children as part of the discourse between the teacher and the parties to the conflict. The intervention of the teacher in these conflicts through the conversation as a suggestion of a strategy for involvement appears among various writers (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992; DeVries & Zan 1994; Evans, 2002; Singer, 2002; Wheeler, 2004).

The parts of the conversation as found in this research are similar to these suggestions. However, this research innovates in identifying the features of the clarification-mediation conversation as it takes place in the naturalistic environment of the educational setting, and not just as a theoretical suggestion. What makes this research unique is its detailed description of the structure and features of the conversation. The conversation is a direct outcome of the educational world view of the teacher, and is not dictated as part of a structured intervention programme.

Teacher-led intervention programmes tend to stress the cultivation of conflict resolution skills through structured lessons (Stevahn et. al., 2000; Jones & Vestal, 2004; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007; Allen, 2009; Pickens, 2009). Such programmes focus on the practice of conflict resolution skills, or the practice of resolving hypothetical conflicts through stories, pictures and events. However, the clarification-mediation conversation described in this research generates natural practice of conflict resolution in the educational setting through authentic conflicts that are generated daily among the children. A similar concept appears in the Israeli training programme "Learning to live together" (Rosenthal et al., 2008; Rosental & Gatt, 2011), however, this training programme stresses the social-emotional aspect in individual or social conflict situations, in other words, only the direct intervention, and does not relate to indirect intervention and the educational approach informing it.

In conclusion, it would appear that this discussion does much to conceptualise the important components of the direct and indirect intervention of the teachers in conflict resolution between children and in identifying the reflection of these components of the children's conflict resolution behaviour. In so doing, the discussion reinforces the main claim of this research that **a democratic pedagogy in the educational setting supports pro-social conflict resolution among children.** This is despite the fact that this research is a single case study, since thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) are provided about the educational setting and the children's methods of conflict resolution.

The main conclusions are:

1. The Israeli kindergarten is influenced to a great extent by the Reggio Emilia approach and is characterised by democratic values and practices.

2. The educational approach in the Israeli kindergarten constitutes indirect intervention in conflict resolution and expresses the democratic values of participation, listening and dialogue.

3. The direct intervention of the teachers in conflict resolution expresses the concept of the child as competent as well as of democratic values and so is conducted mainly through the clarification-mediation conversation.

4. The direct and indirect intervention of the teachers is reflected in the children's conflict resolution, which is characterised by the development and refinement of negotiating abilities, peer involvement and improved competence in resolving conflicts without the assistance of an adult.

It appears that these interpretations reinforce the idea of the educational setting as a mode of intervention in conflict resolution within the educational setting.

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings emerging from secondary research question 3. The following chapters will present the conclusions chapter that discusses the conclusions and propositions that emerged from the discussion of the findings.

PART VI: CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSITIONS

Preview

Part VI establishes the contribution of this research to knowledge about the features supporting children's conflict resolution in an Israeli kindergarten inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. It presents an informed and evidence-based understanding on the basis of the findings gathered for this study. Thus, Chapter 21 restates the research goals and questions in order to discuss answers to the research questions and their contribution to knowledge. Next, a new construct for understanding the features of the studied kindergarten's educational approach which support children's conflict resolution is outlined and explained in Chapter 22. Further, a critique of this research is offered. Additionally, this part suggests the possible contribution of this research to other kindergartens and educational settings for older children, including teacher training in Israel and elsewhere, and acknowledges points which are open for further investigation. Part VI ends with an epilogue which provides a personal prism of my learning in writing this doctoral thesis.

Chapter 21: Conflict Resolution in an Israeli Kindergarten Inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach

Answering the research questions

The purpose of this study was to understand and critically describe the features of an Israeli kindergarten class inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and to investigate how these features support children's conflict resolution. The importance of this research lies in its identification of ways of coping with interpersonal conflicts which might escalate into violence in educational settings and in its reinforcement of the concept of education for peace through democratic pedagogy without the need for financial investment in specific extra-curricular intervention programmes on conflict resolution. This research identified the features of the educational setting, of the children's conflict resolution and of the intervention of the teachers in conflict resolution and compared them with the existing literature in order to critically examine the support provided by the educational setting for conflict resolution

Thus, the main research question was:

To what extent might a 'Reggio Emilia' inspired approach support resolution of interpersonal conflicts among 3-4 year old children in an Israeli kindergarten class? The secondary research questions were:

1. What are the features of the Israeli kindergarten and to what extent does it implement the Reggio Emilia approach?
2. What are the features of interpersonal peer conflicts and their resolution, and how do they change during the year?
3. What role does the teacher play in the process of conflict resolution?

The research examined the main aspects of the educational setting and the features of the process of interpersonal conflict resolution. It did so in order to enable the promotion of a high quality educational setting for early childhood that would support the children's social and emotional competence and interpersonal conflict resolution including negotiations among the children. The improvement in the ability to resolve conflict through negotiation

might create a real chance for living in peace within the community of children and to create a disposition to negotiate (Katz, 1993) that might enable living in peace with communities further afield than the kindergarten environment.

On the factual level, the evidence presented in this study reinforced the view that significant support for conflict resolution exists when the direct and indirect intervention through democratic practices are compatible with each other.

Indirect Intervention

Indirect intervention relates to the application of the democratic practice in the Israeli kindergarten through three democratic values, namely: **participation, listening and dialogue**. These values are implemented in all aspects of the running of the educational setting and hence they create the basis for direct and indirect intervention in conflict resolution.

Participation refers to the right of children to participate in all matters that are of concern to them and to influence both their own learning process as well as the overall environment in kindergarten (United Nations Convention, 1989). It is created when the educational staff perceives the children as competent and as having the right to take part in the society in which they live (Dewey, 1959; Moss, 2009). This image of the child enables the teacher to create for that child and for the other parties in the educational setting the conditions that enable participation. Additionally, participation in the kindergarten community (Rogoff, 1990) is implemented through the children's active participation in the learning processes, decision making about various topics connected to the educational setting, and even taking part in setting the behaviour norms and kindergarten rules and in constructing the curriculum of the educational setting both manifestly and covertly.

In addition, the organization of the daily schedule supports the participation of the children in their community due to the lengthy amount of time allotted to free play in which the children interact with their peers. This interaction involves individual freedom, but also an opportunity to share a common environment with friends that may encourage the creation of emotional involvement, cooperation and strengthening the sense of belonging. Participation is perceived as significant since on the one hand it enables learning of cultural values (Corsaro, 2002) and on the other, creates the children's sense of belonging to the

educational setting and thus a sense of responsibility for themselves and their friends (Moss, 2009) in the conflict resolution process.

Listening is the in-depth observation of the children and the attempt to understand and approach the children's perspective as far as possible in order to respond to their intellectual and social-emotional needs. Listening takes place when the children are seen as human beings who have a voice worth listening to. In this manner, the teacher can get to know the children and adjust the educational setting and the curriculum to their needs. This adjustment created through listening makes it possible to relate to the uniqueness of each child and of the group of children as opposed to relating to the age of the child as a unifying factor that provides information about the children and their development. The concrete expression of listening is the documentation carried out by the teachers during free play or in response to purposely provided stimuli. This enables the basis for the curriculum and the dialogue to emerge (Malaguzzi, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006). The option given to the children to learn and to express themselves through various languages (Forman & Fyfe, 1998) that suit them is also part of how the teachers listen to the children. Moreover, since the teachers also take part in the learning process, they also listen to each other through the team reflection procedures. Listening is based on the acceptance of interpersonal diversity. Thus, the importance of listening is that it encourages a culture in which everyone has a voice and a presence in the educational setting. This culture supports the children's ability to make their voice heard in a pro-social manner and to listen to the voices of their friends. The space created reduces the children's need to fight to express their needs and desires.

The dialogue is the conversation which involves reciprocity, intention and adaptation among the speakers (Buber, 1973; Rogers, 1973). Thus the dialogue between the child and the teacher is made possible because the teacher sees the child as being able to converse and as having the right to participate in the educational setting. The dialogue between the teacher and the children takes place within the relationship but also during the teaching-learning process when the teacher's listening creates the basis for it. A dialogue also exists amongst the children either independently or mediated by the teacher who encourages and guides the children to solve problems or make decisions through a dialogue. The dialogue of the children and the teachers is also carried out with the physical environment when the

children create meaning through their activity in the physical environment and making changes suitable to their needs and preferences. Moreover, the dialogue of the children and the teachers with the documentation creates a collective process of interpretation and of critique and evaluation. Dialogue in daily life between the teachers and the children creates a culture and a tendency towards this kind of discourse among the children. Since dialogue is characterised by pro-social procedures, it contributes to the children's ability to resolve conflicts among themselves through dialogue.

Hence the indirect support in conflict resolution is promoted through a pedagogy guided by the democratic values of participation, dialogue and listening, all of which implements the Reggio Emilia approach to a great extent. Evidently, awareness of the significance of indirect intervention will result in the inclusion of these values and praxis into a training of pre-service teachers in order to develop their practice (Appendix 12 p. 337).

Direct Intervention

The direct intervention relates to the teacher's response to the children's request for intervention in the conflict and to how the teacher helps the children handle the conflicts that arise with their peers. The direct intervention of the teachers in conflict resolution is influenced by their image of the child as competent and by their democratic values. Hence, the direct intervention of teachers is adapted to the conflict situation and the needs of the children who are party to it. The teachers create clear boundaries through judgement, empowering one of the parties and encouraging them to resolve the conflict themselves or by creating the space for a clarification-mediation conversation that is dialogic in nature and involves listening and audience participation.

Judgement is performed when the teacher identifies a deviation from the behavioural norms of the kindergarten, **empowerment** is created when she recognizes the need of at least one of the children for emotional support, and a **clarification-mediation conversation** is employed mainly when the conflict involves violent behaviour. Adapting the help to the needs of the children may empower them, strengthen their self confidence and improve their negotiating skills during peer conflicts.

The evidence also indicates the great importance of the **clarification-mediation conversation** in the teacher's involvement in the peer conflicts. This conversation may

constitute a ‘safe place’ (Rogers, 1973) for the parties to the conflict which helps them handle the pressure created by the conflict. The ‘safe place’ is made possible because of the dialogic elements of the conversation on the one hand, and the adherence to a set pattern that helps internalise the structure on the other hand. Hence, the clarification-mediation conversation provides the space for peer conflict resolution but is also an opportunity to learn and practice social and communicative skills such as listening and dialogue. The conversation also enables application of the value of participation since it enables the parties to the conflict to make decisions and solve problems on their own, and enables casual observers to be part of everything that goes on within the educational setting. Moreover, the initiative of the teacher to resolve a conflict through conversation allows her to be a role model for the children in dialogic conflict resolution.

Hence, direct intervention is yet another means of **constructing the democratic culture** containing participation, listening and dialogue, but also of cultivating pro-social strategies of conflict resolution among children. Thus it may be concluded that the teacher training programme must include practice in **the ability to empower children**, in **mediation skills** and **peer mediation**. Furthermore, the evidence gathered for this research supported the development of an informed and evidence-based understanding regarding the expression of the values of participation, listening and dialogue in the children’s conflict resolution behaviour. Listening and dialogue are expressed in the significant improvement that occurred in the children’s ability to resolve conflicts through pro-social negotiating strategies. Such strategies involving negotiation are based on social understanding and on the ability to understand complex situations which require seeing two points of view at the same time.

The value of participation is expressed in the improvement in the children’s initiative and ability to intervene in their friends’ conflicts and help resolve them and in the decline in the number of requests made to the teachers to help resolve their conflicts with their peers. Hence we may say that it is important that the **direct and indirect intervention be compatible**. This compatibility creates a democratic culture and reduces the gaps between actual and desired reality and thereby strengthens the sustainability (Sellman, 2002) of the ability to resolve conflicts pro-socially.

The findings of this study therefore supported the development of an informed and evidence-based understanding of the importance of democratic values and praxis in the educational setting as a way to sustain pro-social conflict resolution. More specifically, the evidence showed that although the Israeli kindergarten was influenced to a great extent by the Reggio Emilia approach, the two approaches are not identical.

