Growing up in poverty?
Evaluation of outcome and social impact in the international dialogue

edited by
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This book gathers the papers presented at the International Conference on *Misure efficaci contro la povertà: Italia e altri paesi a confronto* (Effective Measures to Cope with Poverty: Lessons from Italy and Other Countries) organised by On. Vanna Iori in collaboration with iaOBERfcs International Association for Outcome-based Evaluation and Research on Family and Children’s Services and Fondazione Emanuela Zancan onlus – Centro Studi e Ricerca sociale. The Conference was held in Rome on October 10th, 2018 at the Sala dell’Istituto di Santa Maria in Aquiro in Piazza Capranica 72, Roma. The papers from Cinzia Canali *et al.* and Marian Brandon *et al.* were presented at the International Workshop on “Growing well: early childhood services in dialogue” held at the LUISS University on October 9th, 2018. These initiatives were organized in the framework of the multisite project “Infanzia, Prima – Supporting local partnerships and innovative projects in the education and care for children [Childhood, First]” jointly promoted by Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Con Il Sud, in collaboration with Fondazione Cariparo for its two provinces and with the scientific support of Fondazione Zancan.

Translations by Cinzia Canali and Devis Geron.

Cover by: Laura Adelaide Gius. The lamps represent the need to highlight research and guide its paths. These lamps also indicate the direction to follow in order to explore all possibilities and share knowledge and available solutions for the increasing in the effectiveness of services for children and families. We first used the lamps for in 2008 at the international Eusarf-Iaoberfcs conference on “Assessing the ‘Evidence-Base’ of Intervention for Vulnerable Children and their Families - Cross National Perspectives and Challenges for Research, Practice and Policy” (Padova, Italy) and later in 2013 and 2017. We have decided to use them again so that they can continue to shed light on new research and solutions on outcomes. They will help us to highlight if our work is useful, how much it is useful, which are the advantages, if we were able to co-produce outcomes with our users and inside our community.

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35122 Padova - Via del Seminario, 5/a

*Supplement to the Journal “Studi Zancan” 3-4/2019*
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Introduction

Current challenges for the future of evaluation
Cinzia Canali and Tiziano Vecchiato

Child poverty and educational poverty have many faces and in the first part of this publication they are highlighted. On one hand, poverty is related to various inequalities: lack of access to educational services and spaces for leisure activities, lacking real relationships and exhibiting emotional illiteracy. Parental competences are another serious concern in taking care of children. These issues require original strategies to face “educational poverty”, with practices based on solidarity and collaboration among all stakeholder.

On the other hand, the solutions highlighted in the international experiences are useful to open our mind and to think in terms of implementing possible ideas. In this framework, connecting poverty and evaluation is a way for strengthening responsibilities and selecting best practices. Solutions are not depending on the “things” provided but how the relations are developed in the local communities with children, parents, teachers, educators, professionals, volunteers. The contributions from different countries and from the Italian foundations converge harmoniously about the need to open a new phase in the fight against poverty of children and families combining theory and practice, outcome and social impact evaluation.

Furthermore, in the transition from the first part of this publication to the second one, a change arises: in the first theoretical and methodological approaches are described, in the second part the focus is on their implementation. This is not a minor difference, considering a number of risks. For theories and methodologies, risks are mainly concentrated in the possibility of confutation, that is, the questioning of the proposed topic. It is a frequent and, we could say, physiological risk since most of the theoretical and methodological proposals sooner or later can be questioned by better proposals, as Khun (1962) said in his “Structure of scientific revolutions”.

In the case of practical implementation, instead, facts speak for themselves, for their concrete ability to describe results. Therefore, the possible confutation comes from unperformed or inadequate implementation. Experience shows that it is not easy to achieve positive results when this means innovation, facing the challenge of implementing something new, socially unprecedented, to be evaluated in terms of outcomes and social impact. The different contributions rotate around this challenge, bringing useful elements to face it.

The third part of the special issue is composed of the experiences of the chairmen of the main Italian bank foundations in terms of the social value achieved by the funded projects. In recent years, these foundations have resolutely carried out many initiatives aimed at innovation, during an economic crisis that created great difficulty in the capacity of public administrations to promote and respond to social problems. In many cases it was not just an issue related to incapacity, but related to their strategic inadequacy to manage with effective solutions the relationship between means and goals.

It is not possible to make a difference with administrative and bureaucratic actions. It is more useful to invest in unconventional practices, and to concentrate efforts where the problems are bigger and can be dealt with those who experience them personally.

It is, in a way, the difference between working on the “average” (the general population) and on the “variance” (those who are excluded but are suffering the problems). We need solutions that are able to help
where suffering and poverty concentrate, preventing more than a million of “minors” in Italy from facing, with equal opportunities, the challenges of growth.

