**[Mary Holwell]:** How does good pedagogical documentation make you a better educator?

**[Karen Hope]:** Oh, Mary, let me count the ways. I mean, the difference between good pedagogical documentation and documentation for documentation's sake is profound. And hopefully, in this webinar, educators listening into it will get a sense of why this is a better way to work. Why generating good pedagogical documentation is ultimately a better way to go to work. So, what good pedagogical documentation does and why it makes us better educators is that it provides for us a record of children's experiences, learning and development as well as our own. That's the key here. It's not only evidencing children's learning but also our learning alongside them.

In that way, and this is I think what is the genius of pedagogical documentation, it is a multi-purpose tool. There is so much, if you like bang for your buck using this approach, that's not just about children and making visible their learning, though that obviously is a very big part of it. It's also a way to make children's learning visible but also their learning processes. It's our way to connect theory to practice as well as being a tool for assessment and evaluation. So, there's a lot there. It's about our learning, children's learning, it's about the visibility of learning, how our theories fit in, and then taking all of this and going, and now we have assessment and evaluation opportunities in this documentation as well.

The other thing about pedagogical documentation, and you touched on this, I think, in your first question was around the fact that it is not a solitary process. So, if an educator says to me that they think they document pedagogically very well and they've got these, able make visible children's learning and theirs and do some assessment, the thing that I would not want to know that would be in there is that you haven't others looking in on the work. When I was in Reggio Emilia once, they described this as being the gaze of solidarity. I've never forgotten that term being used because what they said about that was you don't hold this piece of paper up and make these assessment decisions on your own. You have to have the gaze of others on it. Others are your colleagues, parents, and the children themselves, often the generators of the documentation.

That, for me, really made it a big game changer for me. Because when I trained, Mary, and I'm not sure how if this is your experiences as well, but we were told to be very objective in observations that you wrote down. You did a running record, and you did an anecdotal record, and you wrote down what the children did. When I was in Reggio Emilia, Carla Rinaldi said, "No, no, no, no, no. The point of view is always subjective. It just has to be subjective." She said we should think of this as a strength rather than a limitation, that your subjectivity that you bring to it is actually the thing that makes the documentation a very rich documentation. So, the idea is that the more interpreters into the work, the higher the chances are that you represent that child's thinking and learning robustly.

**[Mary Holwell]:** Yes. I think the more interpreters there are into it, the more likely there is to be growth for you as well because it will open your eyes to alternative ways of thinking about what you thought was meaningful and why it was meaningful, and it will open your eyes to ways that you can progress going forward. So, I think that idea of it needs to be sufficient information to provoke those conversations with others for other people to be able to see what the essence of the observation is and to be able to comment into that does create a much, much more valuable piece of documentation in the end.

**[Karen Hope]:** I know that perhaps people listening, that it can be hard to do that, and I'm not suggesting that it's always easy, but if you take the Diego learning plan, if I generated that and I would take that to Mary, and I would say, "Mary, have a look at this documentation I've generated. What do you think? You know Diego. What do you see in this? This is my way of viewing it. What can you add to this? What are your bits that you can put into this that then gives us a richer picture of his learning?".

**[Mary Holwell]:** Yes. I think that's incredibly important. And those conversations can happen fairly fluidly as well. They don't need to be formalised conversations where three, four, five, six people come together to discuss it, but it can just be with your team member in your room sometimes. Sometimes, you want to go beyond that and ask someone else as well and sometimes, even ask someone who maybe doesn't know the child themselves but is looking at your interpretation and saying, "Wow, that makes me think about X or Y or Z or reminds me of a particular theorist or theoretical approach, and have you considered?". So, I think there are many ways of enriching that documentation from that perspective of having lots of people gaze that documentation.

**[Karen Hope]:** Absolutely, and the children themselves, which it sounds very easy but we do sometimes forget that actually, they are often the authors of it and not just asking them in the moment, "Well, I'm looking at this, and I'm thinking you might've been thinking this, or what were you thinking when you did this?" but actually, sometimes putting it to the side and getting them to revisit the work after. I don't know if you've ever seen a child go back to a piece of art they've done six months earlier and take it out and go, "I might do some more on this," or, "I'm going to add this," or, "Gee, that was better than I remembered." It doesn't always have to be in the immediate moment. You can put it to the side and revisit it.

**[Mary Holwell]:** Yes, that's right. I think if we think about that for those very young children, then it might be that assembly of photographs that you've got in a little book that sits on the bookshelf that the child can go to and take down and, and you can see in their face visible enjoyment of revisiting that experience. You can then engage in a conversation with them that perhaps gives them words to describe what it is they might be experiencing, and it might be something like, "You look like you're really enjoying that," or, "Can you remember those things?" You then add in something that builds their thinking. They're remembering a little bit more.

**[Karen Hope]:** Yep. Agreed. So, that brings us to the end of our webinar today. I really do hope that you have got a few gems out of it and a few different ways of perhaps thinking about how you might approach pedagogical documentation and your general programming and planning cycles. I'd like to give you a couple of little things to think about as you move back into your workspaces and with your teams around documentation. If you can remember that documentation is the search for meaning, that is absolutely going to help guide you in the decisions that you make every single day, in your decisions about program and practice. It's the search for meaning. It provides us, good documentation, with the opportunity to tune into each other. I think as I said at the start, when you work this way, work is more joyful. You feel better going to work. You feel better about the work that you do, and you feel really, I suppose, sound around the documentation that you produce.

When I think about this, I think it was Loris Malaguzzi that said 'nothing without joy', and I know that that statement gets used a lot to describe the work that we do, but there has to be joy in it for you to make those connections with children and families and with your colleagues. So, trust me that if you work this way, it is ultimately a more joyful way to work. Thank you for this conversation, Mary. It's great to actually have an extended period of time rather than just five minutes here or five minutes there. It's been terrific.

**[Mary Holwell]:** Karen, you've made me think of something. Can I just jump in there and say.

**[Karen Hope]:** Yes, you can.

**[Mary Holwell]:** It's when you spoke about Loris Malaguzzi's comment of 'nothing without joy', and that is that I want to highlight that observation is what leads to documentation and that observation, in and of itself from a child's perspective, is not joyful but in that they should not know that they are being observed unless you've had a conversation or you've indicated that you're going to be writing down exactly what it is they're doing, or you want to record their conversation, something like that. But there should be joy for the child in sharing their learning with you or engaging you in their playful experience. So, we need to be conscious of always ensuring that from the child's perspective, it's joyful as well, that it's joyful for us because it enriches our thinking and makes our work of more value to us, but it should also be joyful for the child.

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