Like the Reggio Emilia approach, the Israeli kindergarten is based on similar democratic values and practices. However, the Israeli kindergarten places more emphasis on free play and thus creates space for meaningful interaction that generates relationships and enables the practice of peer conflict resolution. Hence, a teacher training programme must relate to the importance and role of free play in the kindergarten timetable.

The contribution of this research lies in its identification of the democratic practices of the educational setting as supportive of pro-social conflict resolution among children. The research highlights the improvement in the children's ability to resolve conflict through pro-social strategies when the educational setting employs democratic practices without any need for an extra-curricular intervention programme. In this, the study contributes to the issue of coping with the increasing violence in Israeli society and elsewhere.

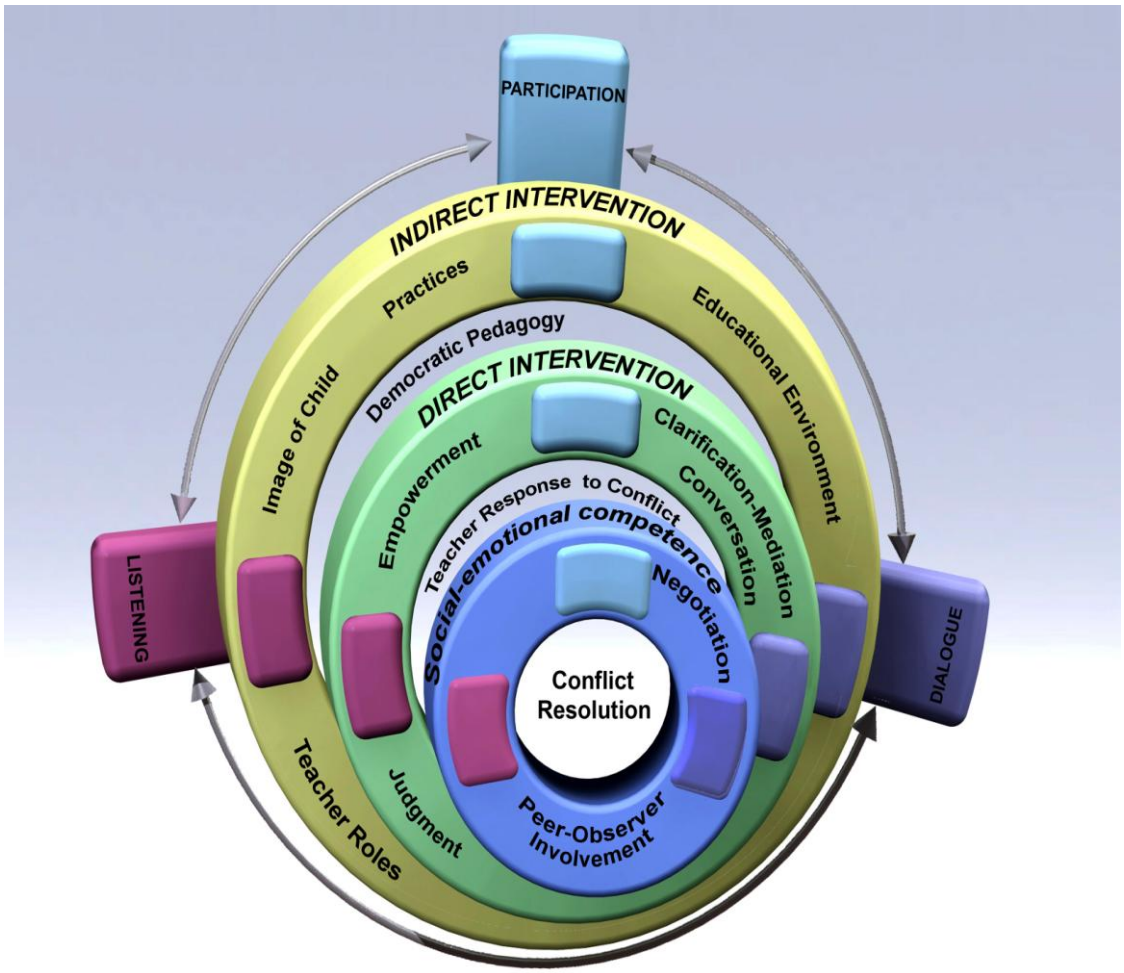
This chapter presented the factual conclusions emerging from the research questions. The following chapter introduces the conceptual conclusions advanced by this study.

Chapter 22: Democratic Pedagogy: A New Construct for Understanding an Educational Approach Facilitating Pro-Social Conflict Resolution

Conceptual conclusions

On the basis of the factual conclusions emerging from the findings, this chapter introduces the conceptual conclusions. **On the conceptual level**, the findings of this study enable the proposal of a new construct for understanding pro-social conflict resolution among kindergarten children. It is based on the findings of this research and on an analysis of conflict resolution theories, socio-cultural learning theories and educational approaches. Figure 3 presents a model of a democratic pedagogy supporting pro-social conflict resolution.

Figure 3: <u>Democratic Pedagogy Facilitating Pro-social Conflict Resolution</u>



This construct, which presents conflict resolution in the educational setting, shows how the direct and indirect intervention of the teachers creates the supportive context for the children's conflict resolution as part of the educational approach and the kindergarten curriculum.

The circle of **indirect intervention** refers to the democratic practices that characterise the educational approach. This democratic pedagogy is expressed in the image of the child, the perception of the role of the teacher, the educational setting and the praxis. The **direct intervention** refers to the teacher's response to the interpersonal conflict and is demonstrated through judgement, empowerment and a clarification-mediation conversation. The third circle describes the children's ability to resolve conflict through negotiation and to intervene in the resolution of their peers' conflicts as part of their social-emotional skill.

At the heart of the model lie three strands related to the three values of democratic pedagogy: participation, listening and dialogue. While each strand shows one value, each of them also enables the existence of the others. In other words, there is reciprocity between these values which creates synergy that supports the children's social-emotional competence enabling the use of pro-social strategies for interpersonal conflict resolution. The elliptical shape of the model emphasizes the variety of intertwined components mutually affecting each other as well as the children's social-emotional competence. According to this model, the educational setting and the staff are the context in which the social-emotional competence develops in general, and conflict resolution skills in particular.

The socio-cultural theories of learning such as those of Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff (2003), Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Corsaro, (2005) stress the importance of the social and cultural context as a variable affecting the individual's development and learning. Similarly, Lewin (1997) stresses that conflict resolution behaviour depends on the environment. Hence, in this model, a democratic pedagogy creates the context for the learning process. All these theories reinforce the importance of democratic pedagogy in the educational setting in order to create a democratic climate that will foster a situation of 'walk the talk'. In other words, the whole management of the kindergarten will implement the values that should be expressed in pro-social conflict resolution.

More can be learned also about a democratic climate that cultivates cooperation from the work of Lewin (1997) and Deutsch (2005) who claim that when the social environment features cooperate, as in an educational environment with democratic practices, the interpersonal conflict resolution process is carried out constructively. The democratic practice as presented in the work of Dewey (1966), Moss (2009) and Malaguzzi (2003) stress democracy as a collaborative lifestyle that places high value on participation, listening and dialogue. These qualities are part of every element of the educational setting and actually guide all educational activity.

The element of the teacher's direct intervention through the clarification-mediation conversation is also supported in the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1983), since they stress the role of the teacher as an expert who promotes children within their ZPD by scaffolding the discourse. Rogers' (1973) theory can inform us about the importance of direct intervention through empowerment and less about the use of judgement strategies. Hence, it may said that the innovation of this research is its presentation of democratic pedagogy as an effective mode of intervention for pro-social peer conflict resolution in kindergarten.

Conclusions that might inform or enhance professional practice

The views expressed in this study have potential implications for the future enhancement of democratic pedagogy as conflict resolution intervention in different educational settings, in teacher education colleges and with policy makers in Israel and elsewhere. The study suggests that everyone involved in early education or even later stages of education should see the value of democratic practice as an appropriate pedagogy for improving social-emotional competence to resolve interpersonal conflicts in pro-social ways.

The research findings stress the change in the children's ability to resolve conflict pro-socially due to the implementation of the educational approach. Thus, this study may have broader implications regarding the allocation of resources on a national level. Raising awareness of democratic pedagogy may save investing money in extra-curricular intervention programmes and focusing on in-service and pre-service teacher training in democratic pedagogy that relates to the whole management of the educational setting and not just one aspect of it. Even an educational setting that chooses or is forced to implement

the standards-based approach and thus cannot implement some of the components of democratic pedagogy (such as a dialogic-emerging curriculum), can still adopt the values of democratic pedagogy since it does not negate the existence of standards but offers a democratic way to achieve them.

Likewise, the research findings may also have an impact on teacher training. The findings indicate the importance of the role of the teacher in how children handle conflicts through the organisation of the setting and the curriculum. According to the research findings, it would seem to be worthwhile putting the emphasis in teacher training on teaching an educational approach and curriculum of democratic pedagogy. This kind of training, based on integrating the exploration of the values underpinning the educational approach, expansion of the knowledge pertaining to socio-cultural theories of learning, identifying gaps that might exist between the values and their application and training in democratic practices might enable the adoption of a democratic pedagogy. Placing the emphasis on democratic practices might be a good basis for the learning process since it provides new teachers or experienced teachers who are new to this approach with the necessary scaffolding for their educational work. Practice might lead to a deeper internalisation of democratic pedagogy and its values (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980).

The training should focus also on the beliefs and perceptions teachers have about the image of the child and of their role as teachers with regard to interpersonal conflict among children, as well as on thinking about pedagogical strategies that enable the implementation of those values and perceptions. In addition, during the training programme, the teachers should acquire the tools with which to intervene in the social context with a focus on the skills of displaying empathy and mediation in emotional-social situations among the peer group. Since such training involves a change in beliefs and values, one may suppose that effective training will be based on the values the training wishes to impart, in other words, participation, listening and dialogue. Since there are differences between the novice and the experienced teacher (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980), the training of novice teachers should place greater emphasis on praxis while the training of experienced teachers should place more emphasis on the values informing the praxis and the gaps between viewpoint and application in the educational setting. A training programme is proposed in Appendix 12 (p. 337).

Propositions and further research

The evidence presented in this study suggests four main propositions that could be the basis for further research:

1. The educational approach of the kindergarten teachers has the potential to affect children's negotiating strategies.

2. An educational approach inspired by Reggio Emilia will be characterised by three values: participation, listening and dialogue.

3. The influence of the educational approach on the methods of conflict resolution derives from both direct and indirect intervention and their compatibility.

4. Cultivation of pro-social conflict resolution skills should be part of the curriculum and culture of the educational setting.

Although it is possible to see in this research the results of in-service training of the teaching staff, a question arises as to what will happen when the training is pre-service? Will new teachers entering the standards-oriented education system be able to adhere to the democratic pedagogy or will conformity and the desire to please the system lead them to act differently? What will be the most effective support system for these teachers? Other questions that this research raises deal with the children's pro-social skills. Will the disposition to using dialogue, listening and participating be expressed in the child's other frameworks? Will the disposition persist over time even if the child moves on to a non-democratic educational setting? The case study setting is culturally and socio-economically homogenous. Will a democratic pedagogy help improve social-emotional skills in a more diverse context, such as children with special needs who find playing and talking hard? Although these questions arise from this study, they do not fall within its boundaries. They are now open to other researchers.

This chapter has suggested a new construct for understanding and improving pro-social conflict resolution in an educational setting. It is based on the theories of conflict resolution, socio-cultural learning theories and educational approaches. The next chapter will deal with the critique of this research and will describe its limitations.

Chapter 23: Critique and Limitations of this Research

The limitations of this research stem both from methodological and ethical issues and from the qualitative nature of the research.

Researcher involvement in the investigation

One of the limitations in this qualitative study was the great involvement of the researcher in various aspects of the investigation. This involvement might have led to a methodological problem of biased interpretation and understanding. The researcher was involved on many levels: firstly, her worldview and involvement due to her lengthy presence at the educational setting under study. It needs to be acknowledged, then, that the Reggio Emilia approach as a shared educational world view might have influenced the researcher's interpretation as well. Possible bias might have derived from the fact that the researcher’s own educational approach is similar to that of the teachers in the kindergarten under study, except that it is relatively innovative and hardly implemented in other early childhood educational settings in Israel. This involvement might have influenced data collection and analysis.