All the chairmen describe what has been done through the National Fund for contrasting educational poverty and, at the same time, they envisage new scenarios at the national and European level. It is therefore a view at the present and at the future in order to share how today it is possible to invest beyond the short term. At stake are results to be consolidated over time with social investments that need to be patient while intervening in a suffering society, subject to the contradictions of inequalities and the difficult inclusion of disadvantaged children, a society that allocates many resources to the older people and the remaining to children, but totally insufficient to promote their life.

The final part summarizes what has been shared at national and international level and the meaning of outcome and impact assessment. Evaluation is necessarily a narrow door to discriminate between positive and negative results, between effective and expensive practices, in order to choose the solutions to be implemented. It is an uphill task, as it should be, to innovate without reproducing the existing situation. The biggest obstacles come from the returns in terms of image, aiming to be the center of attention for one day, to obtain additional resources, to cultivate the possibility of doing things with no risks. For this reason, the conclusions highlight that evaluation is not a self-certificate, a storytelling but an analysis of the proposed solutions, having in mind that social impact without real outcomes is not possible. For this reason, evaluations without reliable metrics are inadequate.

It is a set of contradictions that can help evaluation practices to grow, to improve at technical and methodological level, to contribute to systems of trust that are needed to stimulate investment. The combination of innovation and social development is demanding, because it tests responsibilities. We need it for questioning the paradigms that would like to have everything under control, including the possibility of innovation. It is a contradiction and the international debates help us to reveal it.

The iaOBERfcs association with Fondazione Zancan, Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cariparo, Fondazione CON IL SUD and ACRI agreed to be involved in this debate, with the contribution of researchers from four continents. The recommendations provided by the different perspectives can facilitate the choices for the construction of common goods.
Part 1
Critical issues

Child poverty in Italy: a political and social challenge
Vanna Iori

Introduction
The conference among representatives of different countries represents an important opportunity to talk about the fight against poverty of children and families: a decisive theme for the development of the planet. Since there are many forms of poverty, it is more correct to refer to it in plural terms: “many” poverties. Here a review of some data for formulating some brief reflections.

According to the Oxfam report (2016), 1% of the world’s population is wealthier than the remaining 99%. And the trend of socio-economic inequalities is worsening: the increase in global wealth further increases the richness of the wealthiest 1%. But to seek effective responses, national bodies must act on several fronts, not only on the economic front, even if the main forms of child poverty originate from economic poverty. In 2016, 40 million people were enslaved in the labour market, including 4 million children.

The first differences in the distribution of poverty are geographical

More than half of the children in the world (1.2 billion) are seriously threatened by poverty or ill-treatment and risk dying before reaching the age of 5, due to malnutrition or diseases that could be easily cured, and also risk not having access to education (especially in countries affected by conflicts) and, as far as girls are concerned, being forced into early marriages and pregnancies. In the poorest countries, one in five children lives in extreme poverty, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (30% in India alone). But the problem also affects the most economically advanced areas. Indeed, 30 million children in OECD countries live in severe relative poverty; of these, 6 million live in the United States (Save the Children, 2016; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2016).

While Niger is the country in the world where children are most at risk, Singapore and Slovenia, followed by the Scandinavian countries, are the countries with the highest investment in children. Most Western European countries are ahead of the United States, Russia and China. Without urgent action, economic and educational poverty will continue to deprive children and adolescents of the possibility of achieving the goal of ensuring, by 2030, health, education and protection, as set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals approved in 2015.

Italy ranks eighth with almost 1.3 million children and adolescents living in conditions of absolute poverty. But the most severe problem is the substantial increase in child poverty. According to Istat data (2017), the incidence of families with at least one child in this condition has risen from 2% in 2006 to 9.9% in 2016. Moreover, the number of minors in absolute poverty in Italy doubled between 2009 and 2016, and has grown by almost 250,000 in the last three years. According to Istat, these are mainly children living in large families, single-income families, with young and unemployed parents, families recently immigrated.

If these are some data on economic poverty, it is important to point out the other different forms of social and cultural poverty intertwined with it.

**Poverty and gender difference**

A second variable, after the economic-geographical one, is the gender difference. According to the Save the Children report, it is mainly female children and adolescents who pay the highest price of poverty compared to their male peers: 15 million girls of primary school age will never have the chance to learn to read and write and to enter school, compared to 10 million male peers. Besides that, the lack of schooling is accompanied by two additional elements of poverty for girls:

a. *Early marriages* (12 million adolescents in the world marry every year before the age of 18, and the number is increasing). One in three married girls lives in Sub-Saharan African countries and about 100 million girls live in countries where early marriages are legal.

b. *Physical and sexual violence*, in particular female genital mutilation, rape, forced prostitution linked to trafficking of minor children. About 120 million girls, more than 1 in 10 globally, have suffered forms of sexual violence in their lives. But even in five European countries (France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) more than one in ten girls have suffered at least one episode of sexual violence before the age of 15.

The UNICEF report indicates that more than 200 million girls undergo female genital mutilation and the highest concentration is reported in Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia. These are girls under the age of 14 and mainly under the age of 5. High percentages of girls are also subjected to these practices in Europe and Italy, where there are families from those countries whose cultural context does not seem to be horrified by this violence against girls.

