



# Documentation through a Holistic Approach

By Edina Kartal

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## PURPOSE OF MEANINGFUL DOCUMENTATION

Simple developmental checklists and other ‘classical’ documentation formats (e.g. anecdotes, jottings and ‘boxed programs’) used to account for changes and progress in children’s development are no longer valid forms of documentation.

Some educators may experience difficulty documenting young children’s work in early childhood settings because of limited understanding of the importance of documentation; what, how and why to document and the effective use of documentation. Some educators may have problems engaging with children and documenting simultaneously, revealing a crucial misunderstanding about the purpose of documenting.

Engaging in the *Holistic Approach to Documentation* allows educators to have their own learning journey just as children have theirs. For this reason, so many early childhood professionals feel privileged to use *Alina Dan Learning Approach – The Holistic Approach to Documentation*.

*The Holistic Approach to Documentation* acknowledges that the role of the educator is critical and unique. Hence, the variety of documentation is not only aimed at recognising the variety of provisions (planned or spontaneous), capturing children’s (individual and group) learning journeys but also the variety of strengths that individual educators convey within the team.

Since 2010 there are numerous services that have effectively and efficiently implanted various aspects of *Alina Dan’s Holistic Approach to Documentation* throughout Australia. Many of these services have been able to observe a significant change in the way curriculum is planned and also obtain an ‘Exceeding’ rating under the NQF assessment.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOCUMENTATION?

- Documentation embodies the essence of getting closer to children's thinking, it helps educators understand and support their learning processes as well as their attainment of knowledge.
- *Alina Dan Holistic Approach* has the perspective of looking at documentation from multiple angles.
- All equal in value and importance
- Documentation allows educator as well as children to revisit and reflect on learning experiences. By documenting learning processes in an engaging and attractive way, educators convey to the child that his or her work is valued.
- Documentation is of great value to children, parents, families and the community.
- Documentation represents thinking, allowing small and/or large groups of children to return to earlier work in order to move forward with new understanding.
- Documentation helps educators understand the process of teaching and learning by perfecting their sense of listening.
- Documentation should ultimately bring the educator and child closer together in a mutually unfolding and maintained relationship.
- Quality documentation is used to tell a story and the purpose of an event, experience, or development.
- Documentation is a product that draws others into the experience to help the viewer understand the purpose of the action.
- Documentation is not only about the 'Learning Journey' another important aspect is the 'Magical Moment'. It is via 'Magical Moments' that we all build memories and relate to our past.
- It is the power of such 'Magical Moments' that educators should capture via meaningful and relevant documentation.

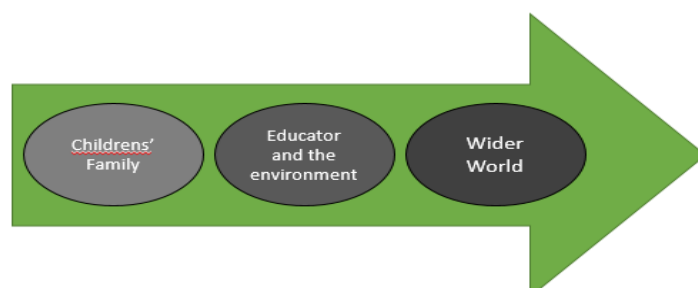
## WHAT IS THE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO DOCUMENTATION?

- A complex set of formats of documentation within an early childcare service.
- This set of formats, includes: (complete list on page 66 of the NGF Self-Assessment Folder)
  1. Reflective Program (ECA)
  2. Morning Minutes
  3. Surveys
  4. Mind Maps
  5. Sequence of Photos
  6. Charts
  7. Reflective Circles
  8. Telling News
  9. Learning Story
  10. Group Discussions
  11. Time Sample
  12. Changes to the Environment
  13. Anecdotes
  14. Series of Jottings
  15. Artwork Documentation
  16. Sequence of Artwork
  17. Projects
  18. Interactive Board
  19. Reflective Research
  20. Reflective Questions / Provocations
- Successful holistic documentation formats reflect the intended audience and its purposes. In addition, the format selected to use for the purpose of documentation will depend on the individual educator preparing the documentation and how and/or why the children are involved in the experience.
- The Alina Dan Learning Approach styles of documentation are key aspects to holistic approach of documenting children's learning while meeting the EYLF curriculum requirements.

- Holistic approach is using formats that not only suit the individual child, uniqueness of the experience but also the individual educator. Here educators are including themselves, children and wider community in the programming process. With this approach children's learning (and/or family input) as well as the educators' philosophy are evident.
- Holistic approach uses the documentation to capture children's ideas, thoughts and feelings. Educators regularly reflect on their practices as well as encouraging children to assist with further programming development. The Holistic Approach is based on a strong sense of co-programming. Children are not only active and direct participants in the delivery of the 'curriculum' but also involved in reflecting the 'program'.
- Traditional approaches to 'programming and curriculums' are restrictive and not a true representation of how educators discuss, negotiate, reflect, provoke and take decision with children regarding the many different aspects of the 'program'.

## KEY COMPONENTS TO HOLISTIC APPROACH

- Using formats that work within the service
- Understanding who the audience is and the purposes of documentation
- Having a clear understanding of what an educator should be documenting
- Presenting the topic and learning in a format that includes individuality within the service as well as including all other contributing factors
- Showing developmental progress using the 25+ formats of Alina's guide to documentation
- Preparing and displaying quality documentation of the children's experience service



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### **Educator's role in a holistic approach in documenting children's learning**

Defining holistic approach to the Early Years Learning Framework document is complex. There are a number of values and perceptions that need to be clarified to establish the Holistic Approach to Documentation and understand educator's role as a holistic educator. In holistic services the Educator is seen less as person of 'authority' who lead the learning but rather is seen as "a mentor, a facilitator, or an experienced travelling companion".

The educational settings should be seen as places where children and adults work together towards a mutual goal and with equal rights. In this concept open and honest communication is expected and differences between children, educators and people are respected and appreciated. Cooperative play is encouraged within as a Cooperation norm, rather than competition.

The 3 core elements of the Holistic Documentation and Holistic Services are:

1. Co-programming
2. Co-operation
3. Co-llaboration (hence the importance of project work and meaningful room displays)

Carefully preparing attractive documentary displays convey to children within the early childcare services that their efforts, intentions and ideas are valued and respected. These displays are not intended primarily to serve decorative or show-off purposes but to demonstrate the holistic approach to documentation where children have a sense of belonging while the learning is reference to the EYLF and NQF.

Alina Dan Holistic Approach refers constantly to the effect of 'over photographic children's interactions' and how this type of documentation may determine the misinterpretation of valuable learning outcomes. Alina Dan Learning Approach encourages educators to consider non-photographic documentation (when appropriate).

There are many theories available that discuss holistic approaches to learning as well as holistic approach to teaching within a service. As the holistic approach is becoming more

of a popular approach to education. EYLF underpinning strategy is to implement the holistic approach to children's development, however there has not been a theory developed that references quality education, documentation and care as a whole to this holistic trend. Alina Dan Learning Approach is demonstrating that all three components within a service contribute to the impact of a holistic service and documentation as a whole.

Alina Dan learning approach is unique in showing that while EYLF principles are the core of effective teaching and learning in early childhood services, the overall approach must be flexible and truthful to each services individual philosophy. It appears that too many times and too often, early childhood services get lost in between adopting or trying too hard to implement different approaches. Alina Dan Learning Approach is about Documenting More by Writing Less!



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