

## CHAPTER 10

# INVESTIGATION OF FIRST YEAR PRACTICES IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPIRED BY THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is influenced by technological developments, economic and political changes, and social transformations in society. The human-oriented approaches that emerged in line with these changes, the increase in the production of knowledge, the criticism against rote learning, and the tendencies towards raising individuals who think, discuss, and produce lead people to think about education and direct them to different perspectives (Gezer, 2007). While Miller (2010) emphasized the need for efficient learning opportunities in the context of raising active and productive citizens, Dündar (2007) stated that the basis of the new education approach formed in the direction of raising productive individuals consists of the idea of “viewing child as an individual and its liberation”.

It can be said that the education system is questioned by parent groups, educators, and even students all over the world; an increase in the demand for learning environments arranged according to children’s interests and abilities has led to alternative ideas and schools. Plans based on students’ interests and abilities brought the concept of ‘alternative schools’ to the agenda (Çankaya, 2011; Memduhoğlu, Mazlum, & Alav, 2015). Dündar (2007), who addresses the problems in traditional schools as ignoring students’ personality traits, development speed, interests, and expectations, reveals which points that educators should focus on when talking about the concept of alternative school. Dündar (2013) stated that alternative schools are individual-oriented compared to democratic education and they offer freedom of choice. While emphasizing the duties of educators in

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with their anxieties by adopting the principle of equality, receiving peer support in cooperation with their colleagues, and doing research on the subject. In addition to anxiety, Reggio Emilia practices were found to create a sense of satisfaction in teachers.

It would also be correct to say that the Reggio Emilia approach provides teachers with great flexibility in terms of determining activities, gains, and evaluating them. In this way, it is planned to provide a constant incentive for new thinking and new ways of working by creating local cultural projects and revealing each school's philosophy and different identity, rather than central control mechanism sticking to a single program. Therefore, the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia will be an alternative in solving the educational problems experienced in schools in Turkey and is expected to provide a positive impact on the solution of these problems. Besides, in terms of the roles given to the teacher by the Reggio Emilia approach, it is considered that this approach transfer teacher from a position of knowing and transmitting information directly to a position that researches, develops, asks questions, and learns.

Based on all these results, the Reggio Emilia approach was found to be worth trying at different grade levels in schools, and the different and innovative approach it brings to school culture and teacher roles can bring solutions to existing educational problems. However, further studies that include comparisons with different approaches and in which learners can be followed for a long time are also needed.

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