**Educational poverty**

As far as Italy is concerned, educational poverty is a major problem, as confirmed by the Istat data, the last CRC report, the Anci data and the last Caritas report. Italy is at the bottom of the list in Europe in the main indicators relating to children’s well-being and rights. We are one of the European countries with the highest rate of early school leaving: 17% of young people between 18 and 24 years of age leave any educational path prematurely (the European average is 12%). With 29.5% of Neet youth, Italy is first in Europe, while it is penultimate regarding the number of graduates (26.9%) in young people aged 30-34.

In addition, less than 2 out of 10 children attend a 0-3 child care service. And we all know how important early schooling is for cognitive development. No Italian region is in line with the European average for 0-3 day-care services: the attendance rate should be 33% in 2020, while it reaches a maximum of 29% in Emilia Romagna, with a huge gap between Northern and Southern regions.

In our country there are differences between geographical areas in regards to the inequalities of access to educational opportunities and spaces. The highest level of educational poverty is in Campania, followed by Calabria, Puglia and Sicily, while at the opposite pole of the ranking are Friuli Venezia Giulia, followed by Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, which are the “richest” regions in terms of services and educational opportunities. These differences represent the gap among the regions also in terms of “per capita” expenditure for children: in Emilia-Romagna 543 euros are spent against 55 euros in Calabria.

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Social and relational poverty

Among the many faces of poverty, in addition to the above mentioned geographical and gender differences, social and relational differences need to be pointed out, as well as cultural experiences in the general sense. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in some behaviors such as affiliation to criminal gangs, use of drugs and poor nutrition.

Poverty is not going to school and not knowing how to read, but also remaining functionally illiterate. It is deprivation of opportunities to learn. It is not being able to experiment, travel, benefit from holidays, books (one family in ten does not even have a book in the house), cinemas, educational opportunities and meeting places. It is not having courtyards, green areas, spaces for playing and for sport. There are less than 1 in 10 young people who exercise daily (in Southern Italy 52.1% do not practice sport or physical activity, and in the North 29.1%). As a result, poverty is also an increase in overweight children (22.9%) or obese children (11.1%), and also children exposed to one of the highest levels of air pollution among all industrialized countries (26th place).

We therefore have forms of poverty that in a sense are “old”, material and immaterial, that we know and monitor, but also “new” educational and relational forms of poverty that are present even in contexts of economic wealth. New alarming data require urgent investments in schools but also in the children’s life worlds.

Emotional illiteracy

A face of immaterial poverty that requires special attention, as it constitutes a serious emergency, is today emotional illiteracy, the inability to recognize and name feelings, in adults and children and to take responsibility for the behaviors implemented as a result of the experience of feelings. A school and a family caring more about the education of heart teach children not to deny or silence emotions, not to suppress those states of mind. The educational task manifests itself in accompanying the children to reserve a significant role to the emotional life in their existence, taking responsibility for it. Because of the educational “neglect” of adults towards emotional life, children can lose the alphabets through which to read their own feelings and those of others. The predominance of knowledge aimed at usefulness and practical calculation forgets that “le emozioni, i sentimenti ci fanno conoscere che cosa ci sia nel cuore e nell’immaginazione degli altri-da-noi” (“emotions, feelings let us know what is in the heart and imagination of others”) (Borgna, 2003).

Listening to oneself is an outdated practice in children and yet silence is indispensable to give voice to emotional tones. An education that overlooks emotional tones, that is those movements of the soul that involve existence by allowing people to regulate the relationships with the world and with the others, ends up removing the sense of feelings. Education in feelings is therefore primarily configured as an accompaniment to cultivate one’s inner self and listen to oneself. In the haste that pushes our rhythms of life, in the eagerness to consume immediately multiple experiences, the wounds end up not having the time necessary to heal.

To restore dignity to feelings, it is necessary to take care of words: not only the words that explain, but also the whispered words that speak the language of empathy, sharing, solidarity. Those words are perhaps able to fill that inner void that injured children cannot fill through the coded lexicon of mobile phones, twitter, facebook.

Poverty and traps of the net

Poverty of feelings is partly connected to the Internet which increasingly “traps” minors, even from an early age (8-10 years), in experiences such as gambling, child pornography and online grooming, sexting...
and trading of photos and videos that involves a huge amount of money. Chats of all kinds where words written in the omnipresence of the net are regurgitated, the virtual place where to be always there has become for teenagers and pre-adolescents synonymous of existing. They are connected at all hours of the day, in contact with dozens of peers and not, with the phone in hand, in relation to the world, but alone. It is in this solitude that lies the greatest danger for adolescents, as evidenced by the data provided by studies on the use of the Internet. It is a loneliness where the unspoken words are many, those swallowed that allow the bullies to prevail in a virtual relationship where the relationship is transformed into insulting hostility: the gang against the victim to mock and humiliate by hiding behind the violence of written words, images, videos.