However, researcher involvement is one of the more prominent features of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) note that the qualitative researcher uses him or herself and other people as the main tool of data collection. The researcher's involvement in the researched area can be considered not only as a disadvantage, but as an advantage too (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin 1990). In this case, the researcher's involvement was necessary in order to collect data and understand all the components of the educational setting and the expression of the educational approach, and to interpret the children's conflicts during the filmed videos. This involvement also made it possible to develop a relationship of trust with teachers and children that was necessary in order to gather data that matches reality. Nevertheless, in order to avoid bias during data collection, the researcher drew up a contract with the teachers, limiting her involvement in the functioning of the kindergarten and her interactions with the children. During the interviews, the researcher adopted a neutral position, by not welcoming or reinforcing the interviewees, by avoiding being seen to be agreeing with the participants, or sharing similar views with them. As a result, the researcher refrained as far as possible from any reinforcing responses

(Robson, 2002). The data collection was taken from various sources, namely, the staff and the kindergarten children, in order to maintain transparency in the description of the research, and in critiquing the process. Additionally, the children were exposed to some of the raw data collected in order to extract their views about those data through using their interpretations. Nonetheless, the researcher's involvement was necessary also because the data collection was conducted in real time during a lengthy stay in the educational setting.

The involvement of the researcher might affect the participants. Hence, in order to avoid any influence on the behaviour of the teachers, the researcher refrained from presenting the data and findings while they were being collected in order to verify them. In other words, a conversation including viewing of a particular conflict or behaviour of the staff following the conflict might direct the future behaviour of that staff according to what they might perceive as the preference of the researcher who is considered an 'expert' in this field.

During the data analysis phase, the researcher positioned herself at a distance and critically re-examined the understandings gleaned from the situation under scrutiny (Shkedi, 2003). According to Shkedi (2003), the researcher has to be aware of the dangers of over-involvement with the researched field in order to minimise biases as much as possible.

Sample size and generalisability

Another limitation in this study involves the size of the sample – 37 participants, of whom 2 were teachers and 35 were children. The small size of the sample derives from the fact that this was the population of one kindergarten class in Israel. Moreover, case study research is an exploration of a 'bounded system' which involves collecting in-depth data (Creswell, 1998). This, of necessity, limits the number of the study's participants.

The limited research population sample raises the issue of generalisability. With such a small research population, there are difficulties in generalising the qualitative findings about different people in different environments (Merriam, 1985). Nevertheless, according to Stake (1995), qualitative research has a naturalistic generalisation and the real focus of a case study is its uniqueness and not its generalisability. Thus, it is the reader of the study and not its author who determines the degree of generalisability and which aspects of the case are applicable to other situations (Stake, 1995). Consequently, the research findings should not be treated as established conclusions, but as what can be described as

empirically developed hypotheses (Merriam & Simpson, 1984). The way to overcome the problem of generalisability is through the use of “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) and detailed reporting of the case under study (Eisner, 1979) in order for the readers to have enough information to evaluate the compatibility between the situation studied and the one they are referring to (Firestone, 1993).

Another strategy used to increase the level of generalisability in this study was triangulation. In this process, different sources and methods are used to see that a particular phenomenon is actually taking place and in order to clarify its meaning (Stake, 2005). In the in-depth study of the conflict resolution process supported by an educational approach inspired by Reggio Emilia, multiple data collection methods, namely interviews and observations, were employed to access multiple data sources (e.g., people, physical environment, documents) and to raise multiple voices (e.g., children, teachers). The limitations involved in interviewing children were discussed at length in the methodology chapter. Additionally, several precautions were used in order to minimise bias. Thus, the interview was conducted as a group interview, the video filming as the stimulus for the conversation with the children was presented as another activity in the kindergarten, and participation was on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, when selecting the extracts to show the children, I was guided by Kassan & Krumer-Nevo's (2010) recommendations of content analysis, in which the researcher decides which segments of the data collected would be used in accordance with the research goals and questions.

Moreover, the data analysis was conducted with constant cross-referencing between data gathered through the various tools suitable for each secondary research question in order to test and confirm their credibility. Thus the researcher was able to increase the precision of the research findings, and their level of validity and reliability (Shkedi, 2003). Data analysis based on the theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994) was conducted meticulously in four stages (Shkedi, 2003) and went back and forth through self-checking and a fully transparent process, which also strengthened the possibility of naturalist generalisation in this research. The interpretation of the findings is supported by theoretical knowledge of the Reggio Emilia approach, the Israeli kindergarten and theories of conflict resolution in early childhood, which also increases the level of generalisability in a case study (Yin, 2003). According to Schofield (1993) and Shkedi (2003),

generalisability in a case study is left for the reader to decide. Finally, although this case study does not claim full replicability because of the limitations of qualitative research, it would still be possible to repeat this study in an educational setting with similar components.

Research tools related biases

One of the prominent tools of this research is the videoed observations of the children's activities. Creswell (2007) claims that the advantages of observation include the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behaviour, and to study individuals (Creswell, 2007). The observations were conducted mainly in the locations where the children were involved in free play such as 'pretend' play or construction play. It could be that certain children who refrained from taking part in free play would not display the changes evident in the children who were filmed. However, since play is a common activity in early childhood and is known to create room for development, children who do not take part to begin with might display relatively weaker social competence than their peers who do. This fact might seem to damage the validity of the findings and the generalisability of the study. However, according to the socio-cultural approach, even the children who do not play regularly with their friends participate (Rogoff, 1990) in a variety of ways in the educational setting and so they develop in the context of a democratic pedagogy.

The interviews with the children were conducted by joint watching of a conflict filmed in the kindergarten, followed by conversation. A detailed discussion of the manner in which the group interviews were conducted is presented in the Methodology chapter. It might be claimed that choosing the extract to show the children as well as phrasing the questions could create bias. However, this is the essence of a qualitative research which needs to be acknowledged by the researchers and thus minimised in the ways described above. This strategy relied on looking at children as knowledgeable, competent, strong and powerful members of society (Bruner, 1996; Dahlberg et al., 1999). The interviews were conducted in order to learn their perspective and interest from the children themselves (Clark & Moss, 2001).

The research included only three interviews with the children because the group interview took place during their free activity time and was conducted by the researcher and one of the teachers. Each interview stopped the ongoing activity of some of the children and created a change in the natural flow of the kindergarten proceedings. Furthermore, it was not possible at that time to continue with the observations. The interviews were not conducted close to the time of the conflict presented in order to enable an interview with less emotional arousal (Hoffman, 1984). Despite the relatively small number of interviews, it was possible to generate value from them and in particular to give the young informants a voice of their own. The children were given voice by relating to what they said as research data and even using their authentic language collected directly from them through the observations as well as the interviews (Shkedi, 2003).

In addition, the research included interviews with the staff. Even though it was possible to enrich the data through more interviews with the staff following a joint viewing of the conflict videos, this was not done in this study. The concern was that such a conversation including viewing of a particular conflict or behaviour of the staff following the conflict might direct the future behaviour of that staff according to what they might perceive as the preference of the researcher who is considered an 'expert' in this field.

Research context

Finally, this research took place at a kindergarten class in Israel and is grounded in the Israeli education system and reality, and is thus true for this specific context. Nevertheless, the research design and even the proposed training programme can be replicated since they are not linked specifically to the Israeli context. Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach is a source of inspiration for educational endeavours all over the world. However, the interpretation of the findings and the conclusions subsequently drawn open up the possibility of learning from this study and basing further research about the theory constructed here if a similar context can be found.

This chapter presented the limitations of this research stem both from methodological and ethical issues and from the qualitative nature of the research. The following chapter introduces the contribution of the research to knowledge.

Chapter 24: Contribution of the Research to Knowledge

This research constitutes a significant in-depth investigation of the conflict resolution process in a Reggio Emilia inspired approach in an Israeli kindergarten class. It is based on a broad range of literature and on existing research from around the world in related subjects. It is also based on a robust research methodology and design. Hence, I have a good reason to believe that I have generated a model of a democratic pedagogy as a new construct for understanding an educational approach facilitating pro-social conflict resolution.

This research filled the gap in knowledge identified in relation to developing pro-social strategies and facilitating conflict resolution processes among 3-4 year old kindergarten children. A gap in knowledge exists in the current literature regarding theories of supporting the acquisition of conflict resolution skills in the context of kindergarten without an extra-curricular training programme. Furthermore, no research was found in relating to the Reggio Emilia approach as a context for the learning of constructive conflict resolution skills. The findings of this study allowed the development of a new democratic pedagogy that facilitates pro-social strategies for conflict resolution processes among kindergarten children, and offered a training strategy for developing these skills among future kindergarten teachers. Thus, the research contributes to knowledge in this area. This research, then, suggests new thinking orientations regarding facilitating conflict resolution processes through a democratic pedagogy approach.

The significant contribution of this study lies in the deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the support that such an educational setting can give in getting the children to employ pro-social strategies during their peer conflict resolution. The research distinguishes between indirect support that refers to the image of the child, the perception of the role of the teacher, the organisation of the educational setting and the praxis, and the direct support that refers to the intervention of the teacher following conflict. There is also a better understanding of the extent to which the Israeli kindergarten implements the Reggio Emilia approach. The research suggests that despite certain differences, the Israeli kindergarten implements the values and key practices of the Reggio Emilia approach to a significant extent. Furthermore, the study emphasises the improvement in conflict

resolution strategies of the children as the year progresses. This improvement takes place with no specific intervention programme on how to handle conflict resolution, but rather through the democratic pedagogy of the educational setting.

Together these salient features form a body of knowledge that coherently explains that the support of the educational setting for conflict resolution takes place not only by way of the direct intervention of the educational staff, but also by way of the indirect intervention that creates the democratic culture of the setting. Since no research was found relating to this issue, the new democratic pedagogy is presented as a novelty within the Israeli kindergarten setting.

The new democratic pedagogy does not pertain only to theoretical aspects, but has practical bearings as well. Thus, the new democratic pedagogy model can complement and infuse the teacher training policy in teacher education colleges in Israel. Since the research showed the significance of the new democratic pedagogy to the overall Israeli kindergarten culture, then it can be included within the teacher training curricula in Israel as part of the teachers' pre-service training. Furthermore, in-service training courses offered to kindergarten teachers can open new possibilities for implementing the democratic pedagogy in the kindergarten settings. On the national level, allocation of funds for this significant educational approach can assure its implementation and spread for facilitating quality early years curricula that also support pro-social strategies for conflict resolution processes. Moreover, in a society in which there are many internal conflicts as well as incessant conflicts with other states in the region, a democratic pedagogy might create a culture that facilitates the construction of dispositions and the acquisition of competence that create the basis of education for peace.

In terms of methodology, the research adds to the relatively little qualitative research on conflict resolution in kindergartens. Finally, the research suggests a tool ('model for analysis of level of negotiation') for identifying the negotiating strategies of 3-4 year old children during a naturalist conflict by identifying the strategies that appear in the conflict and assigning them to the appropriate level of negotiation. The next section provides a personal prism of my learning from conducting the current research.

Epilogue

Two milestones changed the very clear path I had followed for many years in training early childhood teachers. One was my specialisation in non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2003) and the other was the visiting exhibition of Reggio Emilia children in Israel and my introduction to their educational approach. The exhibition aroused both my curiosity and my enthusiasm, as it has for so many people all over the world. I began to study the approach and even include some of it in my teacher training. At the same time, I began to train kindergarten teachers in non-violent communication both in workshops and visits to the kindergartens.

During the work on site, I noticed that the kindergarten teachers who study non-violent communication help the children resolve conflicts in the manner they had learned in the workshop. However, on other occasions, when the conflict was between a child and an adult, or because of the way the educational setting functioned, the respectful, dialogic behaviour of mediating interpersonal conflicts would disappear and power behaviour would emerge. I was surprised by the gaps created among the kindergarten teachers and I thought about how confusing this must be for the children.

In contrast, my enthusiasm for the Reggio Emilia educational approach only grew the more I learned about it and the more I saw the changes taking place in the kindergarten teachers. I understood that adopting such an educational approach might guide the teacher's behaviour to be more respectful of the children in all areas of kindergarten life. My main insight was that adopting this approach might provide a response to how children resolve conflicts. As a result, I stopped giving workshops on conflict resolution and, together with a colleague, devoted my time to training a group of kindergarten teachers in the Reggio Emilia educational approach and in constructing a training programme in the college where I teach pre-service teachers.

