

3.3 Materials and actions aimed to facilitate the interaction with other users.

The youth involved in the planning group identified Internet as an information and entertainment source. The opportunity to get in touch with persons of other places on the world and to exchange data with them was one of the most appreciated features of the net for the members of the group. So they planned to construct an internet site through which to distribute images (pictures, videos also under the format of banners, sets of icons, save-screens etc.), sounds (directly recorded in the environment during the trips) and thematic messages (SMS etc.). Also scientific information collected during the learning activities has been included between the exchanged materials (CD or other magnetic supports). In this first phase of the work, the planning group did not pay any attention to the technical problems concerned (the finding of the materials, the copy right fees, the programming problems to produce the magnetic supports, etc.), but identified these products of the project as other funding sources.

4. Second planning phase. Matching the dreams with the real life.

On September 2002 the dreams survey phase of the program has been concluded and the described network of feelings satisfied the participants.

The second phase of activity of the planning group provided to match the fancy actions proposed in the first phase together with the social, economical, bureaucratic constraints of the real life. This feasibility phase is crucial for a citizens' involvement process, because it allows the non-expert participants of the planning group to measure and to contextualise in some kind of experimental framework their spontaneous feelings, and to produce a more realistic structure of the project. This phase, besides, allows the improvement of the critical behaviour of the participants and is particularly important if the process concerns youth.

Usually, a restricted time lap is required by a professional planner to perform the feasibility analysis of a project. Instead, in the case in which the future users participate to the planning of some activity to be proposed to the large public, not specialised citizens have to manage the problem; therefore the time required extends and is mainly related to the amount of spare time of each participant.

In this second phase, the planning group began the work from one of the better known and most experienced clusters of proposals by the young participants: the learning activities. Between the actions aimed to facilitate learning, formerly proposed, the direct observation of the ecosystems was one of the main wishes of the group; scuba diving was not feasible owing to the national rules (in Italy scuba diving is not authorized to people aged less than 12 years) and to the probable young age of the final users of the project. However, one of the largest aquariums in Europe is located in Genoa and its tanks are devoted to illustrate the world marine biodiversity to the large public. So, the first learning action planned by the group was a monthly leading activity at the Aquarium of Genoa. It has been addressed to ancient people: youth should be the guides for groups of 10-15 individuals along daily thematic tours lasting about two hours, from October to May. The subjects of the thematic tours and the related pathways through the tanks have been planned; the rest locations (bar, toilet or lounge facilities) have been identified in the aquarium structure. Only the financial topics remained to be defined, together with the Aquarium staff.

In the meanwhile, a group of participants saw to the connected biological arguments (tropical reef, Mediterranean low and deep water environments, Cetaceans, sharks) and began to organise a little reference library (books, Internet sites, CD, videos etc.). Some publications from the European Community have been collected to provide information about the European regulations regarding the natural environments, their conservation and safety. The library, besides being an information tool,

showed itself to be a socialising means: to select and to analyse books, magnetic media, internet sites, to explore handbooks and rules, promoted the interaction between the members of the group (both youth and adults) improving their social skills. Further, the library should sustain and provide information to other knowledge construction proposals as the “*in situ*” ecosystem visits and trips. Hence, contacts have been established with agencies specialised in ecological activities in the Tuscan (Capraia) and in the central Mediterranean (Sardinia, Ischia) islands, to collect logistic and financial information. In the meanwhile, some participants gathered the editorial references of the collected computer games, videos and music files and the addresses of the more interesting Internet sites concerning the marine ecosystems.

A role game circle, formerly not involved in the planning group, got on to the group to develop a game set in the sea environment. From 1990, role playing is an appreciated learning environment based on some essential ingredients: i) a goal-based learning about a critical event which requires an immediate response from students, ii) the role-play in the sense of playing a role and of iii) giving to the players a personal stake in the proceedings and iii) the online web-based communication and collaboration between the players (Ip *et al.*, 2001). All these ingredients were appreciated by the group's components.

Unfortunately, the second phase has not been concluded: in the second half of the year (from March to May 2002), the widespread increasing of the schoolwork forced the young participants to delay the attendance to the group meetings, stretching the time lap necessary to achieve the goals of the program.

5. Third phase. Evaluation of the activities and training.

While conceiving the DINAS program, the impact of the school and domestic engagements had been expected as one of the troubles which could breed some delay in the project planning. Therefore the program included a third phase of evaluation of the activities which opening could overlap to some extent with the former phases; during this period, the DINAS members tested some actions derived from the activities pictured by the planning group. The users, in this phase, were both youth and adults from the large public. Also a group of workers, engaged in social and educative programs addressed to young people and interested in a training period which could provide them the competencies for a job in the field of environmental education, were involved in the testing phase.

Nevertheless, also the members of the planning group were directly involved in the testing of some of the activities set during the first or the second phases of the work. At the end of September 2002, the eastern District of the city of Genoa engaged the participants in a public performance on a beach. The aim of the performance was to involve citizens in the science topics through play or amusement. The youth of the planning group organised a delighting workshop on papier-mâché models; the subjects to be reproduced in three dimensions were the local marine animals. The purpose of the group was to allow the public to investigate the morphological features of the subjects living in the sea facing the city of Genoa and to compare the different morphological solutions adopted by these animals under the pressure of the environmental factors. The activity began with the drawing of the lateral outline of the subject and of its frontal, dorsal and ventral views. Then people had to reproduce on wire the lateral outline of the animal (Fig. 2) and to complete the internal structure supporting the model with transverse wire outlines of the various cross sections of the body of the subjects, proceeding like a shipwright building a wooden boat (Fig. 3). The wire pieces were assembled with tape.

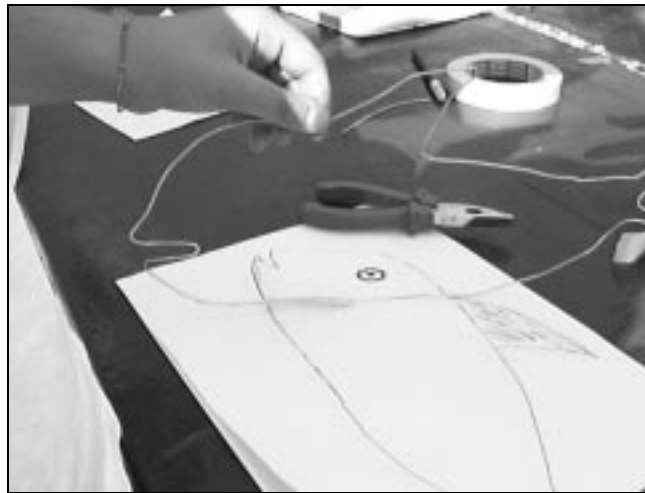


Fig.2: The construction of the wire layout of the subject to be reproduced in the model.

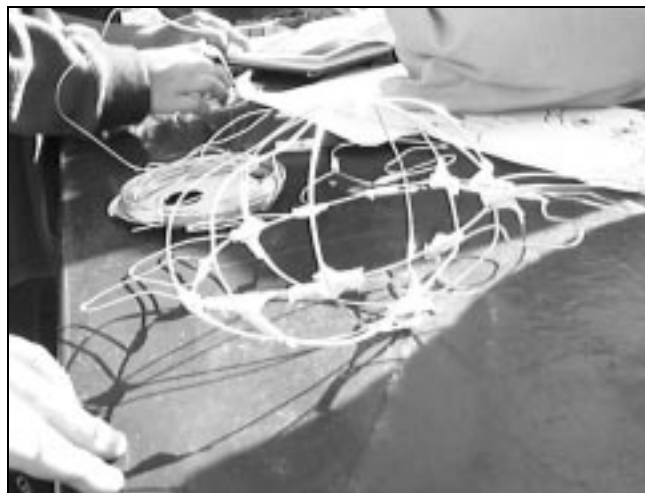


Fig. 3: the complete internal structure of the three dimensional model of a fish.

The external morphological details like fins, thorns or opercula were manufactured with the same procedure and added to the model. At the end of the assemblage, the structure was covered by glue steeped paper and coloured. During the work, to obtain a pleasing model, people were forced to appreciate the dimensions and proportions of the animal and of its parts, their colours, their form, performing a real anatomical study of the subject. Several models produced during the workshop represented the main species of fishes or crustaceans living in the sea grass ecosystem (*Posidonia oceanica*) which characterizes the soft bottoms of the Ligurian Sea and of the Mediterranean Sea (Matricardi, 1995). This gave the opportunity to explain to the participants the main features of this system and its interactions with the human activities along the littoral zone and to discuss the main reasons which supported the inclusion of this ecosystem between the protected marine subjects by the European Council.

Another activity tested during the third phase of the ARCA program involved the group's participants as users in an action which can be included in the domain of knowledge improvements. Thanks to the cooperation of the "Biology of Cetaceans" course at the University of Genoa, and of an agency operating in the western Ligurian Riviera, a whale watch activity has been evaluated both for the large public and for the training environmental education operators. The goal of the action was to connect the heavy media role of Cetaceans, which engaged the attention of people since they were considered sea monsters, with the ecological significance of their mass presence in the north western Mediterranean sea. The high concentrations of Cetaceans in the marine region comprising the Corso-Ligurian Basin and the Gulf of Lion (18 species; 20.000 – 40.000 individuals of dolphins and 2.000 – 3.000 whales) and the considerable threats existing for Cetacean populations living in that area (by-catch in driftnet fishing activities; presence of substantial concentrations of toxic xenobiotics in the trophic chain; high levels of maritime traffic) supported Italy, France and Monaco Principality to jointly declare the institution of a Mediterranean Sanctuary for marine mammals in 1993. International rules protect this area and regulate the sustainable management of such an important natural resource. The European Commission supports the scientific and protection actions in the Sanctuary. During the test phase of the DINAS program, one hundred of users could meet some experts in Cetacean biology which shared their scientific experiences together with the everyday personal knowledge of the participants, cruising on a large boat within a distance of twenty nautical miles from the western Ligurian coast. The experts demonstrated how to recognise the signs of the presence of these important marine animals (Fig. 4). Then the whole group became "whale watcher" and collaborated to



Fig. 4: The discussion about the biology of Cetaceans on board of the whale watching boat.

the visual research of the animals (Fig. 5). When one or more individuals were found, the boat carefully approached them to a specified safe distance and everyone could directly observe what had been explained formerly (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5: The public collaborates to the visual research of the Cetaceans.

A new discussion centred both on the emotions and the perceptions induced by the encounter and on scientific and regulation topics, followed the observations. Owing to the close biological connections between emotions, which enhance the neuronal network sustaining the acquisition of concepts process, and learning (Damasio, 1999), this activity could produce a sound and aware knowledge about the environmental sustainability problems connected with human productions: non metabolic substances concentrate in the cetacean organs and tissues because these animals occupy the highest position in the trophic network of the open sea.



Fig. 6: Direct observation of a diving sperm whale.

Following the guidelines designed by the planning group, the members of DINAS organised some other actions to test the involvement of the large public in the environmental issues and the development of aware and respectful behaviours towards the natural environment.

The students of some lower secondary schools, which were involved in the workshop on papier-mâché models, proposed to organise laboratory activities about the fish anatomy which could sensitize the youth about the alimentary interactions in the marine environment and about the human impact on them. These actions could be arranged in the cluster of proposals aimed to facilitate the learning activities, organised by the planning group during the first phase of its work. At first, a discussion between the students and their teachers allowed collecting the spontaneous knowledge of the youth; so each student could enhance his consciousness to be a knowledge resource for the other schoolfellows. Then, in the anatomical laboratories of the DIBISAA, the students were led in the dissection of a fish by an expert in comparative anatomy (Fig. 7-8) which exploited the direct observation of the internal anatomy of the animal to contextualise the hypothesis forwarded in the former discussion.



Fig. 7: The dissection of a fish in the laboratory.



Fig. 8: Discussing about the observations collected during the dissection of a fish.