The serious and unpredictable consequences are out of control because the possibility of grasping the reactions of the victim in his/her body and in the expressions of his/her face on which to read the feelings disappears; anonymity makes the bullies more unrestrained and aggressive and the victims more powerless for whom it becomes difficult to react, speak, respond. Online actions have effects in real life. The stories of boys and girls who are victims of cyberbullying lead to forms of exclusion/isolation from the peer group up to the increasing phenomenon of hikikomori, getting to suicide attempts in the most serious cases (these are the second cause of death among young people between 15 and 25 years, after road accidents). In most cases, parents are unaware of the dangers their children encounter in the network and do not warn them or control them.

Parental Poverty

Parental poverty and poverty of parental training are the most urgent of the new forms of educational poverty: parents can be lost, insecure, competitive, careless, absent and hasty, and even protagonists of violence in front of their children (10,000 cases of witnessed violence) and more and more often perpetrators of violence against the school, breaking that “educational pact” that should instead constitute the alliance for the growth of children and the community in which they live.

Many parents today spend hours and hours in front of their mobile phones in the already limited time that is available to them after the working day to talk to their children. And so family sharing becomes a set of lonely people, of connections experienced individually with the outside world while being physically in the same interior place. This is why it is necessary to break the silence of unspoken words and, at the same time, to recover the dimension of the spoken, pronounced and shared word, looking into each other’s eyes.

The increase in the separation of couples who cannot count on support services is at the root of parental behavior that exacerbates educational poverty. The trend is constantly increasing and about 70,000 children live the separation experience of their parents each year (60% are under 11 years old). Yet there is no stable service to protect children from parental conflict. In many cases, children become instruments of revenge and grudge between parents, torn apart by hostilities. Injuring the other parent through their children is widespread behavior.

Violence, abuse and maltreatment

Another silent form of poverty for children is the increase in violence, abuse and maltreatment, types of behavior that involve both physical and psychological violence. One phenomenon that is still largely unknown and invisible is child sexual abuse, which cuts across social classes and culture. The available data tell us that abuse occurs mainly inside the family (90% of cases) and is performed, not occasionally but regularly, by known adults that children trust. And, also for this reason, they are silent: out of fear or shame of something they are not to blame for. Feelings that cannot find words to be said. Child maltreatment is
a complex phenomenon that involves pedagogical, psychological, social, cultural, legislative and political aspects that act interdependently with each other. Even in the absence of institutionalized, structured and homogeneous monitoring, the main sources (Terre des hommes, Cismai, Telefono azzurro, Save the Children, Meter, Ecpat) agree that sexual violence against children within the family is the most widespread and submerged drama. Incest subtracts the right to dignity and annihilates the right to the freedom to preserve childhood memories, indeed, it commits adulthood to fighting and erasing them (Iori, 2015).

Partly linked to the previous one is the drama of the new child prostitution, where it is difficult to establish the boundary between economic poverty and cultural and moral degradation. Let’s not forget that of the almost 10,000 unaccompanied foreign minors, a significant percentage move away from residential communities, going to live on the streets, exposed to various forms of exploitation: from undeclared work to prostitution. But even in this case, we cannot ignore the fact that there are adolescents who are not in a condition of poverty and who sell their bodies in exchange for telephone charges or gifts, which is the expression of another form of degradation, produced by consumerism as the dominant educational model and by the absence of ethical values.

Concluding remarks

The subject is complex and deserves, for every aspect above mentioned, further investigation. The changes in the macroeconomic and social scenarios underway strongly call on us to renew strategies and orientations that concern the fight against educational and family poverty. A discontinuity in the evolution of service policies has become imperative, leading to the overcoming of responses that have become increasingly inadequate for the new and different forms of poverty.

Rethinking welfare in the era of globalized solitude and in the crisis of values can no longer be conceived as a response based solely on economic investment or monetary transfers, but on a model of regeneration and solidarity, based on caring for and prioritizing relationships, capable of generating empowerment and producing communities (Fondazione Zancan, 2014; 2018).

So that the crisis of resources does not become also a crisis of thought, feelings and ethics, we must strengthen a thought that investigates how we can still be creators of rights and not be paralyzed by resignation to remain able to look at the future. That is to say, to know how to look at the world according to that ethic of the gaze that knows how to grasp the essential that escapes the superficial and distracted one.

Hannah Arendt (1989) emphasizes how looking, seeing and even hearing are decisive for our responsibility towards the world and history. Widespread lack of responsibility makes us “accomplices” of evil, every time someone evades their responsibilities. In mass society “gli uomini sono divenuti totalmente privati, sono cioè stati privati della facoltà di vedere e di udire gli altri, dell’essere visti e dell’essere uditi da loro” (“men have become totally private, that is, they have been deprived of the faculty of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and of being heard by them”) (Arendt, 1989).

Therefore, the responsibility of the gaze has a necessarily social, and therefore political, dimension. Responsibility, which is the foundation of social action, is characterized by public ethics. The ethics of the gaze is the first necessary step to produce policies of sharing, to counteract incursion and establish ethical rules for social coexistence, building spaces and times of “widespread responsibility”.