The decision to conduct a research study stemmed from the desire to substantiate my intuitive sense of children's ability to resolve conflicts with pro-social strategies even without a specific intervention programme on conflict resolution, but rather 'only' by being part of an educational setting that believes in dialogue. Hence, the topic of my research is a direct outcome of my professional experience in Israel. At the same time,

despite the uniqueness of Israeli reality, this research is very relevant for kindergartens worldwide since it deals with general features of interpersonal conflict resolution and with the features of a widely accepted educational approach. This doctoral thesis provided me with room to really get to know young children and to understand the implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach in an Israeli kindergarten. Moreover, this understanding helped me strengthen the connection between the worldview I developed and the training programme I put together for the college.

The complex journey of writing a doctoral thesis has taught me a great deal about early childhood, about research and about myself. As a lecturer and pedagogical adviser, I see myself as a lifelong learner who needs to develop and advance in order to enable my students to do the same. Nevertheless, writing the thesis helped me grow in a manner that is hardly possible in daily life. Writing required an intellectual effort mainly because the intent of the thesis was to contribute and innovate. Dealing with research was new to me and made me choose unfamiliar paths. I perceived the research process as an opportunity to listen to and present the world with what I perceived to be high quality educational activity.

The process of creating this doctoral thesis was long and often exhausting. Nevertheless, I discovered my ability to persevere and surmount difficulties, but mainly I discovered heart and soul, my belief in the importance of early childhood education. I hope to be able to apply all the knowledge I have accumulated in my teaching and in further research.

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Appendix 1: Description of the educational setting

The kindergarten functions six days a week for 5.5 hours. Some of the children remain for an additional 2.5 hours with other staff and with another group of children. There is no connection at all between the morning and afternoon staff. The kindergarten is open from 07:50 until 13:20 from Sunday to Friday. It is open during the entire official school year which is about 10 months long. It is closed on religious holidays and other days determined by the State.

Most of the children arrive by 08:30 and all finish at the same time. The framework of the day is usually fixed, but can change according to particular needs such as the weather not permitting outside play, a music lesson, the children's interest in a particular activity or how tired they are. During the morning the children can choose an activity that interests them: free play, art workshop activities, and the various work corners around the room.

The kindergarten's underlying assumptions as they appear in an unpublished document submitted to the committee that approves the experimental kindergarten's programme, are that the children's development does not lie in the learning of the existing adult culture in which they are growing up, but rather their experience of the process of constructing their own culture in the present. The staff members perceive the interactions among the children as an active, ongoing process of the creation of social and cultural patterns of their peers, mutual construction of a world of content and activity.

Accordingly, the kindergarten teacher puts herself at the disposal of the children as part of learning and creating community, and offers cultural tools that will make the learning the children have initiated more effective. In this manner the children can be exposed to previously generated knowledge and cultural works in a manner that is relevant to their interests and aims.

Appendix 2 – Sample of data analysis for a subsection of the first research question

The role of the teacher

	Documents	Field notes	Interviews
Partner in learning	"The kindergarten teacher will place herself at the children's disposal as part of the learning and creating community"		"I also learn with the children, it's interesting. I am always learning and now every day is a celebration, every day something new is added, every day there is learning, both myself and the assistant. It is so important for me to come to the kindergarten, even when we were sick, we came sick so as not to miss a day because I grow with the children, I learn with them. Every day there is something new. It's intriguing, interesting, exciting, I get just as excited as the children, I feel like a little girl, when I tell the parents they say: "You are even more excited than the children."

Facilitator	Listening	Listening	Listening
	"The teacher will devote part of her time to observing and listening to the children during their spontaneous activity, in order to identify the areas of interest they wish to deal with. This assumes that young children do not know how to define goals verbally and consciously and these must be identified through their behaviour and conversations with each other and with the teacher. The teacher must observe and interpret, constantly trying to get as close as possible to the children's perspective in order to reflect to the child or the children what is happening, to discuss it with them and suggest ways to process it further."	To the group – usually children play until 11:00. Today Rivka feels that by 10.30 the children have stopped playing and so she invites them to tidy up earlier than usual. To the individual – Doron comes to Rivka crying. "Doron-chuk, what happened? Come and tell me."	"Once they did not have a chest to put all the bits and pieces in the doll's corner in. After they played, they had to put everything back in place and there were lots of things. It took them time, and the dolls were tossed on the floor. I said let's listen. That's also a kind of listening. And then we saw that they want to sit down and they don't have anywhere to do it and so they toss the dolls on the floor. We had a chest and we suggested they put the dolls into the chest when they were done."

	Mediation "The role of the teacher is not to instruct or teach, but to assist learning: to reflect the knowledge and insights the children already have and help them identify ways to obtain answers and/or fulfil goals."	**Mediation** “One of the girls comes up and tells her what another girl did to her. Yafa: “So say to her ‘Why did you take it from me?’ What can we do? Maybe together” Do you agree?”	**Mediation** “My role is to reinforce dialogue, to guide them in their treatment of friends, to respect their friends, to accept ways of resolution. How a child gets organised within the daily schedule and how to transition from one activity to another, and how a child integrates into the kindergarten and into life.”
Cultural agent	**Behaviour norms** "The children are also partners in organising the work procedures and decision making in the kindergarten on various issues, e.g. deciding about procedures for arranging the room, planning the format of a birthday celebration, planning a Hanukkah party, deciding how to celebrate Family Day and what gift we will prepare for our families etc."	**Behaviour norms** "A conversation held at a session before they start tidying up: “Look at the building centre. Who was building? What did you do? What did you write? ‘Don’t take apart’. Does that mean we put it away? No! We only put away what does not belong to the structure. The children tidying the building block corner will take care not to take it apart and those who are going to the book	**Behaviour norms** "All corners of the room are open from the start. Through what happened we introduced the habits. From seeing what they threw or spread around we arranged things and explained and the children explained to the others.”

		corner will be careful!”	
	Role Model **Sharing –** “The dialogue and sharing within the staff creates an atmosphere in which one can educate the children to belonging, sharing and dialogue, because we don’t talk about these values, we live them.	**Role Model** **Sharing –** “Where there is any kind of problem in the kindergarten Yafa comes to Rivka and asks for her help. Sometimes it is done ‘over the heads of the children’, i.e. the conversation is between the adults but the children hear it. To some extent there is modelling and one can see that the children also go to Rivka and to Yafa for help in solving problems” (27.2)	**Role Model** **Sharing –** “I am not condescending, it was always like that, I have no problem and I convey that to the parents. When I am having a conversation with the assistant and consult with her about things the children see it. I say, excuse me, Yafa and I are talking now, do not interrupt, I will be with you in a moment. But they see us, we set an example, not as a show, a real example.” **Listening –** "I think that the whole atmosphere in the kindergarten, all the listening, when we listen to them and to what they say is important and so they get more confident about listening to others."

Appendix 3: Kindergarten rationale

Document: Kindergarten rational- March 2005 (selected parts).

(Translated from Hebrew)

Request to the Ministry of Education to manage a kindergarten using a dialogic approach (written by Rivka the kindergarten teacher and the academic advisor)

...During this experience I discovered that when the curriculum is constructed by listening to the children and maintaining an ongoing dialogue both among the adult staff members and with the children, it is possible to implement the world view of the teacher as 'midwife', enabling the children to express their thoughts and construct their own theories of the world. Working this way in the kindergarten we dealt with fascinating topics which emerged from the children's world, topics that I would never have thought of dealing with as part of a pre-planned curriculum. I also discovered that when you allow children to express themselves in their own way and base activities around their areas of interest, the children reach higher levels of functioning in many areas such as oral expression, listening to and responding appropriately to peers in conversation, graphic expression, cooperation, problem solving, data collection and drawing conclusions. This also affects the children at the emotional level: they are more enthusiastic and excited by their discoveries and through their actions they become more aware of their abilities….

This experience led me to want to develop this way of working. Developing a work method that will indeed enable the kindergarten to be a "kindergarten of childhood". Creating mediating conditions and methods that will allow the children to use (and further develop) their imagination, their unique way of thinking and expressing themselves as children. This would be done in an approach that accepts and respects the particular way in which children give meaning to the world.

At a time when a great deal of emphasis is placed on individual achievements, and in which there is often a tendency to see the essence of every stage of development as preparation for the next, I would like to show that one may emphasise the values of dialogue and sharing and the existence of meaningful life in the present without adversely affecting the individual achievements all children need for the next stages of development

and for their lives as adults. This is in the belief that "*The best way to educate a whole person, is to help the 5-year-old to be a meaningful 5-year old…*" D. Lasry

… Our desire to design kindergarten activities in such a way that the children can conduct their lives stems from the assumption that child development does not come down to learning about the culture of the adult society into which they are growing, but also to their experience of building their own culture in the present. In the interaction among the children there is an active, ongoing process of creating social and cultural peer patterns, mutual construction of a world of content and activity. Corsaro (1979, 1986) describes how children build the activity patterns in which they function. Soker (1993) describes how, through play, children create a world view and shared interpretation of life as part of the process of building their culture. Social-cultural patterns pass down from one generation of children to the next, taking on different forms within different groups of children and in different kindergartens (Higgins & Pearson, 1983). Through educational work in the manner proposed here, one of the roles of the kindergarten teacher is to try and understand the world of the children in their terms, in order to help them continue to broaden, deepen and enrich it.

Work plan description

Authenticity and self direction: to enable the children self-expression, the kindergarten will function through activity centres of interest where the children can spend time investigating topics as they see fit, play and create their own expression of their experiences. The children will be able to choose a type of activity. The centres both inside the classroom and in the yard will offer a broad variety of fields which reflect the cultural and knowledge worlds of human society: literature, music, theatre, plastic art, nature, agriculture and technology.

<u>The teacher's involvement will be two-fold</u>: on the one hand, support for spontaneous, unexpected processes created within the activity centres, and on the other, the organisation of methodical, documented, reflective work around topics identified through listening, observing and documenting children's spontaneous activity considered worthy of expansion.

Meaningfulness: methodical learning will be managed through in-depth work on one chosen topic after another (or on a number of topics simultaneously), which have emerged from the children's lives and spontaneous activity. Exploration will use many representations ("multiple intelligences" or "the child's hundred voices") while conducting an ongoing dialogues among the children and between the children and the teaching staff. The children will propose their theories for phenomena in the world, representing them in different ways, and will examine their ideas in small groups. In this way the children will acquire the habit of delving into topics, giving them meaning asking questions, wondering, conducting a dialogue and creating insights of their own.

A dialogic discussion: The timetable will have a built-in "team" meeting for the teaching staff together with all the children, at which the children will discuss their work on a topic they chose, present their discoveries and what they have done, and will consult with their peers about how to continue working on it and investigating it. The adults and the children will work together as a learning community that researches, confronts dilemmas and jointly creates something around the chosen topic. The role of the teacher here is to facilitate a dialogic discussion, and to participate in it as she sees fit in order to make suggestions to the children for further work on their ideas, call upon cultural tools from various fields, and suggest the use of various forms of representation in order to broaden and deepen the learning.

Reflective observation and mirroring: The teacher will devote part of her time to observing and listening to the children during their spontaneous activity in order to identify what interests them and what challenges they would like to confront. This is on the assumption that young children are not yet capable of defining their goals verbally ad consciously, and so these goals must be elicited from their behaviour and their conversation with their peers and with the teacher. It is the teacher's job to observe and interpret, constantly trying to get as close as possible to the children's perspective in order to mirror for them what is happening, discuss things and suggest ways for further processing.

Documentation: In order to enable children to reflectively monitor the development of their learning and shared activity, events will be documented by several different means such as writing, painting, still photos, video clips and audio recordings. This

documentation will be displayed openly on the boards and in binders so they can be reviewed and reconsidered and new connections can be made between ideas and suggestions for further processing and development. The documentation will be done by the children and by the teaching staff.