The educational process applied during the dissection experience allows the participants to the group activity to mediate between their different knowledge and to propose shared hypotheses to solve the investigated problem. If the comparisons between these hypotheses and the observed evidences don't disclaim them, a generalised theory can emerge. Such an activity introduces the students to the methods of science, answering to the European and world request of enhancing scientific literacy in the society.

On March 2003, when the DINAS program was near to its end, the manager of a non-profit association, committed in a project devoted to the youth leisure time, asked the DINAS members for an in-service training course for the engaged educators. The European dimension to raise public awareness about science points out that public health and environment controversies can create a genuine desire for knowledge among the general public and can also provide excellent opportunities for collective learning (Gago, 2000). The occurrence of a new opportunity to promote an interactive approach to

the environmental problems suggested to the components of DINAS to implement informal scientific education in the training course and to focus on environmental education activities. The “Convention on the Rights of the Child” (UNICEF, 1989, art. 28) urges the States Parties to promote and encourage educative actions which facilitate the youth's access to scientific and technical knowledge and to modern teaching methods. The course began on April 2003 and ended on October 2003; it included some theoretical discussions about the main topics of environmental education and some practical experiences to allow the educators to check their shared ideas in a contextualized set of circumstances. Also the main educational topics, the problems concerned with the interaction between school management and extracurricular activities, and the difficulties in social network construction have been considered in the course's plan.

In the cluster of proposals aimed to enhance sound scientific information, the planning group included the participation to conferences and exhibits. During spring 2002, a technical conference addressed to the main ecological problems affecting the Northern Mediterranean Basin allowed the DINAS members to contribute to the scientific information of an important part of the people involved in the decision making and the technical operations on the marine environment. The speech topic was the spread of the allochthonous alga *Caulerpa taxifolia*, which affects an annually increasing portion of the sea bottom between 0 and 40 m depth in the Ligurian Sea (Boudouresque *et al.*, 2001). The conference, which was attended by some members of the main public and private agencies involved in marine operations (harbour offices, waste removal companies, regional environment offices, researchers), has been organized on May 2002 by the Harbour Office of Genoa to discuss the actions to be undertaken to control the problems of the sea environment. The interactions between the alga and the sea grass *Posidonia oceanica* (which constitutes an ecosystem protected by the European environmental rules) have been discussed in that occasion, focusing on the better technical procedures to face the problems generated by the recreational, transport, communication and resource exploitation activities. The speech contents were discussed together with the members of the planning group, both to share the scientific information with the youth participating, and to organize the paper.

6. Considerations

Owing to the schoolwork problems occurred to the young participants to the planning group, the program developed by DINAS has not been concluded with the production of the final and operational version of the environmental education project. However, some considerations can be advanced about the features and the goals of this program. Osborne and Plastrik (1997) discussed the main innovative characteristics of a renewed public administration; the underlying idea is that governance must be able to identify, to activate, to exploit and to enhance public and private resources to carry out its programs. The assumption of responsibility of the community is the focal concept of the redesigned administration, which ought to meet the citizens' requirements instead of the bureaucracy constraints. The DINAS program was focused on citizens' participation and group working, two of the features suggested by Osborne. A group of citizens is more elastic and creative than the public administration services, it is oriented to the solution of the problems and it is more focused on the competences of the participants than on the deficiencies of the social structure. So, during the first phase of the program, feelings and dreams were the matter on which the planning group formulated the possible solutions to the learning problems about the marine ecosystems. The dreams remove the constraints of the bureaucracy and enhance creativity, stressing the real needs of knowledge of the participants. The framework of environmental education facilitates the connection with the scientific

ic information, which is one of the main demands underlying several welfare actions and meets the European engagement in creating situations which make it possible for the public to be more closely involved in the practice of science and technology. The second work phase oriented the group to match the feelings together with the competencies and abilities that can be found in the social structure. The choice to work on the learning activities has been previously emphasized by the planning group. In Italy, as in other countries, school training is not generally appreciated by youth when it is characterised, for the most part, as a transmission of information from the teacher "who knows" to the students "which doesn't know" (Gardner, 1999). When a constructivistic pattern is applied to the knowledge construction, the learner becomes an active subject of the cultural process; the foreknowledge sharing together with other subjects (students, teachers, experts) induces in each member of the group the awareness to be a resource for the process itself. Besides, the free and active discovery of the features of the inspected topic allows the construction of a sound culture and of a critical aptitude. So, to select the elements to be collected in the reference library obliged the youth to arrange the information coming from the different sources (books, internet sites, etc.) in a wider knowledge framework, enhancing their synthetic skills as well as their culture. In the meanwhile, the goal to realise the collected feelings and dreams sustained the youth creativity, allowing them to enjoy the process. The recent achievements of neurobiology, besides, demonstrate that feelings occupy a central role in the knowledge construction process (Damasio, 1999).

According to the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Children, youth have been directly involved in the program to make way to their commitment to the environmental issues. As stressed by Hart (1997), they showed to be able to define problems and to plan and design consistent actions. Given the young age of the members of the group, one of the main troubles encountered was to consider the administrative and regulation constraints in the planning activity. In the framework of a constructivistic process aimed to activate youth in the administration of the public goods, this is not a problem but the background for the cooperation of different subjects (private and public, youth and adults) in the planning phase. Kotler (1992) stresses that the interaction between subjects which own goods or services of interest for the other part generates social benefits (widening of the network of connections), cultural interest (education, training) and economical profit (access to facilities).

The project planning included a phase of resources rising that has not yet approached exhaustively because of the above-mentioned personal problems of the members. It is possible to anticipate that this phase will be characterised by the awareness of the inadequacy of the resources, which is usual for the actions aimed to the citizens' empowerment: financial support is not sufficient, facilities and equipment does not supply suitable performances and the staff is limited. But, for a group of citizens involved in a decision making process, to meet these problems would enhance the awareness that the resources are a wealth which needs the care of the community.

Since the program was designed more as an awareness enhancement action than as a learning process, we decided to adopt action-research techniques (Elliot, 1991) to evaluate step by step the results achieved. This method was described for teachers training; we appreciated that it allows a reflective self-evaluation of the personal cooperation to a knowledge construction process. Action-research transfers the process, which was the base of each activity proposed in the DINAS program (proposal of hypotheses - experimental evaluation - generalisation), in the personal sphere of each member of the group. From the point of view of the group's leading staff, this means that each step of the process will be characterized as a cycle of action, reflection about what is emerged from the action, rising of questions, analysis of the experiences encountered, drawing of partial conclusions and planning of new and transformed actions. This method was also implemented in the in-service training course for educators, organized by DINAS; we considered it both a suitable evaluation technique in not conventional environmental education processes and an evaluation tool for the course.

itself. At the end of the course, the results of the cyclic action-analysis-planning process have been discussed together with the training educators.

The actions tested during the third phase of the program supplied information about the feasibility of the projected activities. The workshop on the morphology of the marine animals, although being hardly valuable because of its features, generated large interest in the participants; during the activity, a number of the books, collected by the planning group members during the second phase of the program to provide scientific information to the suggested learning activities, were available to the participants. They enjoyed interacting with scientific printed materials to compare the anatomical information with the foreknowledge which emerged from their personal culture. The scientific literacy goal, emphasized in the European context, is achievable also by such a not conventional scientific experience. Furthermore, the demand of a curricular approach to the anatomical features of the marine animals, arose from schools, supplied further evidence of the effectiveness of the action. The students, which participated to the workshop as not curricular users, transferred the claim for scientific knowledge into the curricular activities, making the information available to the other schoolfellows. The check of the learning process performed by the school teachers confirmed that the experiences concurred to the construction of a sound and durable knowledge.

Similar considerations can be applied to the whale watching activity developed in the third phase of the DINAS program. Besides it was not proposed in a curricular context (school), the participation of the training educators allowed evaluating the knowledge construction process and the development of awareness in the behaviours of the users of the action.

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Experiences in children's participation in the framework of environmental education

Giorgio Matricardi
University of Genoa

With the support of EU ARCA Project

Key concepts

- **25.1.** (...)The involvement of today's youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21
- **25.2.** It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their futures. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.
- **Article 12.** States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters (...)
- **Article 29.** (...) The education of the child shall be directed to (...) the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, (...); the development of respect for the natural environment

"United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - Agenda 21"

"UNICEF – Convention on the Rights of the Child"

Key concepts

- Children are the **most committed** age group on environmental issues.
- All children can play a central and lasting role in sustainable development if **their participation is taken seriously** and if communities recognize their developing competencies and unique strengths.
- " (...) *La ciudad democrática debe tener en cuenta todas las personas que la integran. La participación ciudadana en la organización del territorio y en la concepción y la gestión de los espacios públicos es una seña de identidad de este modelo de ciudad, entendida como lugar de encuentro y civismo.*"

Roger Hart

Jorge Borja

Methods:



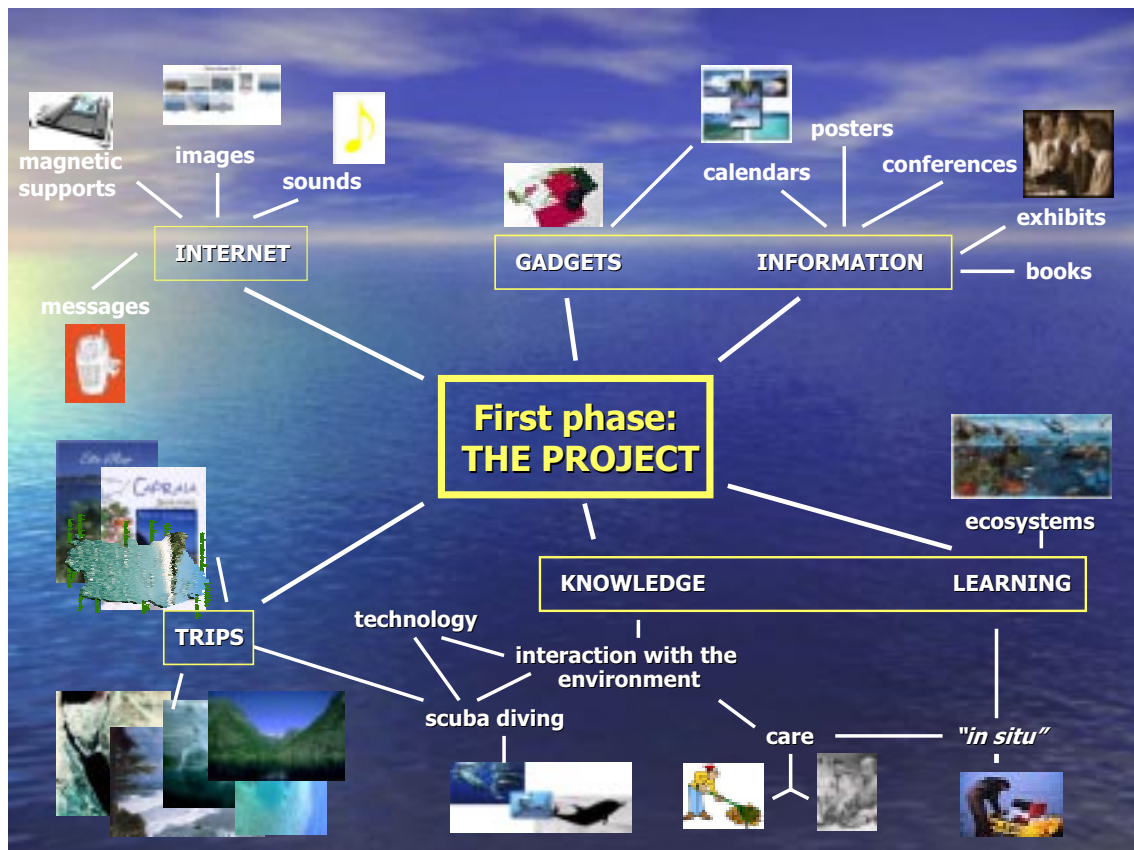
Planning group:
youth (age:9-17) and adults



Constructivism



Action research



E5

WORKSHOP V



Remarks

Citizens' direct participation v/s public administration services

Environmental education, scientific information and welfare

Feelings v/s social, economical, bureaucratic constraints

Constructivism and knowledge

Troubles: - administrative and regulation constraints
- schoolwork and personal engagements
- inadequacy of resources

Action research

EXPERIMENT OF NUTRITIONAL SURVEILLANCE IN SCHOOL-AGED TUSCAN CHILDREN

Mariano Giacchi, Giacomo Lazzeri, Alessio Zani, Chiara Guidoni, Margherita Gulino,
Simone Cocco, Claudio Amato, Emanuela Balocchi,
Anna Maria Giannoni, Alberto Zanobini

CREPS- Research Center of Education and Health Promotion
University of Siena (I)

°Tuscany Region – Department of Health Rights and Solidarity Policies

E5

WORKSHOP V

1) Childhood obesity is rapidly emerging as a global epidemic that will have profound public health consequences as overweight children become overweight adults (1,2). It is associated with several risk factors for later heart disease and other chronic diseases including hyperlipidaemia, hyperinsulinaemia, hypertension, and early atherosclerosis.