The political sense of responsibility therefore translates into care (I Care, as opposed to the violent carelessness of short-sighted and cynical eyes) that needs ethical-political answers, because it is concerned with knowing how to see the discomfort (increasingly complex and differentiated), how to learn the change, to stay in the planning, not to give up acting, but to find time to reflect on the consequences of choices. And it is with that look of knowledge and planning that we go in search of the most effective answers to the material and immaterial, old and new, forms of child poverty.
The evaluation of the effectiveness of the fight against poverty: potential emerging from international comparison
Cinzia Canali, Marie Connolly and Marzia Sica

Introduction
Countries have their own ways of creating child welfare system responses to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families. In general, such system developments align with country-specific cultural values, service structures, and resources (Connolly & Katz, 2019). Some child welfare systems are well established, whilst others are relatively new in their development (Connolly et al., 2014). When established, systems undertake reform, they often draw upon international examples to assist them in making system improvements. This is why we see parallel developments occurring, particularly in countries that speak a common language, share their research, and practice insights in the wide array of journals that now focus on child welfare and protection.

An advantage of looking offshore for solutions is that the adoption of new ideas from other countries provides a degree of confidence that the changes being made meet internationally acknowledged standards of good practice. In other words, the reforms can be seen as aligning with contemporary thinking about child welfare. On the other hand, there are a number of disadvantages in this type of parallel development. For example, imported reform ideas and packages may lack cultural fit, creating tension with established belief systems and views about the way in which children and families might be supported. More fundamentally, however, this replication of policy and practice can serve to limit innovation, particularly if innovative ideas reflect a more radical change in direction.

There are many examples within English speaking jurisdictions of a dominant risk paradigm in child protection that has served to gridlock change, creating a response crisis, and while at the same time remaining impervious to the adoption of what may be considered more responsive practices (Parton, 2017). Within these systems, movements of ideas that fundamentally change the nature and direction of policy and practice is rare. Rather, change happens incrementally within a constrained framework that focuses on risk, proceduralized investigative responses, and marginalises promising practices that have the potential to create partnerships with families and change power dynamics in child welfare (Burford et al., 2017). Although it is increasingly acknowledged that the crisis in child protection continues, the deeply rooted risk paradigm constrains the system’s ability to effectively insinuate more fundamental change.

An alternative to this incremental reform effort can be found in recent Italian developments, where innovative projects in social welfare have started to reconceptualize responses to families and communities. Since 2016, creative and original partnerships have supported a diverse range of projects across areas of community wellbeing. Critically supported by civil society, the projects have benefited from significant third sector funding that is helping to create new responses to children and families in need of support. Most importantly, these social welfare projects aim to influence national dialogue in ways that will impact future services, creating greater responsiveness through the mobilisation of civil society and its creative spaces.

In this article we look at the ways in which these Italian projects have the potential to influence a movements of ideas in social policy and service delivery that ultimately builds community capability and capacity in ways that create more sustainable and meaningful responses to families. In order to understand the drivers of these changes and the way in which they mark a new direction for Italian social policy and service delivery, we use a recently developed international typology of child and family welfare systems (Connolly & Katz, 2019) to examine the shifts in direction taken by the projects, and how they depart from more traditional approaches of child and family welfare.
Typologies and how they explain system development and change

Whilst reform effort in child and family welfare is ubiquitous, there has been relatively little theoretical attention given to exploring what influences system development and change. In recent years, however, work has been undertaken to better understand how and why systems evolve as they do, and how they cause change over time (see for example Gilbert et al., 2011; Welbourne & Dixon, 2013; Connolly et al., 2014). Typologies have been developed that capture the fundamental elements of systems, enabling both better understanding, and opportunities to explore comparisons of systems across international jurisdictions (Berwick et al., 2017). Crucially, typologies also help to explain the cultural value base that underpins a system’s development, along with their strengths and weaknesses (Connolly & Katz, 2019). Gilbert’s (1997) early pioneering work which differentiated systems that have a focus on child protection versus those with an orientation towards family services has been one of the most influential in understanding child protection systems in English speaking jurisdictions.

A more recent typology building on this work has been developed that focuses on the underlying values and beliefs that drives a system (Connolly & Katz, 2019). This typology (fig. 1) enables the interrogation of a system’s fundamental orientation to service delivery across two dimensions: whether the system has a stronger individual or community focus; and whether it prefers to use more or less formal measures to resolve the issues. The individual/community continuum on the vertical axis differentiates two archetypical core values relating to individualism and collectivism, values that illuminate deeply held views about children, families, and communities (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Triandis, 1995; Connolly et al., 2014). A culture of individualism values self-reliance, prioritizing the rights of individuals to resolve their own problem as long as they are not harmful to others. Systems reflecting an individualistic culture look to the immediate family to resolve problems, investigating and assessing concerns and negotiating (or imposing) solutions based on the outcome of the assessment.

