

1

THE LANDSCAPE OF PEDAGOGICAL DOCUMENTATION

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Having previously set the scene, this chapter now proposes a schema to conceptualize pedagogical documentation in terms of the Local Interpretation of Larger Ideas (LiLi). Challenging formulas, this approach to a 'wicked problem' invites creativity and inspiration alongside accountability. A narrative of 'war and peace' situates the reader in this landscape.

Introduction

This chapter offers glimpses of the diverse landscapes of pedagogical documentation, a sense of the richness offered by this way of working. It highlights the importance of philosophy and processes as well as multiple possible products, illustrating complexity as a strength that can meet systemic accountability and employer requirements, as well as generating professional pride and unexpected insights as part of being with young children and their families. Acknowledging differing geographical and socio-political contexts, it is inevitable that each school, children's service or educational system attempting to understand pedagogical documentation will evolve 'particular' located understandings and practices.

Embracing a 'wicked problem'

We propose approaching the challenge of defining pedagogical documentation as a 'wicked problem', in the sense evolved by Bellamy (2007). Speaking from the perspective of environmental resource management, she referred to 'wicked problems' as those that 'defy efforts to delineate their boundaries and to identify their causes, and thus expose their problematic nature' (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 167). Bellamy addressed Adaptive Capacity in relation to these problems through seven component attributes: Participatory, Deliberative, Multi-layered, Nested, Accountable and Responsive, Just, and Well-informed (2007: 108) – a list which resonates with intellectually engaged educators.

Although seen through a lens of governance in Northern Australia (Patterson et al., 2014) rather than education, at the common sense level, these essential attributes sit comfortably with a **LiLi** schema for relating to pedagogical documentation, as explained below. To look at the 'wicked problem' of the nature, roles and 'doing' of pedagogical documentation, the categories of Adaptive Capacity can be interpreted as follows (definitions from Bellamy, 2007: 108):

Participatory defined as: 'engagement with stakeholders being inclusive of the range of values of people involved or affected by [the] decision-making. Critical for building trust and legitimacy'; therefore building on socio-cultural frames and enabling inclusion of multiple voices through participation of varied adults and children.

Deliberative defined as: 'accommodating debate, dissent, mediation and negotiation. Critical for developing shared understanding and trust and enhancing adaptive capacity'; therefore supportive environments need to be fostered for respectful, reciprocal exchange.

Multi-layered defined as: 'not neatly hierarchical ... Critical to adaptive responses at appropriate levels'; therefore implications for individual or groups of children will be considered alongside implications for adults, employers and systems.

Nested defined as: 'multiple centres or authorities for creating opportunities for understanding and for servicing needs in spatially heterogeneous contexts. Critical for providing flexibility for adapting to local contexts ... and creating appropriate learning and decision-making opportunities'; therefore pedagogical documentation sits within everyday practice as an ongoing generative vehicle for authentic living research.

Accountable and Responsive defined as: ‘relating to both local communities and higher authorities in terms of decisions and actions ... responsive to changing circumstances, performance, knowledge and societal objectives and preferences. Critical to efficiency and adaptive capacity ... to respond to and shape change in the long term’; therefore flexibility and clarity of purpose and presentation progress the goals of pedagogical documentation – including consideration of participants and relevance to readers.

Just defined as: ‘social justice in relation to the distribution of benefits and involuntary risks. Critical to enhancing the adaptive capacity of vulnerable groups and society as a whole’; therefore issues of power imbalance or bias need to be considered in deciding on children or content to be included/excluded from experiences and their representations.

Well-informed defined as: ‘embracing new forms of knowledge to deal with complexity and uncertainty associated with change in interconnected social and natural systems. Critical to social acceptability and adaptive governance capacity’; therefore opportunities offered by pedagogical documentation can be explored through multi-media, professional learning and with open-minded intellectual curiosity and creativity. Advocacy becomes enhanced.

While reflecting on these characteristics and making the amorphous process of pedagogical documentation manageable, we suggest consideration of the **LiLi** schema (pronounced LyeLye – not Lily!) proposed by Fleet (2015a, 2015b). The schema is a way to consider *Local Interpretation of Larger Ideas*: embracing intuitive processes that can galvanize this way of working, it proposes a set of core components, examining these from the perspectives of professional decision-making inherent in documenting pedagogically.