Curriculum: The guiding principle in building the curriculum will be that it is an 'emergent curriculum", in other words, the topics discussed will develop out of the work with the children and will not be pre-planned. However, there will be work relating to the Hebrew calendar, mainly in the form of creating stimuli and the atmosphere appropriate for the Jewish festival. Work on the research topics will continue alongside the preparations for the

Belonging and commitment: The child's belonging to a peer group will be based on the spontaneous activities in the activity centres and on sharing in the research and activities around the topics to be worked on systematically and in-depth. The child's belonging to the kindergarten as a social framework will be expressed both in each child's sense of partnership in constructing the curriculum and the work plan in the kindergarten as described above, and in addition, the personal and group belonging will be expressed in the creation of private spaces for each child in the kindergarten: a drawer for paintings, a locker for personal items, a post box, a reading journal in the kindergarten library, a folder for computer files in the kindergarten computer, a drawer with stationery (a writing pad, envelopes, a personal rubber stamp logo such as: "Yossi Levy, Eshel Kindergarten") and so forth. In order to build group belonging, in addition to the partnership in learning and research, we will develop tools to help create the ethos of the kindergarten such as: our own newspaper, a photo album, a petting zoo or vegetable garden. Groups of children will take on duties of organising kindergarten life (librarian, postman, newspaper editor, garden supervisor, work roster organizer and tidying up of the classroom mad the yard and so forth). Developing a sense of belonging will be also worked on in circles extending outside the kindergarten itself by continuing to cultivate the contact with the home, the school and the community, as detailed on the description of the kindergarten thus far (see section: Description of the kindergarten).

Appendix 4: Summary of the first year of work using the dialogic approach (selected parts).

Written by the two kindergarten teachers and the academic advisor

(Translated from Hebrew)

… "an emerging curriculum" is based on the educational discourse in the kindergarten, on listening and dialogue between the adults and the children, among the adults alone and among the children alone. This method aims to create a kindergarten that is a place for everyone involved to live in, children and adults alike, and to advance children and adults in the direction of meaningfulness, authenticity, self direction, awareness, belonging and reciprocity.

A. Arrangement of the learning environment

In the summer holidays - arranging the educational environment so as to enable maximum expression for the children's activity and its development by the children: Enlarging the areas for building with solid building blocks, a space for socio-dramatic play including hollow blocks, setting up a new space for theatre activity, enlarging the space for the art materials workshop with shelves that hold a wide variety of materials etc.

During the school year – the educational setting changed after listening to the children and their needs. For example, in the dolls corner we noticed that the children used the vegetable cart to organise the doctor's equipment and take it to the area where they had built themselves a clinic out of the hollow blocks. So we bought more carts like that and together we arranged that in each cart there is equipment for some other need (hairdresser, office, restaurant). Another example: at the gouache table in the art workshop space we gave the children a disposable plate as a palette for mixing colours. We noticed that the children were interested in painting on the palette and so we decided to give them plates like this as one of the platforms on which to execute their painting. During the year we realised that the educational environment invites the children to play and create, and that the staff does not have to guide and encourage the children to do so. The kindergarten is organised in a way that enables independent management and choice.

B. Organising time

The kindergarten timetable also reflects the desire to allow greater room for activity initiated by the children and their interactions with each other. So we did away with the morning meeting – the children come in and immediately join one of the various activity centres. Eating at the buffet table is free. Instead of the activity being determined by the timetable, the timetable is determined by the activity. We gather the children for a session when we feel that they have exhausted their activities in the centres in the kindergarten. After the session they go out into the yard. In this way, the children have quality time in which to get to most of the centres in the kindergarten and the teaching staff members have time to observe the children, listen to them, document their activities and their conversations, mediate to assist in solving problems through dialogue, and to suggest ways to realise their goals (such as helping to "turn" a story into a play at the children's request, reading a story in the library to one child or more at their request, locate the right materials to make something they want to and so forth).

C. All partners in designing kindergarten activity

Adults – The members of the staff meet after work hours to report and consult.

Everyone feels a great sense of belonging and involvement. The supplementary kindergarten teacher and assistant are not detached, and the assistant is an equal partner in thinking about and planning educational activity including documentation, mediation, suggesting directions for development for the topic we are dealing with etc. The dialogue and sharing among staff members create an atmosphere within which we can educate the children towards belonging, partnership and dialogue, because we do not just talk about these values but actually practise them.

Children – the children are also partners in the organisation of the kindergarten's work procedures and decision making for various topics. For example, the decision about the procedure for tidying up the kindergarten, planning the structure of a birthday party or the Hanukkah party, the decision how to celebrate Family Day and what present we will prepare for our family and so forth. Involving the children generates fascinating ideas we would never have thought of ourselves, such as when we had to host the first grade children, we thought about how we should present our kindergarten to them. The children

suggested that each child should be a guide for a different activity (one for the building blocks, one for the dolls, one for painting, one for the library). For each child we prepared an icon tag representing the role. This hosting day was a special experience for everyone.

D. Conflict resolution among children

This is done through independent dialogue – by learning the habits of the kindergarten, the children learned that when they have a problem between them, they should take two chairs, sit facing each other, each explain his point of view and reach an agreement. At the beginning of the year, the adults mediate in the conversations between the children but later on, most of them learn to do it by themselves. Some no longer even need the physical procedure of sitting on two chairs and they resolve the conflicts between them through listening and dialogue. The need for adult mediation diminishes. The atmosphere in the kindergarten is calm with no physical or verbal violence, you don't hear much crying and complaining. Children who come to an adult receive a dialogic response; the adult does not determine the solution, but rather helps the children think for themselves ("What do you suggest doing?" "How can we solve the problem?" and so forth).

E. Learning content

Work is conducted through an "emerging curriculum", i.e. in-depth exploration of broad topics that emerge from the children's world. Examples of topics that emerged this year: spiders, snails, letters, seeds, spaceships, running a restaurant (a real one!), a pirate ship, musical instruments, the spring. The role of the adult is to identify what the children are doing, listen, conduct an active dialogue with the children, document, decipher, and call upon cultural tools to facilitate expansion of the learning. The aim is to encourage children to give meaning to various phenomena in the world around them, to express their ideas in a variety of ways (the "hundred languages of the child"), and to discuss the thoughts they share, without imposing an adult way of thinking. The children's sense of belonging to the kindergarten as a place they live in is based on the fact that the curriculum and work plan derive from their own initiatives and interests.

As part of the changes in the structure of the curriculum, the method of dealing with Jewish festivals also changed. For example, when we started telling the Passover story, the children said they wanted to act it. The mediation of the adults helped to create a plan to do

this, which included allocating roles, creating the scenery, choosing musical accompaniment etc. The topic of Passover was not expressed this year in the "greetings corner" as in the past, but in the theatre centre.

In our kindergarten, the children and the adults are happy and enthusiastic.

Appendix 5: Interview with Rivka (selected parts).

Rivka: They come with knowledge and choice and I see from what happens. For example, the building block corner, they built up high and it fell on their heads, so what happened? We stopped. We talked, we listened and saw from what happened to them, out of their needs, whether they need to learn this habit or don't need it at all. For example, this year – the book corner. I saw that what I did really didn't help. The young ones tore all the books. I took out all the exchange books that they take home. Very slowly, together with them, I put the books back. But I didn't take the children in one group at a time to make a speech and prepare them what to do and what not to do.

Interviewer: What do you mean 'if they need this habit or not'?

Rivka: There are things that I don't have to teach at all because they already know it. Then, ah, I see from what is going on if I need to teach them whether or not to build high, or whether or not I have to tell them to put a game back in its place. if I see that I do, I stop (play) or when everyone is together, in discussion or at that moment what happened. For example, hitting in the middle of play. In the past, I was after a month from the beginning of the year when we were calm, we would take a doll and play a simulation game, pulling on her arm and asking 'what is happening to the doll?' 'Why don't we pull?' and then I take an incident from the field and bring it up when everyone is together or for discussion between two (children), solving problems step by step (cough) we saw that we had not touched on the problem. When we don't have to, we don't deal with it. We do not raise problems.

Interviewer: You are actually talking about relevance.

Rivka: Yes, meaningful, what is meaningful at that moment.

Interviewer: Were there also habits that you gave up on altogether and you see that they do not appear in the field? That you don't need at all?

Rivka: All the…, how to play, all the…, to teach how to glue things and how to play music. For example, to go to the toilet, which is a hard and fast rule, I used to take them and show them how to flush as if at home they have no toilet, how to wipe themselves and throw away the paper, how to turn on the tap, how to wash their hands, a whole thing all

over the house, before going to eat, to roll up their sleeves, one group at a time. (cough) Now what happens, ah, remind me to tell you about the gouache, what happens I sent them, we invited each child and told him to wash his hands, I watched what happened and then if a child really did not flush the toilet because he forgot or was in a hurry, but they know it. If someone turned the tap on too strongly I said: 'Oh, look what happened, it splashed and so on' and from this we learned not to turn the tap on too strongly because it splashes. But I didn't plan ahead and make a speech to explain and teach. The same with the gouache - once I didn't let everyone work until I had explained to them all how to take the paint, how to clean, how to wipe off, how to open a sheet. Now it's not like that. Today I teach four children, we put down a sheet and clean and then when a new child comes, 'you will explain to him how to work', as if I hand over to the children the responsibility for teaching their friends. This year it is a little harder but, ah, the fact is that they are already doing this.

Interviewer: What you said – you are not responsible for teaching everyone.

Rivka: I hand over the responsibility.

...

Interviewer: So actually are you saying that you see some kind of change that takes place in the children once you left the picture?

Rivka: Yes, yes. Ah, like, for example, they used to quarrel and I would immediately jump up, intervene, separate them and so on and so on, and then everything got worse because I am be…, I became the judge and then you try to see who is right, and you never get to who is right and always I wasn't there, and I didn't see what happened. It was the case that always one (side) was hurt. And when I started, last year when I really understood the meaning, then I understood that I am not the judge, even when they hit each other I am not the judge, 'you will sit down and you will talk, you will resolve the problem'. And sometimes they are not even interested in the solution, once they sat down and so on they were friends again and went back to and …once they talked and conversed in this way of listening and dialogue.

Interviewer: But what does it give them? That means that you have a theory about what enables them so that later they can carry on playing?

Rivka: Ah, also in that we gave them another tool to solve a problem because they always understand that the adult, to rely on the adult, the adult solves the problem for them, here they see that there isn't one, once we hand the baton over to them they talk and they see that they don't always have to run to us, and they don't always need to hit, they can talk, they can listen and they, they say they invite each other to a conversation and ….

Interviewer: Are they more, that means that earlier also, also in the previous kindergarten you told them to manage on their own?

Rivka: Yes.

Interviewer: So what is the difference?

Rivka: Because then I didn't know, I didn't know about this method of listening, listening to each other, of dialogue, like they would come to me and one says one thing and the other says something else, (for) many things I used to say 'try and get along' I wasn't, I mean I didn't teach how, because they don't know on their own, because at home it is also solved for them, and I did not give them the tool, I didn't sit with them, I didn't show them like, 'tell him' because they always talked to me, not to each other so I taught them to talk among themselves that…, that they are important enough I am not the only one who is important here, as if we moved aside and so on.

Interviewer: In other words there was a learning process before you moved aside.

Rivka: Yes, yes, I sat with them, like you explain, I sit with them, 'tell him' he says to me and then 'tell him what you told me', I also direct them because they don't know, they make suggestions but it is not like the children in the compulsory kindergarten where they, where we solved everything by discussion, in a team meeting they came up with lots of ideas and tried them. The young ones, ah, know less how to make suggestions, but they start.

...

Interviewer: I was just going to ask you about that.

Rivka: The parents and the children, once the children did not work in collaboration, every day the child did his own work and the parents expected to see his work and …, last year I hardly had any pieces of work (in the kindergarten) at all there was just a 3-dimensional piece, no single dimensional ones. I had nothing to hang on the board, because everything was collaborative, everything was big - pirates and ships and a television. Everything was 3-dimensional and collaborative. How they worked together, how they shared, once I didn't have that. The children are really like last year, always collaborating. What happened to them because they are always talking about what they are doing, but talking a lot. They saw it also in first grade that they know what they want, they explain, and they have the warmth, and they are very verbal, and very tolerant and explain to their friends that not all solutions are getting angry, or in everything they are more organised, I don't even know how to explain it.