Conversely, a collective culture recognizes the interdependencies children and families have and more strongly values collective responsibility in the care and protection of children. Systems reflecting a community focus will draw upon the strengths of the wider community to resolve family, group, and community concerns. In summary, based on these two core values, solutions to problems such as child abuse and neglect are therefore sought from within the immediate family (reflecting an individual focus), or from across the wider extended family and/or community.
The values underpinning the horizontal axis reflect the degree to which a system prefers to use a more, or less, formalized response. The formal/informal continuum draws upon a number of analyses relating to the role of the state in child and family welfare, but in particular, it has similarities with elements of Fox-Harding’s ideological analysis of laissez-faire, and state paternalism and child protection (1991; 1997). These two positions reflect two very different orientations to social welfare provision: laissez faire advocates for minimal state intervention, and the protection of families from intrusive state action; yet state paternalism and child protection support a much stronger interventionist role of the state in the belief that children should be protected from harm, and that the state has a key responsibility to ensure that this is so.

Focusing on a set of values and beliefs that underpin and drive child welfare systems across the two dimensions, the typology therefore presents four distinct orientations that provide an underlying logic regardless of how well developed a system might be, and irrespective of the structures and processes the system may have in place. These four orientations are identified as: individual/formal; individual/informal; community/formal; and community/informal. It is important to note that these distinctions are not absolute - typologies are necessarily simplifications that capture the essence of a system and its underpinning value base, but cannot account for every possible nuance. Countries may position themselves along the continuum - for example becoming more or less strongly individualistic or more or less strongly regulated. Even so, a particular orientation should still resonate with the core values and beliefs of the quadrant. Hence countries that are positioned within the individual-formal orientation will have highly developed regulatory systems that investigate abuse and neglect, and are heavily dependent on professionalized systems and solutions. Formalized guidelines are well developed, and systems utilize legal solutions including alternative care when a child’s care needs cannot be met by the immediate family. Of course, most systems have regulatory frameworks and the statutory powers they require to protect the interests of children, so it is not a question of whether or not the system has regulatory frameworks - the question is whether the system privileges more highly regulated interventions over less formal ones. This focus on less formal interventions distinguishes the individual-informal orientation. Systems within this quadrant still have a focus on the individual child and immediate family, but they preference alternative responses to statutory investigation. For example, early interventions through well-developed universal services, the provision of voluntary counselling support that is prioritized over compliance-focused interventions that are more commonly found in the individual-formal orientation. The community-formal orientation, like the individual-formal, prefers more strongly regulated service provision, and similarly uses proceduralised processes and legal provisions to assess and investigate children at risk. However, this time, look more broadly for solutions, engaging extended families and communities to develop webs of safety for children. Countries with histories of being colonized are often characterized in this quadrant, particularly when indigenous people are over represented in child welfare systems. Often these cultural groups have very different world views that challenges the system to respond differently to their needs. This results in greater use of extended family decision making processes and the engagement of kinship networks for children at risk. Finally, the community-informal orientation focuses on community solutions through the least formal responses. Here community action builds capacity, often through the mobilization of civil society where communities find innovative ways to generate community responses through a range of actors to support children’s wellbeing (for more detailed discussion of country-specific orientations see Connolly and Katz, 2019).

Understanding country-specific orientations that influence and shape social and child welfare enables a reflexive analysis of the values and beliefs that drive a system and how they influence its responses to children and families. It also informs debate about possible, and perhaps different, ways forward as countries consider how they would like to see their system evolve over time. In the following section, we provide a brief analysis of the project, considering its development in the context of contemporary challenges, and
postulating its established orientation based on the typology in Fig. 1. It then discusses the innovative projects first introduced in 2016, considering how they have caused changes in the way services are provided to children and families, and their potential to influence national dialogue to enact deeper change in the future. Finally, we will explore whether the projects have the potential to change Italy’s orientation towards children wellbeing.

A dynamic route

The model was presented to a group of Italian innovative projects introduced for the first time in 2016, with the aim of considering how they have brought about a chance in the way in which services are provided to children and families, and their ability to influence the national debate with a view to implementing more profound future changes.

In 2013, the King Badouin Foundation launched the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years to improve and innovate services for early childhood and, in particular, those for children from families in a disadvantaged situation or at risk of disadvantage. In order to explore these issues in Italy, a collaborative, dynamic network was built in which to debate the issues related to early childhood. In three years of debate and research the Transatlantic Forum produced ideas, proposals and solutions that are important for children and families, in particular those who are poor, deprived, and with a migrant background (Tfiey Italia, 2016). At the national level, the Forum aimed to synthesize the state of the art, looking to the future, through national meetings, with open debates among professionals, decision-makers, administrators, policymakers, scholars, representative of advocacy organizations, volunteering, and social economy. In these debates all participants brought their own thought and experience. The exchange of ideas started with this Forum represented a very important step to address the problem of accessibility to services for early childhood, especially those living in disadvantaged situations. It is paradoxical that in more developed countries, with more resources, this age group is so neglected. The contradictions emerged during the debates led to the development of new ideas within a pathway that, over time, has proved to be more generous than expected. It has become a community of ideas and practices, now expanded and consolidated (Tfiey Italia, 2016).