To illustrate this multi-faceted definition in the context of **LiLi** and the characterization of pedagogical documentation as a ‘wicked problem’, a narrative will be shared. This story is partial, as layered thoughts and experiences in the lives of four-year-old children, their families and educators, will not slide into this space. It will, however, give readers an opportunity to visualize what might be meant in response to the question: What exactly are we talking about when we refer to pedagogical documentation?

Seeing pedagogical thinking in action

Before moving into an example, let’s position the following narrative in a larger landscape. Generally, when educators refer to ‘pedagogical

documentation', they refer to inspirational professional practices in the community-based centres (and one primary school) in Reggio Emilia, a Northern Italian town that has been interpreting these ideas since the end of World War II. Their thoughts are encapsulated in numerous publications, including editions of the *Hundred Languages of Children* (Edwards et al., [1993] 2012) and catalogues associated with travelling exhibitions of the same name.

Representations emerging from the thoughtfulness of adults and children working together also appear in other guises, including Learning Stories in New Zealand (Carr and Lee, 2012) and Pedagogical Narrations in Canada (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Overviews of pedagogical documentation are available elsewhere, such as in the freely available *What's Pedagogy Anyway?* (Fleet et al., 2011). It would seem, however, that misunderstandings surround this construct (as is often the case with 'wicked problems'), resulting in potentially superficial forms of recording (e.g. reporting in various 'day book' formats), or illustrated reports (e.g. to support accountability requirements). Without capturing reciprocal, responsive, relational encounters with analysis of possible interpretations of unfolding investigations or events, however, the work cannot fairly be labelled as 'pedagogical documentation'. The term is not a 'catch-all' for all forms of visual recording; it implies philosophical positioning related to the image of the child (particularly as proposed by the educators in Reggio Emilia), roles of educators, usage of time and space, the facilitative role of physical and affective environments, and positioning of thinking within the local and larger community. Pieces of representation may be quite brief, involving one or two children, or extended and revisited over longer periods of time.

There are several ways in which the following example is shared. Each is an excerpt of a larger piece as the work evolved over three months; through conversations, chats with children and families, and various forms of pedagogical documentation. Firstly, the teacher introduces her thinking. Then, an overview provides context for this investigation of a topic not often explored with young children, but which was filling the news and concerning hearts and minds at the time. While many materials were presented in panels and/or posters for families entering and leaving the centre, the entire process is considered part of pedagogical documentation.

Suet Mei Lee writes as the lead educator with this group of (mostly) four-year-olds. She works with Viviana Botero Lopez, director and educational leader in a community-based centre. After sharing some of their thinking, the work will be considered in the context of the **LiLi** schema.

Children's exploration of war, peace and social justice

In an early reflection, Suet wrote:

I had an idea of having this conversation with my children for weeks. I had done my research trying to understand what is happening in Syria so that I could prepare for any questions that children might have ... There were many things that held me back from starting this discussion. How do I start this? The discussion might go 'wrong' (unpredictable questions). The other teachers in the room might not agree with this. What about the parents? They might not like it!

But I decided to do it.

During the discussion, I wrote down everything that the children said. I wasn't sure what to expect ... I re-thought and re-read repeatedly what the children said. All I could think is how lucky I am to be able to see the world through their lens. As adults, we often complicate things around us. For children, it is simple yet wise and straight to the point ... I am keen to learn and know more about children's interpretation of the concept of war and maybe peace ...

Project overview

This summary identifies highlights of the project for Suet and Viviana.

As adults, we are exposed to different information around the world thanks to media, and the current situation in Syria is no exception. We can decide how to react to this information, whether to take part or not. Nonetheless, young children are also being exposed to this information, but their reactions and perceptions can be challenging to deal with in a childcare setting. As early childhood educators, Viviana and I decided to follow this project with children knowing that the outcome was unpredictable.

With Viviana's support I embraced this potentially risky issue and captured children's voices and thoughts concerning this war. Children explored the concepts of war, peace and social justice through many group discussions. The discussions emphasized children's theory

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building, their construction of knowledge as a group as well as their making-sense of an issue not present in their everyday lives.

We explored the role of humanitarian organizations with the children and they discussed ways to raise funds to support refugees. The children decided to make jewellery and Christmas cards to sell to the local community to support children affected by the war in Syria. This re-emphasized the role of children and educators as active agents who can address 'big issues', recognizing that we are all part of a global community who have the right to live in peace and experience 'belonging'.