Interviewer: Can you say what makes it so?

Rivka: I think that the whole atmosphere in the kindergarten, the whole approach, all the listening, when we listen to them and 'what I say is important' then they become also more confident about listening and all this openness. So okay, something happened, I don't give a punishment like 'sit in the kitchen and don't move'. I have never sent anyone to the kitchen, yes? Everything is important, the value of the child is important, everything that happens to the child is important to us. A child speaks, communicates. It is important. It is important for us what happens with them. A child is not going to work, having a coffee and leaving, that's how I can explain it. I also don't know yet how to explain how it is that they always know with me by the end how to read and know arithmetic and…, I don't know how to explain the fact that I did not teach last year and everything was through playing and through activities and they reached much more. They knew thousands of the cards, they knew how to write not in capital letters, because I was documenting all day and so they identified their names. I never put up a ruler with the lower case letters, they said 'we want that too, the way you write' and they knew how to read part of what was written from the documentation. Writing is meaningful, I don't know how to explain it.

Interviewer: From the documentation you put up on the big board?

Rivka: On the board, because I sit all the time and write and they watch: 'That's Tal, You wrote my name didn't you? Write it.' Even now I have a girl who came to tell me and says to me 'you write and I will tell you something.' They asked me 'why are you writing?' I said 'because it is important for me to remember what you say…'

Appendix 6: Iinterview with Yafa (selected parts)

…

Yafa: Yes, first of all the kindergarten was less open. It was limited, here three children, five children in the dolls corner, only three children in the building block corner, one child in the doctors' corner, a completely different approach to setting boundaries. At ten o'clock the bell rings, all kinds of rules like that which are fixed and less variable. They didn't change, but it was the routine. As if, let's say, a child created something, it is not like here in the programme itself where any day, any time you can get enthusiastic about what the child made or about a sentence the child said or a theory the child presented. You haven't got it, it's missing, it's missing.

Interviewer: Because there was a limited amount of time for creative work there?

Yafa: A limited time. At 11 o'clock they had to go out into the yard at that time. In this approach, in this programme the kindergarten flows. As if it comes at the expense of something else. Look if…..

Interviewer: At the expense of what?

Yafa: I'll tell you what. If, for example, the assistant used to do the dishes let's say at exactly half past ten, today, I don't allow myself to do the dishes at half past ten. I can do them at half past eleven or a quarter to twelve, depending on how things are going.

Interviewer: That means actually that you have to be flexible?

Yafa: Yes.

Interviewer: And was that something that you had difficulty with?

Yafa: No, on the contrary. It didn't bother me because my actual giving to the children was more important than anything else. You see? It wasn't something that bothered me. I, for example, whenever I worked with some supplementary teacher, who was really strict, so that if I asked her for something would say to me no, no, no, sweetie, this is how I want it. That's what she would say I'm like that, not to the left and not to the right I come and do my job and at the end of the day goodbye and see you next time. You see? So for me, like when we worked like that it was all right, it was very all right, but when I got to know the programme differently, today I look at things differently. So I say, how did we ever work like that? Because it is terrible, like, to say to a child you won't go into the dolls corner today because you make a mess of everything, you will go somewhere else or you will go and draw now because,

Interviewer: Why is that terrible?

Yafa: Because the child does not express who he is, his feelings, he cannot develop. He simply cannot develop. I also asked Hadas (academic adviser, a.p.) I said to her just a minute and what if the child wants to be in the dolls corner all day or wants to be in the building blocks area all day, should we let him? She said yes, there, right there, he can develop. And it happens, and we see it.

Interviewer: Do you see this today?

Yafa: Of course. Or for example, we would do artwork like an assembly belt. We would stick onto an orange crate a child, a woman, a ladder, whatever, everyone the same. I call that an assembly line. It was terrible. But as for me, actually we always worked, I didn't learn the artistic side, but it was there in the kindergarten. As if they always let the children work freely. Even when I worked at Dalia's, and even that, but when kindergarten teachers used to come, and you have to work like that no matter what. But in the kindergarten, like I am a creative person, I don't know how to explain it to you.

…

Interviewer: So from your experience in your kindergarten, are there these kinds of conflicts among the children?

Yafa: Lots, lots, all the time you see it all the time. I think that at this age they are very egocentric, everyone thinks is it only his. It is his and why should I give it to him now? We actually teach them to solve the problem. If, for example, we have a clothes wardrobe in the kindergarten, only one, and two children want the same wardrobe at the same time, what will we do? How can we create a situation where they won't quarrel? And they are both crying, screaming 'it's mine, it's mine' what can we do? After all we haven't got, we have only one wardrobe, what can we do? So actually we will ask them what happened. He will say I want the wardrobe, it's mine, I got it, and the other will say I want it, I got it. And so we argue. They should try to solve the problem. What can be done? So the one can say but I want it, then there is also one who gives in. I think so, that there is always one who gives in.

Interviewer: So your goal in this conversation is that one of them should give in?

Yafa: Either he will or he won't, and if he doesn't, then we try to mediate. You see. We try to mediate. Then we can suggest: what do you want to do with the wardrobe? He might say I want to take it home. And the other will say, no, I want to take it over there. So we can make suggestions. It can also come from another friend.

Interviewer: The other friend can make a suggestion?

Yafa: Sometimes one friend suggests something, and then they listen. Then they say, 'maybe he will have it for a little while and then I will have it a bit', and then usually there are those who give in. I think that there are usually those who give in. And the one who does not give in, he plays with it.

Interviewer: If it were up to you, what would you prefer, that there be more giving in or not more giving in?

Yafa: Not, not giving in. I don't want it to come to a situation of giving in, that he gives in to everything, no. My aim is to teach him that the child has the right to play with the same wardrobe. You see? So usually, they come to an agreement or they leave it and go somewhere else, or through the conversation between them they say so it will be you and then me.

Interviewer: OK, if you can, think of all kinds of situations you have seen in the kindergarten in which there are conflicts. You gave me one example of a quarrel about an object that each child wanted. In what other situations are there conflicts?

Yafa: About games, building

Interviewer: You mean while playing, while building.

Yafa: Building, playing, in the yard, it can happen.

Interviewer: Following what does the conflict arise?

Yafa: I think that at this age they are more possessive, it is more important to them that it is mine now and only mine.

Interviewer: Quarrels about objects.

Yafa: Objects, yes, usually about objects. Or sometimes also violence. And when they disagree, they hit. When they don't succeed in taking what they want, they hit.

Interviewer: So the question here is really how, from your experience, how do they resolve the conflicts? So one answer you gave is by violence, right? What other ways, or giving in, and what other ways have you seen?

Yafa: Giving in or, through our actual learning its in no, like, in the programme. It really teaches them to solve the problem themselves. Letting them deal with it.

Interviewer: That means you will be where?

Yafa: I can through my question. I am actually the mediator. Now, at this age at first they didn't know at all. They didn't know at all what I wanted from them. So I would tell them. I would tell them, teach them really. 'You tell him', we would sit them down and we would say, 'tell him what you told me'. So he did. And I say to the other one, 'and what do you think'? And he says. He took it from me. He pulled, I had it. Then I ask, actually I mediate between the two of them in this situation.

…

Yafa: Look, last year they actually took chairs and sat down and there was another, third child who would speak to him, they really ran it all without our help. But at this age I very much think [two unclear words], but there are those, David for example, David's brother was with us last year. So probably at home when they were fighting, Tal and him, they would sit down. The mother used to say that they used to sit and try to solve the problem. Now, he comes from a background like that which is the same as in the kindergarten. For example, when he sees two children fighting, he says, you took it from him, so you should give it to him, so try to resolve it. Like that he speaks as if in our language. I tell you. And that comes from the fact that this child was in our kindergarten.

Interviewer: David teaches other children?

Yafa: Twice it happened that we saw him mediating himself between the children.

Appendix 7: Comparing the Israeli kindergarten with the Reggio Emilia approach

Feature		Reggio Emilia approach	Israeli kindergarten
The image of the child	Similarities	Knowledgeable, an active learner, learns in social context, has discourse skills, unique in thinking and its expressions, initiates, is independent, can make choices, collaborator, participator	Knowledgeable, an active learner, learns in social context, has discourse skills, unique in thinking and its expressions, initiates, is independent, can make choices, collaborator, participator
	Differences	-	-
Teacher's role	Similarities	Partner in learning Facilitator: listens, mediates, Provocateur Cultural agent: imparts norms of behaviour, being a model Relations with the community: participation, modes of communication, transparency	Partner in learning Facilitator: listens, mediates, Provocateur Cultural agent: imparts norms of behaviour, being a model Relations with the community: participation, modes of communication, transparency

	Differences	Listening as a value and a tool Mediating through dialogue as a value and a tool The teacher provokes by presenting scientific and artistic challenges Reciprocal relations with the wider community	Listening as a tool Mediating through dialogue as a tool The teacher provokes by organizing setting, projects, and solving social problems Relations with the parents community
Components of the educational environment	Similarities	Activity areas: children's activities, children's preferences Principle of choice: where to act, how to organize Private and public space: individual belonging, group belonging Daily timetable: flexibility, continuity	Activity areas: children's activities, children's preferences Principle of choice: where to act, how to organize Private and public space: individual belonging, group belonging Daily timetable: flexibility, continuity
	Differences	Emphasis on enquiry and discovery	Emphasis on free play

Praxis	Similarities	Curriculum: learning processes, emergence, project, deepening, meaningfulness, investigation and discovery, dialogue Documentation: basis for planning, sharing, assessment, reflection, visibility The hundred languages of children: information processing, expressing knowledge	Curriculum: learning processes, emergence, project, deepening, meaningfulness, investigation and discovery, dialogue Documentation: basis for planning, sharing, assessment, reflection, visibility The hundred languages of children: information processing, expressing knowledge
	Differences		Lesser scope of implementation

Appendix 8: Transcription of conflicts

Conflict description (11 16.4)

In the playground, Ran and Yosi are arguing over a big cardboard box. Each one tries to grab the box from the other. They push each other crying and screaming and pull the cardboard box. They try and push each other away. Doron comes closer. He stands at the side for a few seconds and looks at his friends. He approaches them, grabs the side of the box and shakes it. Because he did not succeed in releasing it he pulls Ran in an attempt to release his hold on it. He manages to release one of Ran's hands but he grabs the box again. After another failed attempt, Doron leaves the scene and leaves Ran and Yosi and screaming and crying.

Conflict resolution (6 21.3)

Hadar and Lia are sitting on a sofa in the dolls corner. They are pushing the dolls pram back and forth. Tal asks to be the mother in this play. Lia says to him: "We don't need mummies". Tal pushes the pram towards them and stops them from moving it forward. Lia and Maya make noises of frustration and push the pram forward. They look at me and silently ask for help. Itamar runs to Tal and says: "Tal, Tal, let me push. Tal, I'll push". Tal moves aside and Itamar tries to push the pram towards Lia and Hadar, but it doesn't move. Itamar (says loudly): "Tal, come and help me". Tal comes. Hadar gets up and says: "Oh, now I'll tell on you" and carries on resisting the pushing of the pram. Itamar decides to stop the struggle, puts his arm around Tal and says: "Tal, let's leave them alone". Itamar and Tal move away.

Conflict description: (4 30.10)

Doron, Itai, Sagi and Tal are playing in the building blocks corner. Sagi sits on the blocks just as Tal was going to do the same. Tal starts crying, saying "Go away!" to Sagi. Itai turns to Tal and suggests: "A little jump". Tal looks at his friends and says: "He took my place". From a distance, Doron says "so jump into the water". Doron repeats his

suggestions a few times. Meanwhile, Stav approaches Sagi and says: “Can I sit down?” Sagi makes room for him and says: “Here, there’s room”. Tal looks at them, crosses his arms and makes an angry face. Then Itai goes to him, holds his shoulder and says: “Come, sit there.” Tal follows Itai.