Traditional practices are vertical in nature: critical issues are identified, stigmatized and then public administrations transform them into specific interventions at national, regional and local level. Innovation is needed and this experience gave visibility to positive practices that now are better known and valued. This intense work could not be closed but it needs to be encouraged for building innovation in the local community.

The Call for Proposal “Infanzia, Prima” (Childhood, First) promoted by Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CON IL SUD, in collaboration with Fondazione Cariparo for its two province and with the scientific support of Fondazione Zancan, was aimed at increasing the attention to families with children up to the age of six years old, with a specific focus on children belonging to families in disadvantaged situations resulting from economic, social and integration difficulties or linked to the frailties of the territory in which they live. This Call led to the implementation of 10 projects that experimented new solutions, to the benefit of growing life and services for children and families. It was born from the Tfiey community for cultivating life, since the beginning.

From “Childhood, First” to “Child Educational Poverty Fund”

The projects carried out within the Call “Infanzia, Prima” have enabled the testing of practices, methodologies and tools that have been applied primarily in those communities where the needs and the potentials for innovative interventions emerged. The projects, which ended after two years, progressively
consolidated and developed a very interesting exercise of systematizing the results and the practices carried out. In many cases, practices, methodologies and tools developed within the projects had the strength to transform themselves into real models and also into policies adopted at municipal or local level. This is the case of the Alzano Lombardo project, in which the mechanism of “social barter” linked to the participation of parents in early childhood services was experimented and then applied within the municipal policy. From a practice that emerged informally, a model formally adopted by the public institution has been built. Other projects supported in “Infanzia, Prima” developed paths in the opposite sense: some services previously provided in a formal and structured way were implemented in a more flexible way, for example through “travelling bus” and therefore able to increase access and use of services, or providing more interventions to the real needs of families.

The initiatives supported in “Infanzia, Prima” were developed by a composite partnerships related to the specific territory and community. They were able to benefit from a stable support and monitoring and had therefore the possibility to critically re-read the activities carried out and the results obtained in connection with the real needs and potentials expressed in each territory. During the entire development of the interventions, however, each partnerships was constantly stimulated to continuous exchanges, joint updates on the state of the projects, providing spaces of thought and action for the development of shared solutions, dialogues for progressively leaving the individual dimension of each intervention to build a community of practices for systematizing the work done, so as to become potentially a model to be adapt and used in other territories.

The results obtained by the 10 projects can be read in a longitudinal way considering what happened in the past in terms of funding in favor of children and families. If we go back to the 1990s we may see the important development of the so-called “Progetti adolescenti” and some years later the funds provided by the Law 285/1997 aimed at promoting children’s well-being introducing a variety of new services. Following the Connolly and Katz model (2019), their starting point had a formal-orientation, given its institutional origin. The season introduced and tested by the “Infanzia, Prima” projects introduced a new way of supporting children and families: it has an informal-orientation that is then organized for keeping together formal and informal, institutional and not institutional partners. The starting point is the opposite of what happened more than 30 years ago when it was important to create networks among partners. Nowadays, the 10 projects testified that networks are important but more important is working on the outcomes for children and families.

The map proposed by Connolly and Katz in Fig. 1 is a way for focusing on the process of progressive systematization of practices, methodologies, tools and models promoted and supported by “Infanzia, Prima”. They promote and support to the activities launched within the Fund to contrast child educational poverty, positively inspiring the reflection and development of the Fund itself.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that many of the innovation projects discussed here and practiced across Italy have explored ways in which systems of support can be used to advance community responsiveness. Using the typology to understand change and potential shifts in orientation over time suggests that we may be seeing a purposeful shift toward less formal systems and a greater use of community spaces that build capacity in more sustainable ways. The theoretical values-based typology illustrates the ways in which services can shift in response to community need. The test that we experimented with the 10 innovative projects gives us hope, especially for all children and families living in disadvantaged conditions, that new season is blooming, and that these shifts in social policy and practice present new opportunities for systems change and development.
Part 2
International experiences

Educational poverty of children of the poor and alleviation measures in Hong Kong, China
Joyce Ma

Introduction
Admitted to a residential home after the death of his parents, Ming became a looked-after child until the age of eleven. Due to bullying, he requested early discharge from the residential home and returned home to live with his three elder brothers. The family of 4 children lived on welfare subsidies. Ming often went hungry, in part because his eldest brother’s budgeting skills were poor, though they would have been unlikely to have enough money for food in the first place. He did not have warm clothes during winter and was frequently sick. The malnutrition and poor health badly affected his schooling, and he dropped out after junior secondary school. He went out to work but failed to find a decent job due to his low level of education. Hoping for a better job, he took evening classes, completed secondary school and became a technician in the service sector.