To address this problem, action is needed at national and international levels. A well-documented evidence of the trends in national and local prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents is required to develop sound public health policies.

2) Tuscany Region in 2001/2002 participated in a experimental national survey “Nutritional surveillance based on local data for chronic disease’s prevention”, financed by Ministry of Health, aimed to try a shared scientific system of nutritional surveillance to prevent childhood obesity.

3) 4) 5) Aims

Subjects and methods

6) Since all twelve Local Health Units of the region took part in the survey, in accordance with the protocol of the study, a statistic sample of 3076 (1583m, 1493f), 8-9 years-old school-children had to be collected. Students were selected by a stratified one-stage sample with schools (Primary Sampling Units – PSUs) as clusters of students and primary stratification by relative health district and municipality size. Separately for each stratum, a with-replacement sample of schools was randomly chosen with probabilities that were proportional to the size (PPS) of the school (i.e. number of 8-9 aged school-children).

7) Weight and height were measured using standardized instruments and exact decimal age was calculated from the data of birth and measurement; BMI was then calculated from weight and height, with units Kg/m².

8) BMI’s classes were setted using Cole’s method; this allows us to have specific cut offs for males and females at every age.

9) Dietary patterns was assessed using frequency-food questionnaires one for children and another for parents.

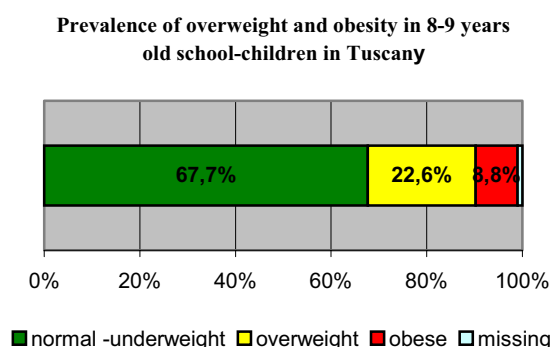
Results

E5

WORKSHOP V

10) Analysis of nutritional status

Data analysis shows that in our sample the prevalence of overweight is 22,6% (22,7%in males and 22,5% in females) and that of obesity is 8,8%:



11) The percentage of obese males (9,4%) is bigger than the one of females (8,2%); but this difference is not statistically significant:

	Males	Females
Normal-Underweight	66.9%	68.5%
Overweight	22.7%	22.5%
Obese	9.4%	8.2%
Missing	1.0%	0.8%

12) Analysis of dietary patterns

To have an indication on the eating frequency meals, we have considered the percentage of those who have them from four to seven times a week.

The analysis shows that 92.3% of children have breakfast (95.2% at home), 95.9% have morning snack and 93.6% have afternoon snack (85.4% at home):

	Breakfast	Morning snack	Afternoon snack
4 – 7 times a week	92,3%	95,9%	93,6%

13) The table below shows the first five most eaten food at breakfast, as morning snack and afternoon snack (to have an indication on the food frequencies, we have considered the percentage of those who eat that food from four to seven times a week in relation to the total frequency of that meal):

BREAKFAST		MORNING SNACK		AFTERNOON SNACK	
Milk	75,0%	Fruit juice	26,7%	Fruit juice	22,9%
Biscuits	42,9%	Pizza	21,6%	Salt park sandwich	19,2%
Cacao	21,8%	Salt park sandwich	19,8%	Snacks	16,7%
Cereals	20,6%	Snack	19,1%	Pizza	14,0%
Snacks	12,2%	Tea	13,7%	Tea	12,9%

14) The relationship between meal frequency (4-7 times a week) and BMI's classes was valued: the outcome is that obese and overweight children have breakfast, morning snack and afternoon snack less frequently than normal-underweight:

Breakfast frequency and children's BMI			
	Normal-underweight	Overweight	Obese
N°	2005	675	264
4-7 times a week	94.1%	89.8%	86.4%

P<0,001

Morning snack frequency and children's BMI			
	Normal-underweight	Overweight	Obese
N°	2000	677	264
4-7 times a week	96.6%	93.9%	95.1%

P<0,05

15) About weekly food frequencies at principal meals, as we can see in the table below, pasta with 79%, fruit with 70%, meat with 68% and bread/bread-stick/cracker with 57% are the most frequently used nourishments (4-7 times a week). For many foods, such as vegetables, legumes, vegetable soup, potatoes, cold cuts, cheese, eggs and fish, the higher percentage is that of 2-3 times a week. We can notice how 10% of the children eats fruit 0-1 times a week.

Food frequencies at principal meals				
Food	Times a week			
	Everyday	4-6 days	2-3 days	0-1 day
Pasta	44%	35%	17%	5%
Bread/bread stick/cracker	35%	22%	27%	16%
Potatoes	5%	21%	49%	25%
Vegetables soup	5%	17%	40%	38%
Legumes	4%	17%	44%	35%
Meat	22%	46%	27%	5%
Fish	3%	14%	45%	38%
Eggs	3%	19%	46%	32%
Cheese	14%	22%	35%	29%
Cold cuts	17%	32%	38%	13%
Vegetables	16%	25%	33%	26%
Fruit	44%	26%	20%	10%

Discussion

The prevalence of overweight and obesity in pediatric age (8-9 years old children) in Tuscany is lower than national average, that is 24% of overweight and 12% of obesity (data of the National Pilot Project financed by Ministry of Health "Nutritional surveillance based on local data for chronic disease's prevention"). In spite of this (notwithstanding this) the prevalence of global overweight in Tuscany, that is the whole amount of overweight and obese children, is 31,4% and it is not negli-

ble so the prevention of childhood and adult obesity remains a public health priority.

The global frequency of breakfast, in particular home-breakfast, is high and children eat mostly milk and biscuits according with healthy recommendations.

For morning and afternoon snack, children eat above all fruit juice, pizza or salt park sandwich such a frequent use, surely weighs over daily medium caloric nourishment. Besides we can notice how, though numerous interventions to promote the use of fruit as ideal nourishment for morning and afternoon snacks, it is not present among the most used first five nourishments. The frequency of fruit, on the contrary, is greater at lunch and dinner.

Strangely obese and overweight children have breakfast, morning snack and afternoon snack less frequently than normal-underweight; it will be necessary to search into this aspect of the question. Maybe obese children eat too much at principal meals? Is there a protective role of the snacks?

At lunch and dinner there is an elevated consumption of pasta, bread and meat, but the use of vegetables, vegetables soup, legumes and fish turns out to be moderate or meagre as the high percentage of 0-1 times a week testifies. Once more, as Tuscan tradition proves, we can notice how cold cuts are consumed in a particularly frequent way (49%). These results are a confirmation of the change in Mediterranean dietary style.

Basing on these data, Tuscany Region started a program to promote positive lifestyles among children, focused on nutritional and physical activity habits.

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EXPERIMENT OF NUTRITIONAL SURVEILLANCE IN SCHOOL-AGED TUSCAN CHILDREN

Mariano Giacchi, Giacomo Lazzeri, Alessio Zani, Chiara Guidoni,
Margherita Gulino, Simone Cocco, Claudio Amato, Emanuela
Balocchi[°], Anna Maria Giannoni[°], Alberto Zanobini[°]

CREPS- Research Center of Education and Health Promotion
University of Siena (I)

[°]Tuscany Region – Department of Health Rights and Solidarity
Policies

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Background

**National Pilot Project on Nutritional Surveillance
based on local data for chronic disease's prevention
was performed in 2001-2002**

Sponsored by the Health Ministry

Participating Regions:

**Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia,
Calabria, Campania, Toscana**

in collaboration with the

Food and Nutrition National Research Institute

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Tuscany Region (2001-2002)

All the twelve Local Health Units took part in the experimental project with the aims:

- ✓ **Creating a network of the Local Health Services to develop a co-ordinate health information system on**
Nutritional status, Dietary patterns,
Physical activity and Behaviour
of 8-9 years old school-children

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- ✓ **Experimenting standardized methodologies for collecting and analysing data**

- ✓ **Measuring health indicators (both dietary and not)**

- ✓ **Identifying trends and priorities for health promotion interventions**

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∇ Acting community interventions

∇ Improoving the active partecipation of the scholars, the theachers, the families and the other important actors at the local community level

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SUBJECTS

In accordance with the protocol of the study, a stratified one-stage sample of **3076**, 8-9 years-old school-children was collected.



1583



1493

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METHODS

Weight



Height

BMI
(Kg/m²)

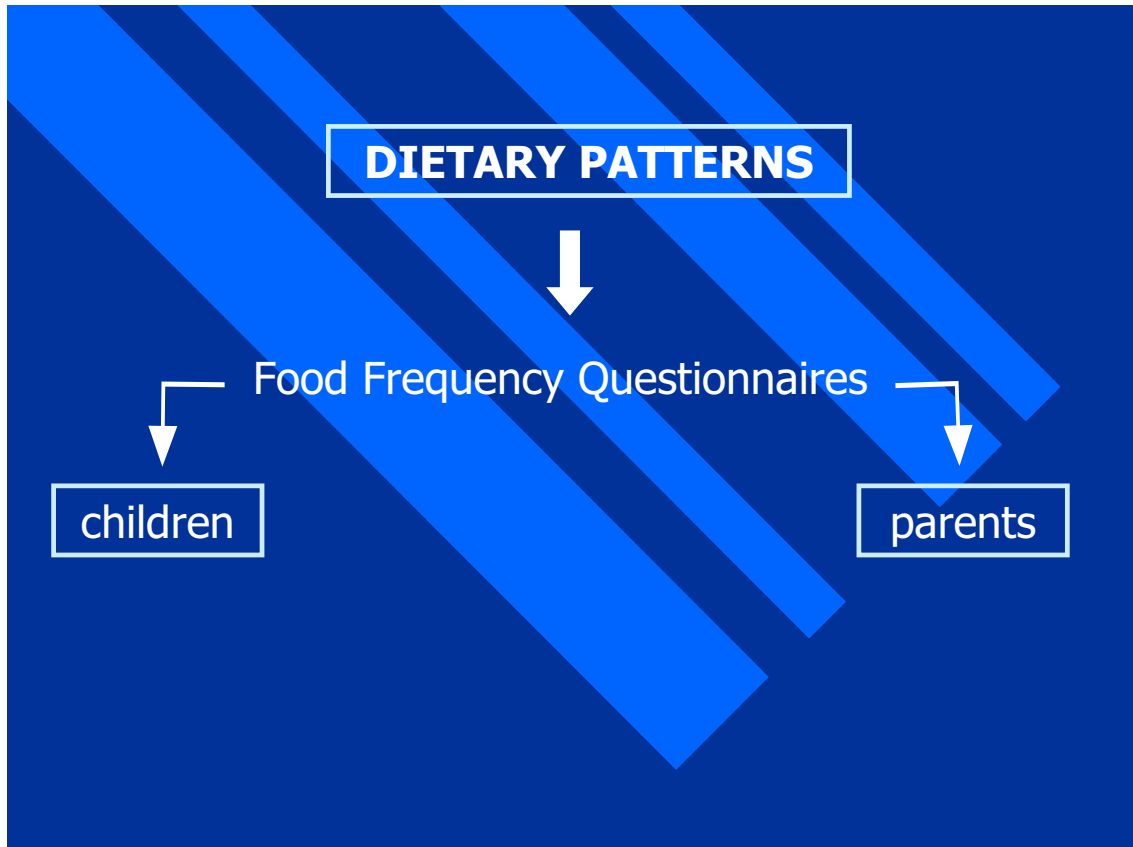
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BMI' S CLASSES