The following snippets include excerpts from a PowerPoint presentation and from large panels that were constructed as part of the pedagogical documentation process, to include children's thoughts and educator reflections:

- Aidan:** [*Comparing the size of Syria and Australia on the map*] It is too small for them to build schools and hospitals!
- Benjamin:** So the buildings were destroyed? Do they have cars on the street? Maybe the cars explode and burn down the buildings.
- Emily:** Yes! You know there is a pipe at the back of the car and sometimes the gas comes out and cause explosion!

Suet and Viviana reflect:

As we can see, the children seemed to find it challenging to link their current life experiences to what they thought might be happening in Syria. So, we decided to introduce the concept of 'war' and we asked the children: What does war mean?

- Charlotte:** That means peoples are fighting.
- Rafael:** And they use weapons to fight.
- Emily:** Like guns.
- Benjamin:** And cannonballs.
- Charlotte:** And swords.
- Rafael:** When you use weapons, you hurt peoples. And the cannonballs will cause explosion that destroyed the buildings.

- Emily:** That is why we don't use gun and weapons in Banksia. Because we are all good people here and no one should get hurt.
- Benjamin:** This war will never end. Because is a fight! Someone needs to stop immediately. If not, this will never end.

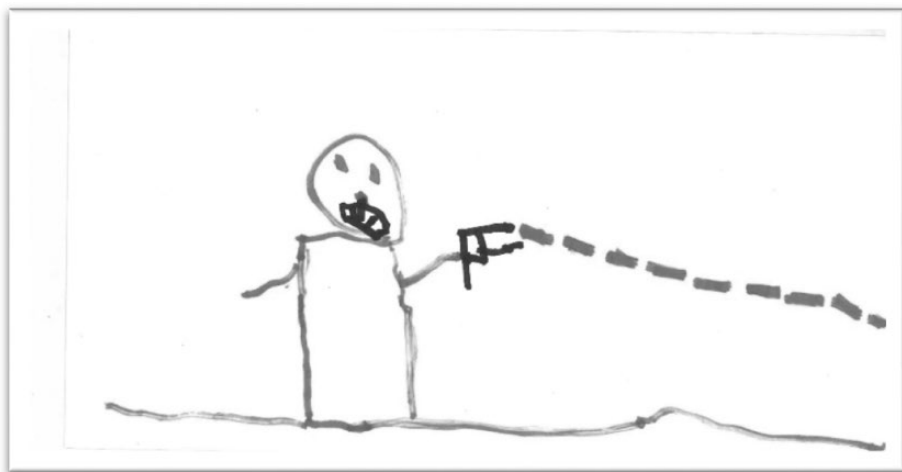


Figure 1.1 War

Suet and Vivian reflect:

Through discussion, children are making sense of abstract issues ... They are using trial and error with different concepts that they are familiar with, but their interpretations are very wise and meaningful.

In one of the group conversations, Yolandy reported:

I watched the news about Syria with my daddy and mummy ... In the news they show some people who are carrying weapons like guns. All the buildings are destroyed and there are big pieces of rocks on the floor ... there are peoples sitting on the street because they are hurt. I saw this man and his face was red. I thought it was face painting and maybe because he was angry. Actually it was his blood all over his face ... it was very sad to see. They all look very sad and worried ...

This conversation moved on quickly to the consideration of *How can we help?*

- Emily:** We can go over there and help them to run away.
Rafael: We can't because it is not safe in Syria!
Charlotte: But someone needs to bring the food and water to them.
Emily: I know! We can pack some of the food at home and Suet can fly over there and give it to them!
Benjamin: I know! We can give them money! Suet, you can give them money!
Aidan: I will bring a gold coin and a silver coin in tomorrow from home.
Emily: We can go to the bank and ask for some money too!
Charlotte: We can ask our daddy and mummy to give us some money, too!
Benjamin: Suet, I have a question. How money is useful, if there isn't any food in Syria? They won't be able to use money to buy those foods!

As these concerns were discussed, time passed and life in the centre continued to unfold, but with media attention still directed towards the war in Syria, the children continued to explore possibilities to raise funds to help refugees. Ideas began to emerge:

- Liv:** We can paint some rocks and sell them!
Emily: We can also sell some stuff made out of papers. We have a lot of papers here!
Benjamin: We can sell used books. Or we can make books that help people to know more about Syria.
Charlotte: We can make some bracelets and sell them.
Aidan: We can write something on the paper so people will know we need to the money to help the Syrians.
Chloe: We could also make some cards Suet!

