



Reading summary

Rigney, L.-I., & Kelly, S. (2023). Reterritorialising pedagogies of listening: Bringing into dialogue culturally responsive pedagogies with Reggio Emilia principles. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 44(1), 147–161.

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In Australian education, pedagogical approaches are urgently required that assist teachers to respond to the needs of Australia’s culturally diverse population and in particular the educational disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Government policies that promote multiculturalism are failing to fully embrace diverse voices and ways of producing knowledge, as they attempt to incorporate recognition of cultural difference within dominant cultural and epistemic frames. This article brings the culturally responsive pedagogy movement into dialogue with Reggio Emilia principles, to examine how they might supplement each other when teaching for superdiversity. In doing this it draws on Foucault’s conceptualisations of knowledge and the subject.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that uses the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of diverse students as resources for teaching. Reggio Emilia positions the child as a capable actor within the life of the community. This article brings culturally responsive pedagogies and Reggio Emilia into one discursive space to examine how processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation bear upon the subjectivities of the child and the teacher. Teachers and children can reimagine their subjectivities as they resist dominant discourses that place limits on their subject positions and experience the freedom to ‘think otherwise’.

Both culturally responsive pedagogies and Reggio Emilia theory imagine education as a democracy in which all people share the opportunity to enact their sovereign rights. Each approach incorporates an ethical commitment to listening and action in relation to others

and the natural world. Reggio Emilia education focuses on the child as a competent knower and citizen, on listening to the child and on the disposition of the listening teacher. These principles complement the commitment to see children as knowledge producers in culturally responsive pedagogies. Both Reggio Emilia education and scholars advocating culturally responsive pedagogies unsettle normalised views of childhood and regulatory practices that objectify the experience of being a child. They see the child as a competent being who seeks choice and self-determination in producing cultural knowledge and exercising their sovereignty and citizenship within their world.

Reggio Emilia emphasises listening as an active quality, especially in the work of teachers. This listening requires a welcoming attitude that is open to difference. The disposition of the listening teacher is also critical when drawing upon students' cultural and linguistic repertoires within culturally responsive pedagogies.

These lessons from Reggio Emilia education can also help educators to create culturally responsive schools which draw on the experiences and knowledge of communities as well as individual students. Culturally responsive schools can also embrace the Reggio Emilia commitment to producing democratic citizens, seeing students as political subjects who also practise their democratic responsibility to others.

Take-home messages

Educators as active listeners: Educators who seek to adopt culturally responsive pedagogies can learn from Reggio Emilia education's emphasis on adopting a commitment to active listening in democratic classrooms.

The child as an active citizen: Reggio Emilia principles remind culturally responsive educators to see the child as an active citizen who produces cultural knowledge and exercises their sovereignty and citizenship within their world.

Schools as centres of knowledge production: By combining principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and Reggio Emilia, schools can become centres of research and producers of cultural knowledge, in collaboration with their local communities.