- normal-underweight
- overweight
- obese

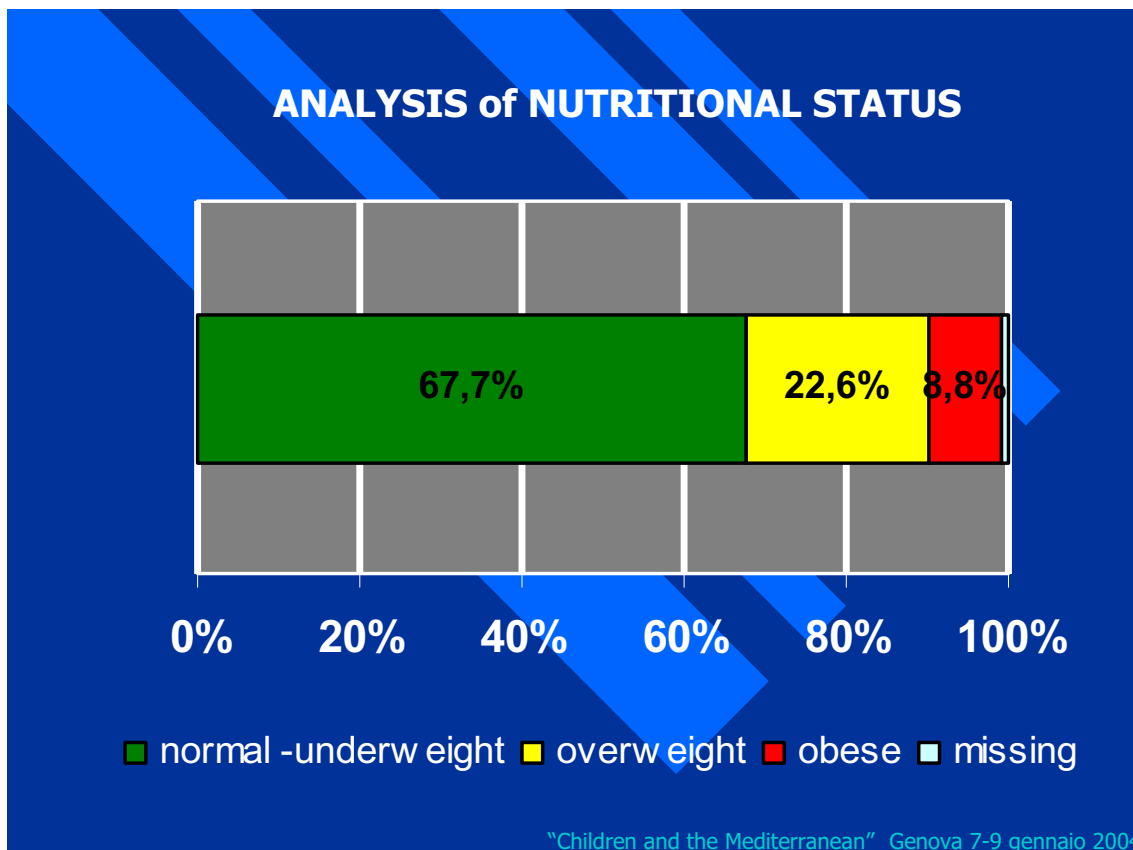
Cole et al.'s* method
that allows us to
have specific cut off
for males and
females at every age

*Cole et al., BMJ, 2000



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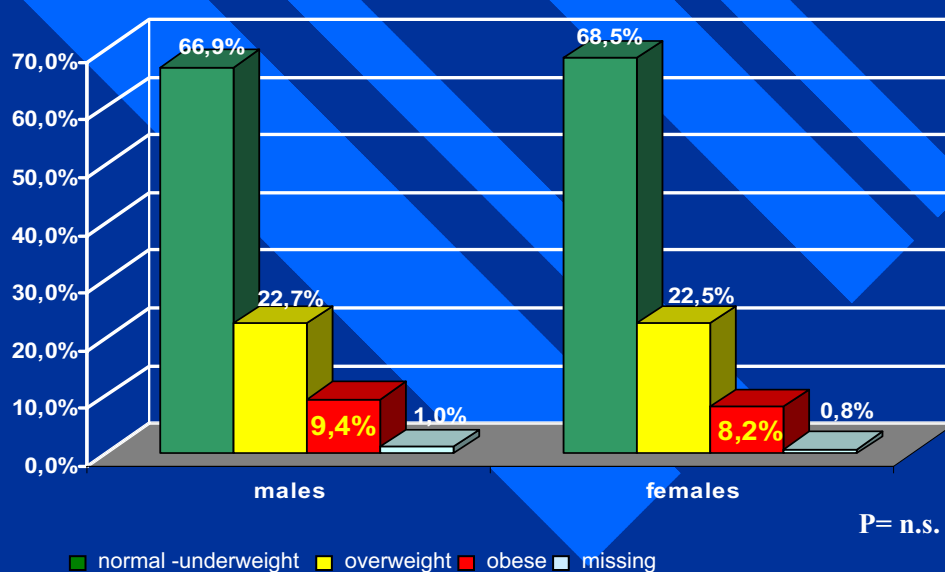


ANALYSIS OF DIETARY PATTERNS

	Breakfast	Morning snack	Afternoon snack
4 – 7 times a week	92,3%	95,9%	93,6%

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Prevalence of overweight and obesity in males and females



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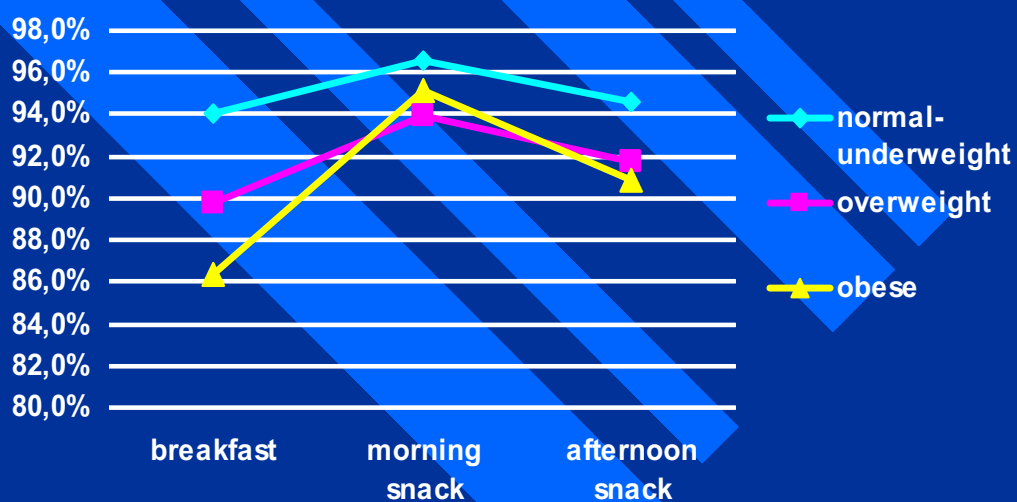
First five most eaten food at

<i>BREAKFAST</i>		<i>MORNING SNACK</i>		<i>AFTERNOON SNACK</i>	
Milk	75,0%	Fruit juice	26,7%	Fruit juice	22,9%
Biscuits	42,9%	Pizza	21,6%	Salt park sandwich	19,2%
Cacao	21,8%	Salt park sandwich	19,8%	Snack	16,7%
Cereals	20,6%	Snack	19,1%	Pizza	14,0%
Snack	12,2%	Tea	13,7%	Tea	12,9%

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PRINCIPAL SNACK AND CHILDREN'S BMI

4-7 times a week



P<0.05

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Food frequencies at principal meals				
	Times a week			
Food	Everyday	4-6 days	2-3 days	0-1 day
Pasta	79%		17%	5%
Bread/bread stick/cracker	57%		27%	16%
Potatoes	5%	21%	49%	25%
Vegetables soup	5%	17%	40%	38%
Legumes	4%	17%	44%	35%
Meat	68%		27%	5%
Fish	3%	14%	45%	38%
Eggs	3%	19%	46%	32%
Cheese	14%	22%	35%	29%
Cold cuts	17%	32%	38%	13%
Vegetables	16%	25%	33%	26%
Fruit	70%		20%	10%

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Growing Up in Differences between the International Norms and Standards

And the National Values and Concepts

Omar Musa Amireh
Eyyad Ahmad Salem

Growing Up in Differences between the International Norms and Standards

And the National Values and Concepts

• **Introduction:**

- International Organizations and Institutions have to recognize children unity and variety.
- Children united in terms of needs safety, but variable in terms of values ,concepts and beliefs.

• **The Problem**

- Children problem redefined not solved
- Failure of solution generated from;
- Generalization
- Edge judgment
- Narrow angle of vision
- Norms and Standards

Methodology

- Ä quantitative measures of standards versus the qualitative dimensions of values, that is standards of living versus quality of life, who comes first and where they overlap.
- Ä It is clear that many researches in our world and in particular the Arab world have followed the contemporary way of solving a problem. Anxiety are relocated if not within this generation to another one, burdens are transformed if not within developing countries to developed ones, conflicts are circulated if not within one region to continents. All of that for the good well of universality and globalization. At the end we are back to square one and we all convinced even the most powerful organization and institutions that what is being done is a gesture form those who know to those who don't, and from those who have to those who have not.

Edge Judgment:

Quantifying children is easy, straight forward, balanced and form a base of equality, at the end it holds a genuine universal applicability.

- Ä Jordan although reserved over three articles 14, 20 and 21 of the convention on the Rights of the Child, nevertheless adopted the edge definition and Judgment in many of its system (National Report 2000). In the Educational system, a child one day below the age of six at the first day of the elementary school admission have to wait another year to be admitted, while a child one day above is accepted. However that extended to too many part of children life, driving license, university admission, election, TV programs, marriage, crime etc.

- A It is the convention on the Rights of the Child which marginalized children and considered them too inexperienced too unrealistic too unqualified and immature. "Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the child by reason of physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care" (CRC 1990). A day in children's age makes a lot of difference, it is there, all over your life, at the TV screen at the entrances of malls and shops and bars, civil services and affairs departments. A continuing anxiety and confusion which led many children to convince adults that they are also adults by practicing the adults' privileges, smoking, drinking, free movements, free sex etc. On the other hand when it comes to rights the same group abuses their rights as children to form a license of irresponsible, reckless immature conducts and behavior.

Informative and Responsive Survey:

- A Children are a step forward than adults, they construct in their mind what urban and community could not afford them. All they need is the skills of communication, and here comes the main and real role of the project.

Concept of Rights, Requirements and Demand

- Ä Education varies between rights and requirements and demand, it represent a critical case where children rights has to be reevaluated
- Ä Education-> UN CRC =Rights
- Ä Education-> Child = Requirements of future career
- Ä Education-> Culture= Demand of the intellectual human tool

Standard of living and values of life:

- Ä Children responses classified them into three categories: Personal, Cultural, Spatial
- Ä Individual child; personality and attitude
- Ä Member of the community; conducts and codes of behavior
- Ä Urban child; perception and cognition

The Individual Child; Unit or Member:

- Ä child as a unit is identified as a human entity with special identity and rights, at the end he is a unit in the family, the community the urban setting.
- Ä Child as a member, while entitled with all his right he shall share responsibilities and duties which are appropriate to his age and physical and mental maturity.