Suet analysed this evolving investigation in terms of the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (DEEWR, 2009). In that accountability context, she reflected that:

It was clear to me that children demonstrated increasing awareness of the needs and rights of others. They broadened their understanding of the world that they live in and were keen to take actions in assisting the others who are in need of help. The children showed a

strong sense of empathy and care towards the others (DEEWR, 2009). More than that, they showed a strong sense of belonging, being and exploring their becoming (as they participated fully and actively in their community) (ibid.).

She continued to work with the children to tease out their understanding of concepts of war, peace and human rights, including drawing as another 'language' of investigation. Conversation returned to practical ways to help – a key component supporting the development of agency and social responsibility rather than generating fear or helplessness. The children and educators then worked to make their plans a reality – making jewellery, cards and paperweights to sell at a fundraising event for families and nearby university community.

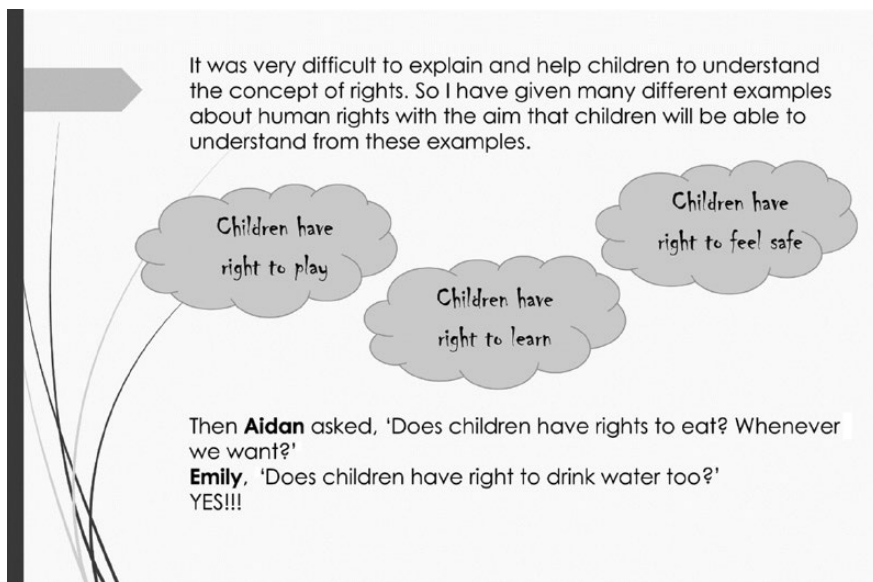


Figure 1.2 Children's rights

We searched for 'Volunteers that help Syrian refugees' on Google. After careful consideration, the children decided to choose UNICEF Australia.

- Emily:** I choose UNICEF because they used money to buy medicine for the Syrian people. This is important. So they won't get sick.
- Chloe:** UNICEF also provide winter clothes for them. This will help to keep them warm.
- Rafael:** And UNICEF provide education so children will be able to learn.

The day before the fundraising event, Aidan and Isabel helped organize the labels that showed the others the cost of items that we would be selling.



On the day of the event, Aidan introduced our handmade cards to one of our previous parents.

Figure 1.3 We raised \$2000 and donated the money to UNICEF Australia

So, how does this approach sit with LiLi?

The aim of this schema is to: ‘investigate decision-making frames inherent (and often invisible) when an educator pursues pedagogical documentation as a way of being with children. It aims to identify decision points that enhance or constrain the efficacy of this professional practice’ (Fleet, 2015b). By making these *implicit* components *explicit*, there is both some reduction in complexity and awakening of the breadth of areas for consideration. The apparently contradictory nature of these two goals reflects the realities of working in a sector torn between requirements for linear accountability and desire for humanistic educational environments nurtured in relationships.

LiLi originated to highlight conversations in Australia, but may be relevant elsewhere. Theoretical frames associated with **LiLi** can be summarized in terms of seeing:

- pedagogical documentation as non-linear, interdisciplinary sites of possibility rather than product-oriented record-keeping (Rinaldi, 2006)
- professional decision-making positioned within a socio-constructivist frame (Berger and Luckmann, 1966)
- foregrounding of relationships in pedagogical processes (Hill et al., 2005)
- participatory rather than transmissive pedagogies (Formosinho and Pascal, 2015), therefore, from a transformational perspective
- pedagogical documentation as a component of socially just practice (Fleet et al., 2006, 2012).