Conflict description (11 22.1)

Liat and Maya (twin sisters) are sitting on chairs in the playground, squabbling and hitting each other over who will be the train’s ‘engine’. Nurit is sitting next to them and Raz is standing near them. They are both listening to the fight.... Nurit is explaining to the camera the reason for the conflict: “because she’s the engine (pointing to Maya) and she’s the engine (pointing to Liat)”. Nurit turns to Maya “So, so, so… Maya, stand here. Stand here and then….”, she indicates the place behind her with her hand. Maya to Nurit: “No, I’ll be the engine”. Nurit to Maya: “You’re the engine and she’s the engine (turning her head towards Liat and places her palm on Liat’s palm as the latter holds the back of the chair) and she’s the engine (turning her head towards Maya and put her hand on Maya’s) OK? (turning to Liat) both of you (turning to Maya), you’ll be…” (indicating the place behind her with her hand). Maya to Nurit: “Me first and then we’ll swap”. Nurit to Maya: “Yes, come on, so…” (again pointing to the place behind her by tapping on the back of her chair)…..

Conflict description (14 19.3)

A group of children are playing in the theatre corner. They are arguing about the roles they were given.

Hadar turns to the camera: “Just one show and just one audience”. Omri: “Because, because. Because…” Ran: “I want to be the pl… the play manager”. Omri: “… I don’t want you to, you be the audience.” Ran: “I want to be the play manager.” Omri: “Because…I don’t allow you”. Ran: “I want to”. Omri: “I don’t allow you”. Ran: “What are you…. We want, we must” Omri: “We don’t have to”. Ran: “We have to”. Roei P. “Not true”. Ran: “Yes true” Omri: “Not true” Ran: “Yes true”. Omri: “Not true”. Ran:

“Yes true”. Omri: “Not true”. Ran: “I …” “Omri: Well, so you are not going to take part in the show”. Lia joins the conversation: “You are…he is taking part”. Ran: “I want to be the play manager”. Omri: “… Maybe we will both be play managers”. Ran: “Let’s do it”.

Conflict description (7 27.11)

Tal, Itay, Yossi and Stav are playing in the building block corner. Tal sits on one of the blocks and Itay tries to sit beside him. Tal sees this and starts to scream and punch Itay. Stav intervenes and says to Tal: “That’s my horse, my horse”. Tal answers: “It’s my horse. There are more in the back.” Stav insists: “It’s my horse”. He points to his mouth with his finger, says: “Quiet!” hits Tal and moves away. Or, who is standing near them says: “Tal is dumb.” Itay sits on the building block.

Conflict description (5 22.1)

Sagi, Yossi and Dan are playing in the corner of the house playing dragons. Suddenly Sagi begins to shout at Yossi and hit him. Dan, who is near them, pulls at Sagi, who is leaning over Yossi and says: “Mmmmmm, Sagi, but you should know that I remember that the dragon was a kind-hearted dragon. I remember that it was a kind-hearted dragon”. His response made Yossi stand up. Yossi: “Ahhh, you pushed me, you…. I’ll tell on you (walks to the teacher). Dan turns to Sagi and carries on: “I remember that it is because the dragon was, the dragon was kind hearted”. Sagi answers him: “No, I don’t remember”. Dan: “I do remember.” Play stopped.

Appendix 9: Transcription of conflicts

Conflict description (12 26.2)

Neta goes to the dining table with an empty plate and sits down smiling next to Ayelet. She does not notice that there is already a plate there with a slice of bread, indicating that the seat is taken. Ayelet, who was also sitting at the table shouts: "Tamar, she took your place." Maya approaches, turns to Neta and says: "No, I was here. Get uuuupppp!!"Neta keep sitting. She picks up the plate with the slice of bread and says to Neta: "Now I will tell on you" (goes with plate in hand to the teacher). Tamar comes up to the teacher and says: "Yafa, she took my place." Yafa answers: "Who did?" Tamar answers: "Neta". Yafa turns to Neta and says: "Neta, get up. You can see she has bread in her hand with the plate. Get up sweetie." Neta throws her bread onto the table. She picks up the empty plate and vacates the seat.

Conflict description (4 11.1)

Around the play-dough table, are Dafna, Neomi, Avivit, Tamar and Adi. Dafna and Neomi say to Avivit "You're little". Avivit is looking offended and says to her friends angrily: "I'm not little, No." Dafna insists: "Yes you are." Avivit calls loudly, whining: "Rivka, Rivka, Rivka". Rivka comes to the table. Avivit looks up at Rivka and wails: "They called me 'little', I…." Rivka asks: "What did they say to you?" (she pulls up an empty chair next to Neomi, and leans over to help Tamar with the dough). Avivit answers: "Little". Rivka goes on: "And are you little?" Avivit: "No" (shaking her head.) Rivka: "So tell them." Avivit turns to Dafna and says: "I am not little." Dafna and Neomi apologize to Avivit of their own accord. Rivka turns to Neomi and Dafna and says: "You apologised? Well done!" The girls continue playing with the dough.

Conflict description (9 13.11)

Katya and Shelli A are playing with each other in the building block corner. Tal approaches, watches, gets onto the blocks the girls are playing with and asks to climb into

the hiding place near them. Katya and Shelli refuse to let him do it. Tal walks on the blocks, tries to move them and in so doing kicks Shelli's foot. Shelli A. says to Tal: "Stop it! Stop it!" Tal keeps on moving the blocks. Shelli goes on: "I'll tell my Granny about you." Tal looks at her and does not respond. He gets off the blocks and goes to the plastic washing machine nearby. Katya says to Shelli: "Tell Rivka (the teacher)". Tal says: "No!" But Katya again says: "Tell Rivka." Shelli goes to Rivka and Katya says: "I'm coming with you. Shelli and Katya go to Rivka. Katya says: "He slapped me on the foot". Rivka call Tal over: "Tal, Where's Tal, come here, sweetie, Katya wants to talk to you." Rivka goes to Tal's hiding place with a document binder. She addresses him: "No, No, sweetie. We are talking about the problem.

Appendix 10: Children interview 3

Interviewers: the researcher (Anat), the kindergarten's teacher (Rivka)

Watching the film: 19.3, Conflict 14

The children are talking while watching the video.

- I hear the kindergarten teacher
- I saw me

Good. What do you say?

I saw that then they said : “not true, yes true’ and then Ran cried, and then they said : “we will both be the play managers”

. . .

Anat : Yes. What else did you see there?

Rivka : What does it start with? I didn’t see.

Anat : Yes, how? What? What happened here anyway? What happened?

Omri : becasuse, Ran and I . . . we wanted him to be the play manager . . . that the play manager, and then, and then I said a new solution :

We will both be play managers, and then I said . . .

Ran : I should have told them that . . .

Rivka : and Ran agreed to accept your suggestion that both of them would be managers?

Omri : Yes

Rivka : What did you quarrel about : yes tue, not true?

Omri : Because he also wanted to be the play manager.

Rivka : Ahh. And in the end you decided it would be both of you?

Ran : and he said, Omri said : I don’t allow you to be the play manager.

Rivka : Ahh. That was at the beginning.

Yes

Rivka : Yes? Ahh . . . so about that you said : yes true, not true?

Yes

Rivka : and eventually you decided . . .

Anat : Ran, do you remember what happened? Why did you come to me? You told me : “Anat, they did something not nice to me” - why did you come to tell me that?

Ran : I don’t know

You don’t know? Can anyone think why Ran came to me and said : “Anat, they did that to me . . . “?

Because they behaved unkindly to him (not Ran).

Anat : If they behaved unkindly towards him, then why did he come and tell me? What was he thinking?

Anat : What can I do there, in this argument of yours?

Ran : You could calm them down.

Anat : I could calm them down? What else could I do?

- You could explain to them.

I could explain to them. What else? Sometimes I really saw, when I film you and it happens that you are arguing and right away you go to Rivka or to Yafa. Why? Why do you go to Rivka or to Yafa?

Rivka : Why do you come to me when you’re arguing or quarrelling?

To tell you.

Rivka : Why do you come to tell me?

Because we can come.

Rivka : So why do you come to tell me?

That what happened to us happened.

Rivka : That what happened to you happened? And what do you want me to do?

You'll calm them down.

Rivka : That I'll calm them?

Yes

Anat : Who do you want Rivka to calm down? Which children?

- The ones who hit
- Omri

Anat : The ones who hit?

Yes

Anat : The ones who hit, that she'll calm them?

Yes

Good. Do you want to see it again?

Yes (a number of children together).

Appendix 11: Intervention through conversation following a conflict (28.5a)

Context: The conversation takes place in the building corner. The conflict occurred between Yosi and Sagi. Omri and Itamar., who were nearby and playing with them, joined in the conversation. David, Raz., and Neta joined as observers. Rivka, the teacher guiding the conversation. She appears after hearing crying.

Itamar. looks up at her, points with both hands to Sagi and Yosi and says: "They're crying, both of them."

Sagi looks up at Rivka as he cries.

Rivka: "Let's get chairs and find out what happened."

Yarin comes and turns to Rivka in a whining tone: "David wants to hit me"

David appears behind Rivka's back and sits on the sofa to her left, beside Yosi, while looking up at Rivka.

Yosi, holding a toy syringe in his hand, looks up at Rivka and continues crying.

At the same time, **Rivka** takes a chair and puts it in front of her and Yarin repeats his whining: "He wants to hit me" - now pointing at David, who has sat down to the side.

Rivka to Stav: "What happened to him? What happened?" (bending forward and holding the back of the chair in front of her).

Rivka: "Go and get a drink of water, calm down and come and talk. Go and drink some water" (turns to Sagi and places her hand on his head).

Yosi (crying): "Don't want to" (brings the syringe close to his foot and kicks the air, irritated)

Rivka to Sagi: "Are you [plural - AP] choosing to cry?"

Omri climbs onto the structure Sagi is sitting on, and sits next to him again.

Raz is seen standing behind the structure Sagi is sitting on and looks down.

Sagi (crying): "But Yosi hit me" (looks up at Rivka and points to Yosi)

Yosi continues crying.

David gets up for a moment and pulls on a toy stethoscope he had been sitting on.

Liat approaches Rivka and asks her to help her take off her blouse.

Rivka: “I don’t know what happened. Let’s find out what happened. I can’t know, this one is crying and that one is crying”.

Rivka turns to help Liat, but explains that one can’t only wear a vest in the kindergarten.

Yosi cries louder, stamps his feet in irritation and screams: “Stoooop, Stooop…”

Rivka sits down with a sigh (“Aaaaah…”) and asks Yosi: “Have you finished crying?”

Yosi continues to cry.

Rivka: “ I can’t know what happened” (opens and closes her palms in a gesture expressing ‘what can I do?’)

Sagi (whining): “Yosi hit me and beat me” (pointing to Yosi)

Rivka: “Beat you?”

Sagi nods.

Rivka looks at Yosi and starts to ask him something, but stops and turns to Omri who starts to speak to her at the same time.

Omri: “No. I’ll tell you, because, because, because, what happened to Yosi and Sagi and … Ben” (accompanies his speech with movement of his left arm with an open palm, and finally turns his head to the side and points to Itamar., who is to the side outside the frame.

Rivka to Omri (as he speaks): “What happened? What?”

Rivka to Yosi: “But Yosi, you should calm down, what? You should calm down, drink some water and then we will find out”

At the same time Rivka addresses Yosi, Omri stutters (“Uhm …uhm … uhm … uhm…”) and then stands in front of Rivka, points at Yosi and explains loudly: “Yosi – because he hit Sagi (points at Sagi) because Sagi wanted to sit here and I took Yosi’s seat (pointing to the place next to Sagi, where he had just been sitting) so he began to cry, and then he hit him” (pointing to Yosi).

Yosi jumps on his seat, irritated.

Itamar. sits next to Sagi in the seat Omri has just vacated.

Rivka nods as she listens and looks around in the directions Omri points to.

Rivka: "Who is *he*?"

Yosi points in front of him and whines: "That's Itamar's place and that's …"

Omri "Yosi" (points towards Yosi)

Yosi rocks his upper body back and forth.

Rivka: "Ah"

Yosi (gets up and approaches Sagi as he continues whining): "That's Itamar's place (pointing at Sagi) and that's my place (pointing at Itamar.) turn around"

Raz stands between Rivka and Yosi observing.

Rivka: "I understand. So now I … I want to see if I have understood properly…"

Omri to Rivka (interrupting her words): "and in the end I didn't have anywhere to sit" (waves his arms in the air)

Rivka: "So wait a moment, Yosi wanted the seat and so he hit Sagi because of that?" (pointing with her thumb towards Sagi)

David gets up from the sofa and appears in the background behind Sagi and Itamar.