Children Awareness and Maturity:

- Ä Signs of maturity and awareness were observed in several ways, part of which is how children allocate themselves from within their age or younger or older children. How they perceive those below their age as Noisy, Nagy, Annoying, Immature and Irresponsible, and those above their age as Arrogant and Reckless. Nevertheless they are keen to quickly pass their age to the adolescent and adult age, where the community, the system and state parties will acknowledge their maturity.

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Play is Another Sign of Maturity

- Ä Here it is connected with body maturity, children associate their mental maturity with their body growing.
- Ä In all cases children give up their joy and happiness of childhood for the sake of trying to convince their families and communities that they are mature adults.

Awareness is a sign of Maturity.

- Ä Sound judgment of children of their surroundings, environments and community is another tool where children at the selected age show that they are mature.
- Ä Issues of awareness
 - Ä Pollution
 - Ä Standards of living
 - Ä Urban setting
 - Ä People relations * a twelve years old girl comments of places did not change but people do

Preferences and Satisfaction

- A It was clear in the due interview and results that the targeted group, have in a way or another accommodated themselves with their living conditions, they do not criticise their own values, neither their standards of living, but through preferences they admire a better standrds of living.

Child as a member of the community

Rights and Responsibilities

- A Concepts of culture and religion in the international terms is "child free rights", while in terms of national understanding is" child participation".

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Responsibilities and Participation

- ⌘ Replacing responsibilities with participation prove to be futile, Participation definition goes for, "an active involvement in certain activities, exercises and opinion. Responsibility refers to having control or authority, and to be able to take action or decisions without supervision.

Preferences and Consideration between Relative and Neighbors

- ⌘ Relatives persists it provide and produce visits, support, ride, walk, celebrations, indoor and outdoor activities
- ⌘ Neighbor fading it provide and produce play, safe, anxiety, trouble, outdoor activities

Ethics and Codes of Behavior

- Ä Children use comparative values of the past, the present and the future, most of them stated that people relation and behavior was much better in old days than it is now, also they mentioned that there is wide difference in culture and ethic in this region and the west

Preferences and Priorities

- Ä Gender is one of the main factors in the children set of preferences and priorities and connected with
- Ä Family priorities
- Ä Social life
- Ä Relation and visits
- Ä dependent and independent
- Ä Education and reputation comes first for girls
- Ä Career and admiration and respect are boy's slogan

Child Urban Figure

- Ä Children presence around their houses, in their way too school in and out of their residential areas and in the city follows certain pattern which controlled and directed by available facilities, children interests and communal participation. That is:
 - Ä Providers
 - Ä Facilitators
 - Ä Resources
 - Ä Limitations

Thinking measurements

- Ä Distance, size, scale, materials colors, details, shapes, new and old play a complementary factors in defining children map setting.
- Ä Distance is controlled by places of facilities and interests and participation.
- Ä Size and scale play a two-way effect in children vision. It is interesting and appealing for some of them and scary and uncomfortable for others.
- Ä New and old building and spaces are both interesting to children; they also like to move to new areas but to take their houses with them. Also they mentioned demolishing old buildings and constructing new ones but that does not include their houses, they want to see new building with clear colors, new shapes, curved and inclined walls, pitched roofs, glass and stone

Concept of Interior, Exterior and Internal External

- À Space hierarchy, definition and transition is clear in the conscious map of the surveyed children, walls, doors, roofs, balconies, gardens, and yards all plays a key factor in their movements and presence.
- À At last it is of big importance to know that children in this region create their own space and place of interest, if not in reality in their imagination, that is one of the facts which keep them happy, smiling and active, they draw what they think of not what they see, hence they live inside their conscious, where things are much better than outside.

Results and conclusion

- À Children- Urban issues are becoming more and more on the agenda of the international community. Conventions and charters developed, from within a preconceived idea, that children conditions and environments in the world, and in particular the developing world are deteriorating. A universal or international problem needs an international solution. Self sustained agendas turned into strategies in turn developed into programs, objects, and exercises, all with international motivation. Standard norms, spared no effort or way, to solve the children problem. New terminological concepts such as sustainable, friendly, better, attachment, authentic etc. took the initiative and produced framework and manuals of implementation. The size of children problem and the scale of the rapid urban deterioration prove to be faster and much bigger than the effort and success achieved in all attempts. All work hard to mobilize local communities, organization, children, and families to participate in solving, or at least softening their problems. Yet the approach remain that they have to adopt the international standards, norms and processes to reach the right solution. For a long time, since the spread of the international style in urbanism and architecture and until now, potential values and qualities hold in communal cultures and beliefs have long been neglected or ignored and in cases believe to be futile.

- A This paper proves (although that was not planned in the GUIC survey) that children in this region usually and initially refer to concepts they are familiar with, and live; that is the values of their life and not the standards of living. From questions included in the GUIC project and more questions added to enhance the research goal, we concluded that solving children problem and improving their urban conditions and enhance their participation, could be achieved through the actual structure of their age and gender. Generalization in age and sex of children prove to be confusing and disturbing, projects and programs if to succeed have to recognize sex definition and age gradations as prove to clearly exist in interviews, surveys, and in children conducts and response. Maturity is one of the main factors which highly direct and control children conduct, behavior, relations, activities, nearly all aspects of their life. It is of big importance to recognize that children maturity while affected by gender and interim ages; is directly associated with body and physical maturity. Preference, priorities, awareness responsibilities, satisfaction, consideration, ethics and many qualitative words and measures persist more than words of quantitative dimension, such as; unit, information, edge, etc. Questions holding qualitative measures produce more responsive reply than informative questions.

- A Children adapted conducts and behavior and use of space and urban setting is not manipulated by, planning standards and criteria or urban design concepts and frameworks, but rather by availability, interests, and participation. Children perceive their urban surroundings through relative concepts such as walking; that is distance of the adjacent or close places, visit and reside; interpreted into big or small buildings or spaces, accessibility regular and casual; preferred to be near or faraway.
- A Children draw what they think of and know, more than what they see or perceive. They live inside their conscious where things are much better than what are actually outside. If planning and urban design, do not have the power or ability to find such spaces or place for them, let's assist them to find it themselves, if not in reality why **not** in their thinking or conscious map.

Implementing Large-Scale Studies of Children Using Clinical Assessments

Elizabeth T. Spier, Susan Sprachman, and Cassandra Rowand¹

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Research on children comes in many guises. A researcher can gain some understanding of how child development is influenced by the environment—such as parental depression or experiences in day care—by collecting data from caregivers. Substantially more information may be gained by administering developmental assessments directly to the child. However, adding an assessment to a research project can be difficult and costly when the child is an infant, toddler, or preschooler. Only a small number of tools are available for the direct assessment of cognitive and motor development in infants and toddlers. As a result, researchers often limit their choices of outcome measures or restrict themselves to studies using small samples because they are concerned that they will not be able to reliably administer complex assessments to large numbers of children. While this is a valid concern, the authors of this paper encourage researchers to think creatively in considering how to train a broad range of field data collectors to reliably administer such complex developmental assessments for large-scale studies so that we can enhance our understanding of factors influencing children's early development.

This paper highlights three case studies in adapting a complex child development scale, the Bayley Scales of Infant Development-II (BSID-II), for large-scale research projects. We first present the experience of developing a training plan for the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHS), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Early Head Start is a two-generation program designed to provide high-quality child and family development services to low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers, and now operates in more than 700 communities around the country. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) conducted the national evaluation of this new initiative, assessing the impacts of the program on a wide range of child outcomes, parenting and the home environment, and family self-sufficiency on a sample of approximately 3,000 families.

The second case study shows how the BSID-II were converted into a valid and reliable “short form” for administration to 13,500 children for the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The ECLS-B, conducted by Westat, Inc., will follow the development of a nationally representative sample of approximately 13,500 children born in the year 2001 from birth through first grade.

Finally, we present the challenges of “exporting” the BSID-II to evaluate the impact of swaddling on development among 1,300 children in Mongolia—a country in which such assessment tools have been little used to date. The Investigation of the Effect of Swaddling on Lower Respiratory Infection in Mongolia Infants project was funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Canada Fund.

The BSID-II consists of a Mental Scale and a Motor Scale for children aged 1 through 42 months; either one or both scales may be used. Administering the BSID-II involves the complex and precise manipulation of a complicated flow of testing materials and instructions, rules for which items to administer based on the child's age and performance, and judgment calls about whether credit should be given or not. Clearly, the decision to use an instrument like the BSID-II with a staff including individuals who are inexperienced with the measure should not be made without carefully considering the ability of the project staff to develop a comprehensive administration and training plan. We feel that presenting these three examples of using the BSID-II will encourage more researchers to

think creatively about how they might incorporate complex assessments into large-scale research projects.

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Adapting the BSID-II for the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project

When a complex measure is to be administered by a field staff with varying backgrounds, it is crucial that careful attention be given to making the assessor materials as user-friendly as possible. For example, the field staff for the Early Head Start study was drawn from a range of individuals and we could not assume that any staff had prior experience with developmental assessments. We will discuss below how, for the Early Head Start study, staff from MPR and New York University (NYU) carefully designed the instructions we would provide the assessors, reformatted the instructions and scoring sheet, made the basal and ceiling calculations less prone to error, provided direct training to the staff, and ensured that they were administering the test reliably.

“Translating” the Assessment for the Field Survey: For such assessment tools as the BSID-II, the test structure and instructions, and the format of the scoring forms, often are not well suited for use by field interviewers. Once we made the decision to use the Mental Scale from the BSID-II, our first task was to “translate” the clinical version of the assessment for successful use in the survey environment. The term “translation,” usually applied to converting something from one language to another, refers here to changing the format and language of an assessment designed for a clinician to something a lay interviewer can understand. A good translator takes into account both the cultural interpretation and the audience, and does not merely translate individual words and phrases word for word. Thus, the task facing the survey professional is analogous to that of a good translator.

In our translation of the BSID-II, we were faced with a 375-page manual that included instructions for administering test items, as well as for determining which items to administer based on the child’s age and performance. The child’s performance is scored on BSID-II “Record Forms” that list the items in order of difficulty, but not necessarily the order in which they are administered. The order of item administration is based on grouping like items or items using the same materials and is contained in an appendix in the manual. To make the BSID-II Mental Scale more interviewer-friendly, we reformatted the materials and made the administration more structured, enforcing a standardized approach. We wanted to ask all children in the study a core set of items. Thus, regardless of the child’s age (the range was 13 to 16 months), the starting point for administering the test was the same. In most instances, this resulted in first administering items intended for children younger than the ones tested, allowing the interviewer more time to establish rapport with the child.

For every item, we created a one-page card that contained the list of materials used in the item, the instructions given in the manual, and additional clarifications suggested by our assessment consultants. While the BSID-II items are listed on the score sheet in order of difficulty, we wanted to simplify the test administrator’s task by having items using similar materials presented together, as suggested in the manual. The cards, in the mandated order of administration, were put in a flip chart that contained all the items we wanted administered to the children in our study. We bound the flip chart together in this order and included a cross-reference of flip chart pages to item numbers. We made a supplemental flip chart for children who required the administration of items below our standard starting items and inserted a checkpoint in the main flip chart before items that would be administered only to older or higher-scoring children. The cards contained the basic instructions from the manual, as well as administration hints. We placed scoring boxes on each page so the interviewers could easily flag the appropriate score and afterwards transfer the information onto the BSID-II Mental Scale Record Form.

Training the Research Staff: Among the considerations in designing a comprehensive training program for assessments are who will do the training, what kind of demonstrations need to be done,

what kinds of training videotapes can be affordably produced, and whether arrangements need to be made for hands-on training with children. The MPR-NYU team worked together in designing and implementing the training and the subsequent interviewer certification.

While trainees can do practice interviews in dyads that replicate administering a questionnaire or a test to an adult, it is virtually impossible to imagine what it is like to administer a task to a one- or two-year-old. Rehearsing with another adult is useful for developing technique, but not for experiencing the actual task. In designing the BSID-II training, we wanted the interviewers to have experience with a broad variety of children—uninterested children, children with their own ideas of what to do with the materials, restless children, and children with intruding siblings. We designed the training to include a range of experiences: observing the trainers demonstrate tasks, discussing the tasks, practicing in pairs, viewing a range of difficult-situation administrations, and finally, practicing with babies and receiving feedback.