It highlights five areas where there seems to be a shift from past orientations to more current frames of reference, as follows:

The Space: From a conception of the importance of ‘the environment’ referring to physical layout and specific resources towards a focus on CONTEXT as a sociocultural frame

The Individual: From a planning focus on each child’s ‘interests’ or developmental stage towards consideration of the child’s perceptions and PERSPECTIVES

The Group: From a focus on cooperating to ‘work together’ towards a focus on CONNECTEDNESS through collaboration

The Site: From a focus on trying to ‘involve’ families towards a focus on partnerships with COMMUNITIES, with

The Goal, therefore, of moving from focusing on ‘responsible autonomy’ towards focusing on SOCIALLY JUST PRACTICES through embedded equity agendas. (Fleet, 2015a)

While each starting point continues to be important for consideration, each may be potentially limiting. Expanding possibilities provide broader scope for growth and also reflect an interest in ideas offered by thinkers in Reggio Emilia.

‘But isn’t documentation supposed to be about recording?’ some might ask. Well, partially. While artefacts for record-keeping are part of the processes of pedagogical documentation, a product is not the purpose. Working in relationship with adults and children enables consideration of curriculum, of children’s learning and development, of the affective culture of the centre, of goals of families and each larger community. Along the way, photos are taken, conversations transcribed, investigations planned, observations recorded, outcomes considered. Multiple possibilities exist for consolidating these elements. Energy put into these efforts and insights required to move in fruitful directions must be accompanied by

thinking professionals working in collaboration with others, by ongoing analysis of what is being revealed about pedagogy, about children's unexpected ideas, concerns, theories, priorities, discoveries. Pedagogical documentation is more than reporting; it is a multi-faceted way of growing alongside children which includes recording, using documentation as a stepping stone, as a vehicle for sharing with children, families and other professionals as well as guiding future planning. At its best, this work can be living, inspirational and revelatory. It can also be perceived as a time-consuming chore. In that case, the potentials of pedagogical documentation have probably not been understood.

LiLi can assist educators' decision-making about recording and professional practices. Core elements can be seen with reference to the examples of shared engagement in provocations from the war in Syria:

- a relevant project *context* that is socially culturally situated
- individual children's perceptions and *perspectives* being sought respectfully and enabled to evolve over time, particularly through explorative investigation
- multiple opportunities fostered for collaboration encouraging the development of authentic *connectedness* within and across groups
- sharing with families and encouraging engagement with and contributions from *communities*
- enabling progress towards the goal of *socially just practices* through embedded equity agendas.

These conceptualizations can be represented as shown in Figure 1.4.

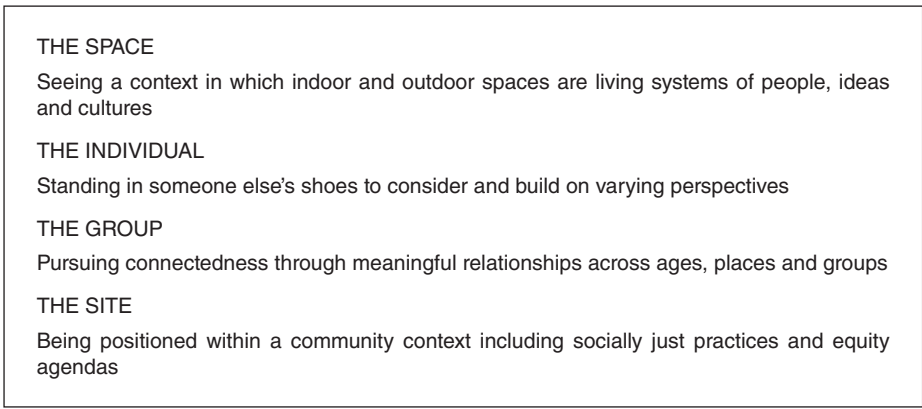


Figure 1.4 Links to LiLi

While always expecting professional decision-making and intellectual curiosity, this interpretation of an investigation enables *Local interpretation of Larger ideas*. It builds on links to literature and children's theory-making, embraces families, valuing reciprocity and being interactive, while often including cyclical investigations. While it does not predetermine formats or generalize expectations, it does require written analysis for the way of working and evolving representations to be considered pedagogical documentation. Subsequent distribution may include blogs or newsletters, posters, portfolios or workshops. Purpose will determine the size and efficacy of the evolving experiences, relevant aggregation and presentations.