Omri: "Yes"

Rivka: "Is that what happened, Yosi? Yosi?"

Yosi leans his head back on the sofa and continues crying without answering.

Rivka: "But wait, do you think…"

Itamar. stands in front of Rivka and interrupts her: "No. I built other seats. I built other seats".

Rivka: But Yosi, if you cry, we won't be able to solve this. It won't help – not crying and not hitting. Let's think how you can solve this."

Now both Neta and Raz. come and sit on the sofa next to Yosi.

Yosi stops crying.

Rivka: “No. Because here crying solves nothing. Nothing. You can cry all day. If you [plural – AP] do not talk and solve things, they won’t be solved. Right, what do you think, David?”

David, who has moved to a corner behind the structure Sagi is sitting on, nods his head.

At the same time, Itamar. turns to Omri, who has meanwhile sat down beside Sagi in the seat where Itamar. had been sitting: “Omri, Omri”

Omri “What?”

Itamar.: “Do you want to sit on top, higher than him?” (pointing to the corner of the blocks)

Omri and Sagi look in the direction Itamar. is pointing.

Omri: “Oh, yes” (gets down from the seat next to Sagi and apparently joins Itamar. at the corner of the blocks to the left of the frame.

Rivka to Yosi (at the same time as the exchange between Itamar. and Omri): “So do you want to tell me what happened? Did they take your seat? Did they take your place?”

Yosi keeps on crying.

Rivka: “OK Yosi, when you calm down, come and speak to me. I can’t help you”.

Neta and Raz. sit next to Yosi, looking thoughtful.

Raz. gets up from the sofa and calls out: “Itamar”

Rivka gets up and turns to David who is holding a stethoscope: “David, put it away, it belongs to the doctor. Put it back,” (pointing to the stethoscope, holding David’s arm and seemingly directing him towards to doctor’s corner).

Yosi continues crying in the background.

Appendix 12: Pre-service training in democratic pedagogy

Pre-service training in democratic pedagogy – a course on "Study Planning"

Training for democratic pedagogy conducted at the Teacher Education College is part of a broader training programme based on a humanist worldview and early childhood developmental knowledge. This course relates to the issue of planning studies and takes place during the second out of four years of study. The course integrates theoretical study at the college and hands-on experience in an educational setting in the field through the analysis of incidents that have taken place in the classroom on the one hand, and on the other, through actual implementation in the kindergarten of the practices learned in class. The teacher, a lecturer at the college, is also a mentor who works with the students within the educational setting. The students' practical work is done in kindergartens that reflect democratic pedagogy to a great extent and cooperate with the college as Professional Development Schools.

Course objectives

- Develop an educational creed based on democratic values such as participation, listening and dialogue
- Develop self awareness and flexibility of thought as the basis for cultivating a professional identity
- Understand the connection between a worldview and planning learning for early childhood
- Understand the connection between features of early childhood and constructing a curriculum for this age
- Develop the ability to listen and create dialogic discourse between the student teacher and the children and among the educational staff.
- Cultivating the image of the competent child
- Cultivating community-oriented (community of learners and surrounding community) thinking and educational activity

Topics

- The image of the child – different concepts of childhood, children's rights, children's culture
- What is a kindergartener? – familiarity and amazement
- The image of the desired adult
- Investigation of the values guiding educational activity
- How kindergarteners learn – through participation, through play and from the more knowledgeable 'other'.
- Democratic pedagogy practices: listening and documentation, the child's 100 languages, emerging projects
- Conflict resolution among kindergarteners – empowerment training, empathy and mediating between the children
- Kindergarten management based on democratic pedagogy: organisation of the educational setting, timetable, team work, contact with parents, adapting the curriculum to the individual based on gathering and analysis of information.

Teaching methods

Lessons follow the principles of the humanist approach and take place in an atmosphere of listening and dialogue. Thus the training lessons will model the educational process parallel to the processes the student teachers generate with the children in the kindergarten. The democratic values are as indicators according to which the student teachers explore their personal values and the choices they make when managing interactions with the children.

Emphasis is placed on observing and listening to the children in order to get to know them and be amazed by them. In this manner, the use of documentation is established as an educational practice. Listening opens the way to identifying topics that are of interest to

the children and to develop a learning project that creates an opportunity to apply other practices.

There is also quite a lot of emphasis on the social-emotional aspect of kindergarteners through in-class analysis of their social interactions. Parallel to the channel stressing the children as a group, there is also treatment of individuals within the group by getting to know one child in depth and creating a specific intervention programme for that child. The student teacher must get to know the child within the context and put together a programme that takes place mostly within the group of children during the regular daily timetable. Analysis of issues that arise from their practical experience is conducted through the prism of the democratic values and thus the decision making process takes into account both the group of children and the individual child at one and the same time.

Student teachers practise dialogic discourse and conflict resolution in class as part of the natural learning process that occurs through the very fact that they are a group and during the interactions in the kindergarten. The mentor creates room for discussion of this issue and even provides modelling of conflict resolution mediation at the college and in the kindergarten.

The lesson is given as a workshop with varied teaching methods: peer teaching, pair and group discussions, expression of processes and ideas through various means (plastic arts, music, drama etc.). Theoretical materials are dealt with through various audio-visual means such as videos, PowerPoint presentations and so forth.

The hands-on practice is conducted in a kindergarten that applies a humanist-dialogic worldview. The student teachers are perceived by the mentor and by the kindergarten teacher as part of the staff and are thus involved in the running of the kindergarten. Once every six weeks, the counsellor remains for the 3-hour staff meeting during which the planning studies is discussed as well as coping with dilemmas and deliberations concerning either topics or children.

Appendix 13: Parent/carer consent form

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM

NAME OF PARENT/CARER:

Title of the project: **Conflict resolution among children in a kindergarten class that uses a "Reggio Approach".**

Main investigator and contact details: Anat Porat

TL. 03-6852451 anatporat@hotmail.co.il

1. I agree to allow my son/daughter take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what his/her role will be in this research, and all our questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I understand that my son/daughter can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
4. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my son/daughter provides will be safeguarded.
5. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
6. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection Act 1998: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as

outlined to me. I further agree to the University processing personal data about me described as Sensitive Data within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name of parent/carer

(print)……Signed……Date

Name of witness

(print)……Signed……Date

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw your son/daughter from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of the project: Conflict resolution among children in a kindergarten class that uses a "Reggio Approach".

I WISH TO WITHDRAW MY SON/DAUGHTER FROM THIS STUDY

Child's Name:_____

Signed: _____Date:_____

"The University" includes APU and its partner colleges

Appendix 14: Participants information sheet – parents

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- parents

Conflict Resolution among Children in a Kindergarten Class Using a "Reggio Approach"

In the coming school year the kindergarten where your child is learning will take part in a study. The aim of the study is to examine how children resolve conflict in a kindergarten class using a "Reggio Approach". Since dialogism is one of the principles of this approach, the study is interested in discovering whether or not the children internalize this value and solve conflicts among themselves through negotiation. The results of the study will contribute to the comprehension of the "Reggio Approach" and to the development of ways of lessening violence in kindergartens.

The researcher (myself) will visit the kindergarten once a fortnight for nine months. During this day I will document (using recordings, videos and observations) the **natural way** in which the children manage conflicts among themselves during their activities in the kindergarten. That is, with no manipulation on my part. In addition, I will talk with the children (conduct an interview) in a group regarding the way they have managed a conflict which appeared three times during the course of the study.

The kindergarten teacher will be involved with the children and their activities in the usual manner, so my influence as a researcher will be minimal. As documentation is part of the way of life in this kindergarten, there is no need to worry that my presence will cause the children any difficulty.

The research does not involve any type of testing and does not involve the comparison of individual children.

Throughout the course of the study and the publication of its results, the children are assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The documented materials will be used for research purposes only, will be kept in a safe, secure place (under lock and key or computer password), and will be destroyed five years after publication of the results. The results will be published using no

identifying details regarding the kindergarten and/or the children. Data will also be collected through interviews with the staff, and analysis of the documentation they carry on regularly. The data analysis will be qualitative – text and content analysis.

The study is carried out as part of a study towards a PhD degree at APU University in Britain. I'm, a Pedagogical Advisor in Kibutzim College, and part of the team that developed the implementation of the "Reggio Approach".

Your consent to your child's participation in the program will allow me to observe a group of children throughout the year, but you may withdraw this consent whenever you wish. A child not wishing to continue his/her participation in the study may stop doing so, even if his/her parents have given their consent.

For further details:

Anat Porat

Tel. 03-6852451

Cell phone: 054-7559202

anat_porat@hotmail.co.il

Sincerely,

Anat Porat

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,

TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Appendix15: Teachers consent form

TEACHERS CONSENT FORM

NAME OF TEACHER:

Title of the project: **Conflict resolution among children in a kindergarten class that uses a "Reggio Approach".**

Main investigator and contact details: Anat Porat

TL. 03-6852451

anat_porat@hotmail.co.il

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information provides will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection Act 1998: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as

outlined to me. I further agree to the University processing personal data about me described as Sensitive Data within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name of teacher

(print)……Signed……Date

Name of witness

(print)……Signed……Date

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of the project: Conflict resolution among children in a kindergarten class that uses a "Reggio Approach".

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name:_____

Signed: _____Date:_____

"The University" includes APU and its partner colleges

Appendix 16: Participants' information sheet– teachers

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- TEACHERS

Conflict Resolution among Children in a Kindergarten Class Using a "Reggio Approach"

In the coming school year your kindergarten will take part in a study. The aim of the study is to examine how children resolve conflict in a kindergarten class using a "Reggio Approach". Since dialogism is one of the principles of this approach, the study is interested in discovering whether or not the children internalize this value and solve conflicts among themselves through negotiation. The results of the study will contribute to the comprehension of the "Reggio Approach" and to the development of ways of lessening violence in kindergartens.

The researcher (myself) will visit the kindergarten once a fortnight for nine months. During this day I will document (using recordings, videos and observations) the **natural way** in which the children manage conflicts among themselves during their activities in the kindergarten. That is, with no manipulation on my part. In addition, I will talk with the children (conduct an interview) in a group regarding the way they have managed a conflict which appeared three times during the course of the study.

The educational staff will be asked to in-depth interviews regarding their perceptions on resolving conflicts in the kindergarten class and regarding the "Reggio Approach". The researcher will ask to use teacher's documentation of children's conversations during the day's interactions.

The kindergarten teacher will be involved with the children and their activities in the usual manner, so my influence as a researcher will be minimal. As documentation is part of the way of life in your kindergarten, there is no need to worry that my presence will cause the children any difficulty.

Throughout the course of the study and the publication of its results, the teachers and the children are assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The documented materials will be used for research purposes only, will be kept in a safe, secure place (under lock and key or computer password), and will be destroyed five years after publication of the results. The results will be published using no identifying details regarding the kindergarten, teachers and/or the children. Data will also be collected through interviews with the staff, and analysis of the documentation you carry on regularly. The data analysis will be qualitative – text and content analysis.

The study is carried out as part of a study towards a PhD degree at APU University in Britain. I'm, a Pedagogical Advisor in Kibutzim College, and part of the team that developed the implementation of the "Reggio Approach".

Your consent to take part in the program will allow me to observe a group of children throughout the year in your kindergarten, but you may withdraw this consent whenever you wish.

For further details:

Anat Porat

Tel. 03-6852451

Cell phone: 054-7559202

anat_porat@hotmail.co.il

Sincerely,

Anat Porat

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,

TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Appendix 17: Participants information and consent form –children

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION - **CHILDREN**

AND

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Conflict Resolution among Children in a Kindergarten Class Using a "Reggio Approach"

The researcher will talk with all the children in the kindergarten, obtaining their consent to her presence there, and explaining the purpose of writing and videotaping. She will explain them that she is interesting in children relationship and she will listen to their conversation and look at their play. She will talk personally with each child taking part in the study in order to obtain his/her consent to be observed and recorded, and to attach a neck microphone to their shirts for the purposes of recording. Their agreement will be **video record**.

The researcher will clarify to the children that s/he may withdraw from the study at any point in time.