Our consultants videotaped their administration of the BSID-II, and from these tapes we selected examples of both easy administrations and more difficult ones. Our surprising difficulty in identifying what we considered to be a “perfect” administration underscored the complexity of seemingly straightforward tasks. Since we had examples of an imperfect administration, we built a critique of the administration into the training activities. The actual training for the items was a mix of watching a good administration, discussing it, and practicing with the materials. Items were presented in groups so that like items were presented and practiced together and a rhythm could be established. We also included watching videotapes of items that were incorrectly administered so that interviewers could develop a critical eye regarding their own administration.

We brought babies into the training, and pairs of interviewers practiced administering the tasks with them. Finding enough babies, scheduling their visits around nap or feeding times, and fairly apportioning them to maximize practice without overtiring them can be exhausting. However, we know no substitute for this kind of hands-on practice. The most confident interviewers in training were sometimes the most insecure when actually confronted with a baby, and nervous interviewers gained confidence from their success in administering items and engaging the baby in the safe haven of training. We were never able to schedule enough babies so that each interviewer could administer a full practice test. Often two or three interviewers took turns administering groups of items. Some of the babies were real troupers, willing to be confronted by various strangers fumbling with materials; other babies crumbled within minutes, making interviewers deal with the very real situation of not getting flustered while an embarrassed mother tried to calm her baby. The practices were videotaped and were reviewed by the training team so that the interviewers could get feedback on their main errors right away. The group was also instructed on tasks and techniques that other interviewers had found to be problematic. Thus, by the time interviewers left training, they were aware of their most serious errors and could concentrate on refining their administration.

Ensuring Proper Administration: In-person training and immediate review of interviewer practice were the first steps in a lengthy certification process. No one can learn to administer the full BSID-II for 14-month-olds with just two days of classroom training and a half hour with a baby. After training, interviewers were required to practice the BSID-II Mental Scale and be videotaped administering it to age-appropriate children. When we embarked on the certification, we did not require self-evaluation, which caused many reviewer hours to be wasted on tapes that were unacceptable. The NYU team thus developed a critique form that could be used first by interviewers to review their administration and consider whether it was close to certifiable, then checked by the reviewers. The level of the tapes we received after imposing this requirement improved considerably, and the number of tapes that had to be reviewed before an interviewer was certified decreased.

Each aspect of an item’s administration was assigned one or two points based on difficulty.

Individual tasks might be worth anywhere from four to seven points, depending on complexity. Each interviewer was required to correctly score 85 percent or above on two tapes in order to be certified to administer the BSID-II Mental Scale to children in the sample. If they scored between 70 and 85 percent on the second tape, interviewers received a conditional pass allowing them to administer the BSID-II with research children but requiring them to videotape additional BSID-II administrations for certification purposes until they had reached the required standard of administration.

Developing the Bayley “Short Form” for the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) focuses on how child and family characteristics, early health care, and in-home and out-of-home child care history influence children’s first experiences with the demands of formal schooling. Measures of children’s early physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development were taken during home visits when the children were approximately 9 months of age; subsequent data collections are planned for when the children reach 24 and 48 months of age, and upon entry into kindergarten and first grade.

The successful adaptation of the BSID-II for the Early Head Start study enabled this project to propose its use in the ECLS-B. The ECLS-B differed from the Early Head Start study in that the BSID-II Motor Scale was added, and that testing would begin when children were 9 months of age rather than 14 months. Thus, the materials developed for the Early Head Start study had to be modified for use in the ECLS-B. We designed assessment booklets and scoring sheets for the ECLS-B based on the format described above for the Early Head Start Study but covering a range of items appropriate for 9-month-olds. The Motor Scale items followed the Mental Items in the booklet. The first ECLS-B field test demonstrated that a full administration of the BSID-II, even when streamlined and condensed through the use of flip charts, required at least 40 minutes for the Mental Scale, plus time for the Motor Scale. Upon completion of both the Metal and Motor scales “to ceiling,” children had often reached their limit and were unable to continue with the other activities required for the study. The research protocol included 10 other tasks so that the entire home visit required in excess of 90 minutes to complete. Such a lengthy home visit was beyond the scope of the project.

NCES was unwilling to eliminate the BSID-II from its protocol. In its original state, however, the BSID-II took up far too much time to be practical for inclusion in the ECLS-B study. The challenge, then, was to create a “short form” so that valid, reliable BSID-II Mental and Motor scale scores could be obtained for the children in the study, while substantially reducing the time required to complete the assessment. The goal was a maximum administration time of 25 minutes for the Mental Scale and 15 minutes for the Motor Scale.

Adapting the Assessment for the Field Survey: The ECLS-B contractor, Westat, needed to develop a reduced set of items that could be administered in less time and produce reliable, valid scores equivalent to the full set of BSID-II Motor and Mental scale items. In the end, the “Bayley Short Form” was developed, field tested, refined, and implemented in the nine-month data collection of the ECLS-B. Selection of the final items was a multi-step process. First, Item Response Theory (IRT) analyses identified the strongest and most predictive items using the original, nationally normed BSID-II database developed by the Psychological Corporation. Second, BSID-II experts looked at those items that were found to be most predictive, and judged both the administration time of the items and the expected difficulty in training field staff to administer them. They found that the use of fewer materials and transitions during testing could reduce administration time. And, finally, child development experts examined the reduced set of items for thoroughness in covering all essential developmental domains. Assessment booklets and scoring sheets were assembled containing the reduced set of Mental and Motor scale items that comprise the Bayley Short Form.

The Mental Scale of the 9-month Bayley Short Form consists of a core set of 15 items—compared

to 45 items for the Early Head Start 14-month assessment. The Motor Scale had a core set of 10 items. New basal and ceiling rules also had to be established for the Bayley Short Form. The Bayley Short Form Mental Scale requires three or more items correct to establish a basal, and three or more items incorrect to reach a ceiling, compared with five or more items correct to reach a basal and three or more items incorrect to reach a ceiling for the full BSID-II. Two or more correct items on the Bayley Short Form Motor Scale establish the basal, compared with four or more for the standard BSID-II, and two or more incorrect items establish the ceiling in both the Bayley Short Form and the BSID-II. As in the Early Head Start BSID-II administration, a checkpoint was established at the end of the core set of Bayley Short Form items for testers to determine whether they needed to administer additional items to reach a basal or ceiling rule for that child.

Training the Research Staff: Training field staff to administer the Bayley Short Form Mental and Motor scales was conducted over three days, with a day for practice with a child in a format similar to that used to train the testers for the Early Head Start study. A training video was used to highlight the administration of items and scoring nuances. A video clip was shown with the administration of each item, followed by correct and incorrect responses. Field staff were then given an opportunity to administer the items in dyads, with one person acting as the child. When trainees became familiar with the items, they watched a video administration of the Bayley Short Form with a nine-month-old child. This tape was paused following the administration of each item, and trainees were asked to critique the tester's administration and to score the child's response for that item. A critique form similar to that designed for the Early Head Start study was designed to review testers' administrations.

Ensuring Proper Administration: Field staff were required to be certified to administer the Bayley Short Form in a manner similar to that employed in the Early Head Start study. They worked in pairs with one videotaping while the other assessed and then switched off for the second session with a new child. On the last day of training, children between 8 and 10 months of age were brought in, and trainees were videotaped administering the Bayley Short Form and critiqued by training staff, using the form mentioned above. Trainees were required to meet a certification level of 85 percent on the Mental and Motor scales, independently. Trainees who did not reach 85 percent at training on both scales were required to videotape an assessment with a nine-month old after they attended training. To guard against assessor drift, periodic reliability checks were made throughout the data collection period. Trainees were required to meet a certification level of 85 percent.

Adapting the BSID-II for the Infant Swaddling Study in Mongolia

The BSID-II Mental and Motor scales are currently being employed to examine some of the risks and benefits to development of tight swaddling among infants in Mongolia. Although field staff were trained to use the BSID-II specifically for that study, the training was also intended to serve as a foundation for the future application of the BSID-II as a clinical tool in Mongolia. Therefore, unlike the staff for the Early Head Start and ECLS-B studies, the Mongolian trainees were all pediatric professionals rather than laypersons. There is a plan to develop BSID-II Mental and Motor Scale norms for 13-month-olds based on the large swaddling study sample, and it is hoped that Mongolian BSID-II norms for other ages can be established in the future. We used the materials, training, and certification structure from the Early Head Start study as a basis for the training in Mongolia. However, additional considerations arose in extending the BSID-II to this new cultural setting, and the BSID-II training was more rigorous and extensive in Mongolia to ensure that these issues were adequately addressed.

"Translating" the Assessment for the Field Survey: The BSID-II had to be translated into Mongolian in the literal sense, but that was only the beginning of the process to ensure optimal

understanding of the test. In fact, during the two weeks of training, translation became an iterative process by which BSID-II instructions in Mongolian were refined as the testers became more familiar with the focus and nuances of each task. We found it necessary over the course of training to set aside time in several sessions specifically for the testers to discuss the translation as a group and come to an agreement as to the best wording.

The flip cards for the BSID-II Mental Scale that had been used at the 14-month assessment for the Early Head Start project were translated into Mongolian. In addition, Mongolian staff found it helpful to incorporate pictures of the materials needed for each task onto the relevant card, to facilitate quick transitions from one task to the next. In addition, a new set of cards was made for the BSID-II Motor Scale items to be used in the research. The cards were originally made in English, in the same basic format as the Mental Scale cards, then translated into Mongolian.

Training the Research Staff: The training was conducted over 10 full days at the hospital where the research staff worked in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. Trainees were hospital pediatric staff who had extensive experience with young children, but who were unfamiliar with this type of developmental assessment. The trainer spoke English, with translation into Mongolian by a pediatrician participating in the training. The first few days of training were devoted to explaining the purpose of the BSID-II, understanding standardized testing in general, watching videotapes of sample administrations, and learning what the BSID-II materials were and how to care for them. This last item seems minor, but it was especially important in Mongolia because if materials became lost or broken, it would be prohibitively expensive and time-consuming to order replacements, and substitutions with local materials would not be acceptable for standardized administration.

The trainees practiced administering the test to each other in pairs for two days, then had five full days of practice with children approximately the age of study participants. A child would be brought into the training room, and one tester would administer the Mental and Motor scales while the other testers and trainer watched. The group then discussed what they had observed in terms of completing the tasks exactly according to instructions, the overall engagement of the child, smoothness of administration, and so on. It also presented an opportunity for the group to discuss how they would have interpreted ambiguous responses on the part of the child, and allowed trainer to clarify instructions and ensure adequate understanding of each task by the group as a whole. The trainees then split in two groups and completed some additional BSID-II administrations in children's homes, in order to gain a more "real life" experience of testing (for example, where siblings were present or perhaps there was no table to sit at with the child).

We found that the testing became much more precise and reliable when the examiners had the opportunity to discuss why tasks were administered in a certain way. "Because the manual says so" was not accepted as a sufficient explanation in this setting. For example, the testers informed the trainer that they could not see why you would follow the BSID-II manual instructions and say, "See my tower?" to a one-year-old who had no idea what a tower was. Therefore, they would not bother to use the wording at all while administering that item, or would say it at the wrong time. In discussion with the trainer, the Mongolian staff agreed that children of that age could indeed associate this label with a sample block construction the examiner was making if uttered concurrently, and that hearing "tower" again while more blocks were placed in front of the child would suggest to them that they were to build in the same way. Once that connection was made and the Mongolian testers understood that the wording to the child was not superfluous, then they consistently administered the task exactly according to the instructions in the manual.