Relating children's explorations to the 'wicked problem' of pedagogical documentation

Returning to components of 'Adaptive Capacity' to tackle the 'wicked problem' of pedagogical documentation, one might ask whether this problem is shaped by record-keeping as required by legislation? Partially. Regional requirements vary widely across instrumentalities but no one (as far as we are aware) explicitly requires the doing or keeping of something named 'pedagogical documentation'. In itself, therefore, expectation does not make documentation a 'problem'. Everyone needs to devise effective ways of working with children in safe, sound, facilitative, enjoyable and perhaps inspirational educational environments and to record something about these actions. Whatever happens in those environments needs to be planned, implemented, evaluated and reported. There are infinite numbers of ways of tackling any part of this equation. For the moment, we are focusing on the elements of Adaptive Capacity as related to productive, effective and worthwhile engagement with pedagogical documentation.

Does this extended explanation mean that pedagogical documentation is only relevant for major issues or events, to be attempted by people with generous time allocations, who are Reggio-informed, with all elements essential throughout? No. Insightful pieces can be presented (particularly as work in progress) on a page reflecting encounters unfolding one afternoon. The experiences are more likely to generate pedagogical potential, however, if the initial idea is considered, shared with families, explored, followed up, perhaps when a key child next attends the site. If the data and/or information offers possibilities for further thought, highlights unexpected theory-making or discovery by a child or small

group of children, then taking a few minutes to download a photo, describe a snippet of context and the unfolding interaction (non-verbal for the youngest ones) becomes energizing. That leads to analysing elements making the situation or event noteworthy, while looking for patterns or threads of engagement or dispositions over time to add additional richness to the seeing, hearing, thinking and interpreting. Such worthwhile work is more likely to unfold if there is supportive infrastructure, including interested colleagues, a thoughtful professional environment, and an informed educational leader (see, for example, Shepherd and Robertson, 2012). That was the context for work reported in this chapter: the lead educator has never been to Reggio Emilia, has been teaching for less than five years and speaks English as an additional language. She works in a context, although with professional, well-informed leaders who promote professional learning opportunities, provide time for collegial reflection, and a culture of collaboration and intellectual curiosity. When asked about whether the recording while doing this investigation assisted in the thinking of educators and/or the planning with or understanding by children of the purpose of the project, she wrote:

I think recording the events gave me the opportunity to go back and read repeatedly about what the children had said. The revisiting process helped me to understand as well as learning how to be responsive to children's desire and determination of helping the Syrian refugees ... Recording events also reshaped my thinking and understanding of children's learning. Children being persistent, showing their sense of belonging as part of the global community and showing empathy and care towards the peoples who are in need. Throughout this project, I felt like a student, who put on a different lens, and relearned the world that I have lived in for 25 years from the children. I want to say that I learned to look at the world with simplicity but really, the children's interpretation of the world is very wise. For children, revisiting the discussions we had before seemed to enable them to think deeper about the concept of war and peace and their rights as children and humans.

Conclusion

Pedagogy is shaped by interpretations of philosophy and perceptions of accountability: it is more than curriculum or programme implementation. If concerned about whether or not pedagogical

documentation can make a worthwhile contribution in contexts of stringent accountability, it is worth considering perspectives offered elsewhere (Fleet et al., 2014). Further, as we are reminded by Giudici et al. (2001), it is a case of seeing assessment (and community expectations) as 'making learning visible'.

Journeying with pedagogical documentation includes thinking around and then discussing with colleagues several foundational points including:

- Who is the documentation for?
- Who contributes to the processes involved?
- When are decisions made that affect the shape and content of the documentation?
- What is the pedagogy of the documentation? (Fleet, 2015a)

The answers to these questions help shape what happens next. Thinking in terms of LiLi demonstrates that:

- locally contextualized knowledge shapes pedagogical decision-making
- respectful time and space are necessary for co-researching with children
- intellectually complex decision-making by educators benefits from supportive infrastructure and collegial facilitation. (Fleet, 2015b)

Engaging with this 'wicked problem' includes an invitation to position yourself in this intriguing landscape: the goal must be to engage with children in ways that value their humanity. This work matters; today only comes once. The provocations of pedagogical documentation can thread through multiple layers of living and learning together; relish the invitations inherent in the process!

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