Ensuring Proper Administration: The certification process for the testers in Mongolia was very similar to the certification for research staff in the Early Head Start study, but more stringent for sev-

eral reasons. First, it was expected that the training would eventually form a foundation for more general use of the BSID-II as an assessment tool in Mongolia beyond the swaddling study. Second, because the testing was being conducted in Mongolia for the first time, it was especially important to make sure that the testers would manage the overall assessment procedure in a way that was comparable to what the test designers had originally intended. This often included judgments on the part of the examiner, such as whether instructions are to be repeated or how an item should be scored based on ambiguous actions on the part of the child. And third, the BSID-II Motor Scale was being applied in this manner for the first time, so it was important to make sure that its administration flowed smoothly and that all necessary reminders for proper administration and scoring had been included in the Motor Test flip chart.

To be certified to administer the BSID-II to children in the research study, testers had to videotape themselves practicing on age-appropriate children and fill out the same self-evaluation form for the Mental Scale as the testers from the Early Head Start study—translated into Mongolian. An additional self-evaluation form was developed to cover the Motor Scale items in the same manner. Testers had to submit two certification tapes, each with scores of at least 90 percent for both the Mental and Motor scales. If a tester achieved 90 percent or above on one scale, but not the other, they had to submit an additional certification tape for the scale they had not passed until they achieved the required standard.

In Conclusion

As these case studies have demonstrated, it is clearly possible to use complex developmental assessments in large-scale studies. However, the diverse issues that arose during the three studies show that there is no “one-size-fits-all, how-to” manual for doing so. Rather, careful attention must be given to how materials can be formatted for ease and efficiency of use and to minimize errors, how research staff will be trained, how testing may need to be adapted to fit into time constraints during field assessments, and how to ensure that accurate translation, understanding, and administration can be achieved when extending testing to novel cultural contexts—all the while remaining faithful to the original test. We hope that the examples we have provided will allow others to consider how they may undertake or enhance large-scale studies of children through the use of clinical developmental assessments.

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- 1 Elizabeth Spier is an independent international child development consultant (elizspier@aol.com).; Susan Sprachman, the corresponding author, is senior survey researcher at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., Princeton, NJ (ssprachman@mathematica-mpr.com); Cassandra Rowand is a survey researcher at Mathematica (crowand@mathematica-mpr.com). This paper was prepared for the Children and the Mediterranean Conference, Genoa, January 7-9, 2004.

Informed Consent of Immigrant Patients: A New Problem in Pediatric Oncology

Massimo L., MD

Department of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
G. Gaslini Scientific Children's Hospital, Genova Italy

E5

WORKSHOP V

The sick immigrant child is an emerging challenge for Italian pediatricians. Until a decade ago the phenomenon was limited to occasional patients whose families had the chance to meet Italian workers abroad. This story tells of an 8-year-old girl from a North African family affected by an abdominal rhabdomyosarcoma (RMS) at onset whose family was referred to us in 1991. Attempts to communicate with her family were nearly futile, as her father spoke little Italian and an older brother living in a Catholic Seminar in Rome was immediately unavailable. Efforts at all levels of our Unit were made to give support to the girl and her father. Diagnostic examinations confirmed abdominal RMS and a CVC was inserted. At the chief physician's and medical team's decision to start anticancer treatment according to the standard Italian RMS protocol, informed consent became necessary. Due to the communication difficulties encountered, the chief pediatrician decided to attempt to explain the child's conditions to the father in a simply written document. When asked if he had understood or if he had any questions, the father replied that he was unable to read or write. With the help of a nun who had lived in an African mission, the father - with unexpected sagacity - explained: "I arrived here with my ill daughter from Africa because I trust in you, and I hope that you will save her. I understand that you have rules, and that you need my consent to treat my child. Tell me, please, what I must do". It was decided that he give his informed consent, signing with an X in the presence of two witness. It was decided to leave the girl in Genova under our care, assisted by the nuns of the Convent where she lived for the following three years. She received a visit from a family member every few months. At 12 years after diagnosis of disease, she is now a long-term survivor enjoying good health and a model student intent on helping the children of her country.

Learning from the Palestinian - Israeli Experience

*Dr. Ghassan Abdullah & Ms. Adina Shapiro, Co-Directors
Middle East Children's Association*

E5

WORKSHOP V

Introduction:

From the early stages of development, a child is a quickly evolving creature who is constantly learning about his or her surroundings. One of the more inspiring parts of watching a child grow is following their curiosity and their unquenchable thirst for constant learning. It is sometimes startling to notice how human development can be a series of efforts to control and even stifle this learning process. Why is this done? Possibly because the adults' world is threatened by the constant interest of the child in fields that they are not capable of supplying answers to. Possibly unintentionally the adults who must defend their own dynamic world, and thus are incapable of being constantly open to new vistas, relay this "survivors" instinct to the child.

Mostly this process is unintentional. But no matter what the reason is, the role of an educator in the early stages of a child's development is clearly a central one. It is therefore of interest for us to try and explore in what ways we can have a better impact in helping the child develop within a constantly developing world.

In this article we would like to take the backdrop of the Israeli - Palestinian current state of conflict, as a basis to explore this question. During this period both the Palestinian and the Israeli children, each in different ways, are not able to enjoy some of the basic rights guaranteed to many children around the world. In these difficult circumstances parents, as well as teachers stand shocked and helpless by the types of violence their children are exposed to. They are anxious and simultaneously at a loss in finding suitable ways to care for their children.

Our working hypotheses is that a process where the adults are constant learners themselves, is the best environment in which to provide the child with the necessary developmental tools that they require.

It is important to clarify that this paper is based on the empiric experience of our work in the Middle East Children's Association (MECA) and has not yet been organized in a proper academic fashion. We relay this experience as material that can be used to further learn about how educators can be of use to preschool age students.

In this paper we will bring forward, from our experience, some of the general challenges, which are faced by preschool educators in our regions, specifically during the past three years of conflict. Finally, we will relay some of the activities, which MECA has provided and would like to explore in the context of being a joint Israeli - Palestinian organization.

MECA's process with regard to preschool education.

The Middle East Children's Association was established in 1996 as an organization dedicated to promoting educational activities through the Palestinian and Israeli communities.

The first stage of the organization, which started parallel to its inception, and after several meetings between Palestinian and Israeli students, was that, in order to properly work with the children, it is essential to do in depth work with the teachers. The rationale behind that was the following:

- a. The educational process in general and learning concepts of understanding and tolerance in particular, is a long term process. Therefore it is necessary to partner with the players who have long term and regular contact with the students.
- b. The teacher's reactions are evident and directly affect the students in the classroom. Even unspoken suspicions, fears and stereotypes, are transmitted to the students. These tendencies are sometimes even more effective than the actual curricular material that is periodically brought in to the classroom. Due to this assumption, any process with the students with outside intervention, such as MECA, even if there is a lot of expertise and professional work, can be hindered by the teachers who have qualitatively and quantifiably more influence on the children.
- c. A third rationale for working with the students, is one that has evolved in later years, yet was not among the initial rationales. Nonetheless, we find it to be an important rationale and relevant in retrospect to continuing in the direction of investing most efforts in the teachers. This rationale relates to the general status of the educational systems. In trying to work within the educational systems, one of the messages that we are trying to relay to the students is that the messages, which they receive through the educational systems, should be more influential and credible than those that they receive on the street and through the media. As such, any initiative that wishes to address the educational institutions must strengthen the legitimacy of the institutions themselves. Unintentionally, the work of an NGO may give messages that imply that the teachers or the schools are not qualified to handle the complex educational contents that are provided from the outside. In order to assure that our work is viewed as a partnership with the educational institutions and not a subversive means to undermine them, it is crucial to do intensive work with the teachers.

Initially the organization sponsored several seminars for Palestinian and Israeli teachers. Several hundred teachers in total participated in these events. In these early stages it became evident that in order to properly respond to the needs of the two societies, two criteria must be met.

- The first being that each educator involved must commit to a long-term process (minimum of one year) of participation.
- The second criteria, was to focus on teachers in their areas of subject and expertise. Thus, the needs of a preschool teacher are different from those of a high school teacher; and the needs of a math teacher are different than those of a history teacher.

Stage 2

In the backdrop of these conclusions, in 1997 MECA decided to gather a specific group of Israeli and Palestinian preschool teachers in the areas of Jerusalem and Rammallah. The purpose of this group was to explore how teachers of this young age from both communities can work together on examining how to integrate concepts of peace and tolerance into the classroom. The decision to focus on preschool teachers was based on several assumptions:

1. The young age of 3-6 is most impressionable. In order to effect the future generation through the educational system, it is necessary to begin from this age.
2. The period was during the peak of the euphoric times after the Oslo interim peace accords.. The

assumption was that the two communities were working towards peaceful relationship, yet at the same time a significant educational process must take place in order to help assimilate the political accords amongst the people. In the preceding years to this agreement, both communities experienced violence and hatred towards one another. We chose to begin the educational process with children who were not as exposed to the impact of the more negative times. It is important to note that although the young children may not have experienced some of the negativity first hand, they were growing up in communities who did. Our efforts were therefore to create a different second hand experience, in order not to have the fresh new generation poisoned by the sufferings of the adults.

3. The preschool teacher has a maximum of liberty in creating a curriculum for the preschool. Although there are basic guidelines set out by the ministries of education, there are no final exams, no homework and a lot of creative activities. This allows for a wide range of autonomy for the teachers to work within her kindergarten, without having to confront opposition from the authorities.

A group of 12 preschool teachers gathered. Of them, six were Palestinian and six were Israelis. The group set out to meet approximately every three weeks. Two facilitators led the group. The Palestinian facilitator had a masters degree in psychology and the Israeli had a doctorate in education. Both were professors at the University level, had expertise and experience with early childhood education, and had experience in Israeli - Palestinian communications. The facilitators and all of the teachers were women.

The group worked for two years. They focused on several areas:

- An group process for the teachers focusing on them as individuals. Here the facilitators worked with the teachers to learn about their own feelings about themselves, their colleagues and about their relationship to each other's national identity. The teachers preferred to remain at the level of the personal and professional meetings. They achieved a high degree of intimacy and developed strong personal relationships between one another. At the same time they were more resistant to attempts to explore the more conflictual "political" aspects of their identities.
- The second area of focus was the pure professional aspect of pedagogical tools for the preschool teachers. Here the facilitators brought different tools for the teachers that they could then use in their classrooms. There was a lot of emphasis on the experiential aspect of acquiring these tools. This included:
 - i. The teachers had visits in some of the different preschools where they were exposed first hand to the environment in which they worked.
 - ii. The teachers practiced on themselves each exercise that they were to bring later to the students. This allowed them to recognize the effects of their own personality and coping mechanisms on their environment. It created a linkage between who the teachers were as individuals and who their young pupils were as individuals. Each with diverse personalities and cultures.
- The third aspect that was the focus of the group was the connection between the Israeli and Palestinian children. Through their activities, the teachers together with the facilitators were constantly trying to find ways to learn about the other, to create links of communication with the other side. All of these efforts were done while responding directly to the specific needs and directions that existed in each of the schools. The introduction to the "other" was not presented as a disconnected or hindering aspect, but rather as an additional way to promote the work in the school.

Stage 3:

In 1998, after a year of the work with this preschool group, MECA decided to develop an additional five groups of teachers. Two coordinators (one Israeli and one Palestinian) were hired in order to help recruit teachers throughout Israeli and the Palestinian authority. In 1999 this number grew to 11 groups and in 2000 this number was increased to 15 groups. Each group included between 16 - 20 teachers and had regular meetings every 3 weeks. As part of the increase in 2000 an additional group of preschool teachers began. This group included preschool teachers from more central and northern areas. These included refugee camps on the Palestinian side. The facilitators for the preschool groups joined the entire network of facilitators for all of the MECA groups. In essence the initial model of the preschool group became the basis for the development of the other groups. Once these other groups were developed, the preschool groups continued to evolve in accordance to the lessons learned from the general experience. Several factors resulted from this process:

1. The preschools were viewed as an integral, and at some times even leading, component of the overall educational program. This is contrary to general educational processes, which tend to view the preschool work as irrelevant as or less sophisticated than the older classes.
2. There was an interdependent learning process created between the primary and secondary teachers and the preschool teachers. Certain aspects were learned from one another. The preschool groups contributed a more creative and avant-garde approach. Other teachers, who must adhere to a stricter curricular and school format, are more hesitant in exploring less rigid options for teaching in the classroom. Similarly, the preschool teachers were enriched by seeing themselves as an integral part of the general school system and were regularly reminded of their commitment to preparing the students for this reality.
3. The fact that there were different groups of teachers all involved in the same program, each needing to respond to different needs and requirements, challenged the facilitators, and the teachers to become more sensitive to a diversity of needs and styles. This point is potentially the crux of the joint work and its parallel effect on the classrooms. Noting the diversity among the Palestinians and the Israelis cannot be achieved in a vacuum. It requires developing sensitivity to diversity in an array of dimensions. The heightened awareness to the issue of diversity which is manifested in a meeting between teachers of different age groups, contributes to raising awareness towards other realm of diversity such as the diversity between the two nation groups. These sensitivities further assist in becoming aware of diversity among the children in the classroom, even if they are from a similar ethnic background.

Stage 4

In October 2000 violent confrontations erupted between the Palestinians and Israelis. In the context of these confrontations the Palestinians suffered frequent military incursions and several hundred checkpoints throughout the Palestinian areas restricting freedom of movement. The Israelis suffered frequent suicide bombings and terrorist attacks. In the course of this reality many children in both communities have been killed and injured. We are currently in the third year of this conflictual political situation. MECA's work was affected on two levels.

First, the seemingly technical result of the breakdown of the peace accords between the two peoples was in the creation of physical barriers. Israeli citizens are prohibited from entering the Palestinian territories and vice versa. This de facto separation means that the bi-national setting of frequent meet-

ings between the Palestinian and Israeli educators and staff members has become increasingly difficult if not impossible. The meetings between the teachers in the different groups are less frequent, and sometimes can only take place out of the region. Much of the work therefore takes place on a uni-national level with regular coordination between the two group facilitators. Due to frequent closures within the Palestinian areas, some of the Palestinian teachers are often unable to hold uni-national meetings.

A second process that has been taking place since October 2000 was the psychological impacts that have seriously affected both societies. Most people in either societies have come into close contact with a violent situation, and know first or second hand victims of this environment. This creates an entire society, including the educational system, suffering from the reality, and as a result going through a process of mass projection and demonizing of the other and a breakdown of positive communications between the two people. MECA has remained one of the few NGO's who has continued to work despite the violence. Nonetheless, the severe impacts of this reality affect every student or teacher in the region, and thus raised additional needs to respond to, particularly in regard to the prospect of joint activities, which are not widely embraced by either society. As a response to these needs MECA has invested more efforts in staff training and has added specific segments to the programs of coping with trauma.

MECA's general activities included the following adaptations in light of the aforementioned situation. These adaptations were true for all of MECA's work including the groups of preschool teachers.

- I First, we were challenged with maintaining a joint organization, while political tensions filled the air as well as physical barriers prevented frequent joint meetings. It was therefore crucial to define how work would take place on a uni-national basis. The uni-national work had several goals. A) To allow continuity of the general programs. The information gathered through these meetings could be relayed to the facilitators of the other half of the bi-national group. B) To assess the independent needs of each side, while infusing concepts of tolerance and understanding, as tools for addressing these needs. C) To provide a forum for ventilation and discussion of feelings that aroused with regard to the other side. This allowed for an initial processing of emotions necessary before a loaded meeting with their Palestinian or Israeli counterparts.

In retrospect we found that the significant investment in uni-national work was an independent need regardless of the actual deterrents on the ground. Of course more bi-national meetings would be able to contribute to the work, but two main focuses from the uni-national meetings ended up being a crucial element of the joint work. First and foremost it challenged the groups to focus on professional standards. The bi-national encounters were intriguing and stimulating. At times this was sufficient for the participants and they were not always challenged to achieve concrete educational contents. The scarceness of the bi-national meetings meant that standards had to rise in order to assure that teachers would continue to frequent the work. The intrigue of meeting the other side was not always present and definitely not certain at any given time. Therefore there had to be other reasons, which would assure long-term commitment of the teachers. This indirectly caused a significant rise in the professional educational standard of our work.

The second focus of the uni-national sessions, which we found to be a crucial element of joint work, is to allow a proper assessment of needs on each side independent of the other. The joint work may at times distort or at least blur the specific needs of each nation, which naturally are very different

from one another. In the long-term this lack of clarity may result in frustration or even resentment. The separate work allows to distinguish the specific needs and to specify where the common ground is that can be worked on together.

- II An additional change in MECA's work after October 2000 was to focus more on staff training and support. The saturation of crisis clarified more and more the needs of the teachers for support. The complex situation required coping with trauma as well as complex moral dilemmas which teachers were presented with. Children required much more support in their daily school lives, and thus the teachers who were to provide this support, were in need of finding sources of strength. MECA staff responded to this need by an extended focus on support for teachers and school principals, one on one communications and regular meetings with psychologists and social workers with specific expertise in trauma. This however, shed light on an additional need. The staff of facilitators who lead the groups of teacher, were becoming involved in work that was not socially acceptable and the tricky elements of partnership during violent conflict raised internal dilemmas among the committed individuals. In response to this need MECA hired regular and guest experts who were to work on coaching and professionally supporting the facilitators. Their task was to review issues, give guidance, counseling and support. Finally, even the nucleus MECA staff was dealing with challenges in fulfilling their own jobs for all of the aforementioned reasons. Responding to this need for support, MECA co-directors nominated a group of advisors with whom issues of policy and daily challenges could be reviewed. Noting the parallel process of support taking place on all levels, these persons were termed "learning companions".
- III As a result of the added need for supporting the teachers, an additional focus of the work began to evolve towards the beginning of the scholastic year of 2003. Over the past two years MECA became a safe haven of support for committed teachers. The response to this need was so significant that there was an influx of more teachers during times when it would seem more natural to shy away from these activities. Parallel to this process, however, the emphasis on the teachers deflected the attention from the main goal, the students. It was clear that responding to the teachers' needs is crucial to being able to have a confident and well rounded teacher enter the classroom and come in close contact with the students. None the less, the correlation between responding to the teacher's needs and its impact on the class room was not always fully articulated and not always clarified.
- IV Two other aspects at the same time contributed to a potentially growing gap between the teachers work within the organization and the effects within in the classroom.

First, the general status of teachers in the two societies was in a constant decline. As a result of the deteriorating political situation, there was also deterioration in the economic situation. The situation within the educational systems required more financial aid that was not readily available due to the subjective set priorities and objective financial limitations of the two educational systems. Within the Palestinian Authority the restriction of movement of Palestinian workers significantly effected the ability of teachers (and students) to reach their work, subsequently resulting in a financial burden on the school (for the same costs there is less output and much more finances would need to be invested in achieving the same minimal results as before. More money for less output.) It effects the parents' ability to enter into Israel and earn daily wages, which are necessary for basic expenses towards the children's educational need. In Israel the teachers' salaries, and the ministry of education's budget, were directly cut, while additional funds were being set

towards security guards at schools due to a wave of terrorist attacks. In general, schools were getting less and less funds. This entire situation has created a ripple effect within both communities, affecting the role of the school and of the teacher. Within both communities the parents finance many of the preschools for children under 4 years old and so daycare was becoming less of a possibility with these financial deteriorations.

The school became more and more of a place to physically safeguard the children (although not always successfully), and less where actual demands for learning were set out. It is quite comprehensible how in an environment such as this, where there are no high expectations from the teachers themselves to actually have an effect in the classroom, the teachers themselves internalize a similar message. This inclination is strengthened by the fact that no peace settlement negotiations (on a formal or informal level) have seriously grappled with the role that education must play in its midst.

The second contributing aspect to the exhaustion of the role of formal education is the development of modern technology and the significant role that the media plays within the context of the conflict. It is important to note that as a general rule, the educational systems have been one of the slower systems in evolving and adapting to the rapid shifts of human development. This paradoxical process seems to have more acute manifestation when the changes in the situation and instability are frequent, such as in our region. Things that were not always acceptable or available to the mass media have become integral parts of our lives. As a result, children are exposed to a wide array of information independently of the adult world. The media relays information yet at the same time it also manipulates the information by showing certain parts over and over again, by choosing the areas of focus and by adding comments and innuendos that slowly trickle into the consciousness of the society. In the Palestinian and Israeli societies there is a constant escalation of violence, there is a feeling of a lack of control and subsequently a thirst for information. The school systems are no longer the main nor initial source of information. Many times students are aware of events prior to their teachers either because they have experienced it personally on their way to school, or because they will receive messages on their cell phones in the middle of class. Even if information is available to all, it is no longer the teacher's prerogative to choose when and in what manner information is relayed. The information is already out there and the teacher may act in reaction to what is available, usually without much notice or solid facts different than those exposed to the general public. It is no wonder, under these circumstances, that the society as a whole, and the students and teachers in particular, have become somewhat cynical as to the specific role of the formal education.

As we described, MECA's activities inadvertently fell into the category of a system that was disempowering the educational system. Supporting the teachers as individuals, without requiring specific outcomes in the classroom, seemed to come to terms with the developing axiom that their affect within the classroom was irrelevant. This was of course not a conscientious decision of an organization that initially targeted teachers as the most important channel through which to reach the students. It was probably this belief that made us more aware of this contrary process.

In response, over the past year of 2003, MECA has started to make a more conscientious effort to explore together with the teachers, how their activity is having an effect on the children. Where are we able to make more of an impact? Where less? And in general, how do the meetings with the other nation, the recognition of diversity, and the conveying of complex realities, being used as serv-

ices that help the children. The fact that a teacher can give a human face to the so-called “enemy” is not within itself sufficient to respond to the child’s needs. Furthermore, it can de-legitimize the teacher in an already de-legitimizing context. Having an effect on the classroom would therefore mean, first and foremost to identify and respond to the needs of the students. As we will describe later, we believe that our joint efforts can and do assist in identifying and responding to the needs.

The specific needs or challenges which have been identified within the preschool section 2000-2003:

Several challenges over the past few years were specific to the preschool education, although they reflected issues, which educators on every level were dealing with. We would like to briefly describe these challenges, and express how the joint MECA structure was central in coping with these issues.

Most of the preschool teachers are female and are also directors of their preschools –

A vast majority of the preschool teachers are women. This may respond to the classic roles of women in providing warmth and emotional growth. However, during times of physical crisis, especially within traditional societies, the communities tend to relate more emphasis and importance to military strength which is more associated with the men who are not present in the preschools. This process can contribute to a general feeling of lack of security by the children and the teachers within the preschools. One of the aspects which we tried to emphasize with the preschool teachers, therefore, was where do they find their sources of strength. The uni-national settings provided the teachers with a secure forum for them to deal with some of their difficulties so that they may enter the preschool with more confidence, thus contributing to a feeling of security. Additionally, the bi-national aspect, where the teachers actually dared to face the “enemy” provided an additional sense of control and of strength to what would otherwise seem like a threatening situation. Through the joint encounters these women were able to express their anger, disappointment and fears towards the other side, without using violent and physical measures. They were also able to see a human face on the other side, rather than a demonized unknown threat. Although none of these aspects could entirely erase the actual danger that presided for young children on both sides, it contributed to a more confident atmosphere set by the teachers.

Children are more exposed to information from their surrounding; Adults do not share information with young children

One of the challenges, which we address in modern times is the fact that the classroom and even the home are no longer the only source of information for children. Furthermore, even before mass media, younger children were also exposed to information provided by their older peers and siblings undiscernibly. This is particularly relevant in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities where there are many children in each family who are in surroundings with many other children. As such we find ourselves in a situation where the preschool children are exposed to many facts and myths and yet at the same time are being shielded by their teachers who feel, and sometimes correctly so, that they are not able to deal with this information. What happens, therefore, is that the preschool teachers do not relate to the experience of the children with regard to current events.