This example illuminates the negative effects of poverty on the short-term and the long-term developmental outcomes – such as health, schooling and employment opportunities – of children like Ming. It also demonstrates the reciprocal negative effects between poor health and lower educational attainment (Morrison, 2002). Similar to the situation of other children from poor families in Hong Kong, Ming’s dropping out from school and academic underachievement were closely linked to the poverty that his family was experiencing. In contrast, it was secondary education and post-secondary vocational training that helped Ming move out of poverty.

This experience can be regarded as educational poverty, which refers to the lack of structural opportunities in society for better education (Engle & Black, 2008) and the capability deprivation (Sen, 1995) of children from socio-economically disadvantaged families. The problem of educational poverty varies in form, depth and severity from one society to another due to different resources available and to alleviation measures adopted. Past studies (Engle & Black, 2008; Ferguson, Bovaird & Mueller, 2007) have shown that timely and effective social measures at multiple levels can reduce the educational poverty faced by children from poor families.

Although a few studies (e.g., Cheung, 2015; Chou, 2013) have been conducted in Hong Kong to investigate the trend of childhood poverty (Cheung, 2015), its linkage to familial contexts – namely migrant families (Chou, 2013) and single-parent families (Cheung, 2015) – and its effect on developmental outcomes (e.g., B. G. C. A., 2006; Tang & Wong, 2013), little has been done to investigate the educational poverty faced by children of the poor. There has been no attempt to examine whether alleviation measures have reduced the educational poverty of this cohort.

To fill the knowledge gap, this paper reviews the problem of educational poverty in Hong Kong, and critically examines whether the alleviation measures taken by the government and society are in fact alleviating the problem of educational poverty.
Poverty in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a former British colony, now part of the People’s Republic of China, with about 7.8 million people residing in a land area of about 1,104 km$^2$. The Hong Kong economy is market-driven, with an overall GDP US$3.0 billion in 2015. The average GDP per person was US$40,240 in 2015 (World Bank, 2017), indicating that Hong Kong is a rich society.

However, there is a wide income gap between the rich and the poor. The Gini Coefficient is a figure indicating the general distribution of income on the basis of household income (Kwok, 2006b). In 1981, the Gini Coefficient was 0.45, rising to 0.539 in 2016 (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2017a:7). The rise in the income disparity in Hong Kong is comparable to that of other global cities such as New York City and San Francisco (Kwok, 2006a) but is near the “great concern” mark of 0.6 set by the United Nations. The rise in the income disparity in Hong Kong, however, has been attributed to changes in household size, increasing numbers of well-educated and high-income people, and the economic downturns in 1998 and 2003 (Kwok, 2006b).

Hong Kong has a low fertility rate, below 1.3 for the last 20 years. The fertility rate dropped below 1 from 2001-2006 before rising to around 1.2 in recent years (Census and Statistics Department, 2018c), which is still lower than the replacement level (2.1) suggested by Craig (1994). Average household size has also decreased, from 3.3 persons in 1996 to 2.8 in 2017. The percentage of one-to-three-person households rose from 54.2% in 1996 to 69.2% in 2016 (Census and Statistics Department, 2017a). Therefore, families with children are gradually less able to receive the informal social support provided by extended family members.

Even more worrying is the aging population. The number of senior citizens has been increasing 2.34% per year over the last 20 years, which is much faster than the increase in the total population (0.53%). Senior citizens (age of 65 or above) were 15% of the population in 2014, and are estimated to be about 22% in 2024 and 33% in 2064 (Census and Statistics Department, 2018c).

As an open market, Hong Kong is inescapably influenced by the global economy. It experienced two economic downturns (1998 and 2008) and, with the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, the economy came to a standstill. There was an upsurge of unemployment, poverty and divorce during these three periods. The relatively cheap labour and production costs in Guangdong province (just across the border in mainland China) have attracted Hong Kong manufacturers and industrialists to move their factories and industrial plants northward. This migration to mainland China since the 1980s has transformed Hong Kong from an industry-based economy to a knowledge-based economy (Cheung, 2015). Part of this economic restructuring is the disappearance of many jobs in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, which has disproportionately affected people with lower education and poorer job skills.

In an economically prosperous city like Hong Kong, poverty is measured in relative rather than absolute terms. Poverty was defined in 2012 by the Commission on Poverty as living in a household whose income was beneath the poverty line, i.e., 50% of median household income (Census and Statistics Department, 2018; p.1). Setting up a poverty line can be regarded as a big step forward by the government – albeit from denying the problem to merely acknowledging it. However, while this statistic clearly contributes to problem identification, monitoring and alleviation, the current definition of poverty, which is principally income-based, has two limitations. First, it overlooks particular financial demands – such as the burden of medical care – on an individual or family. For instance, a cancer patient may need to pay a large portion of his income for treatment, especially for new or experimental drugs. Second, the poverty line does not include available assets (e.g., stock or property). For instance, a retired senior citizen may have no taxable income but may have an apartment and a considerable investment profile.
It is estimated that about 1.377 million people (a poverty rate of 20.1%), coming from 592,000 households, were living in poverty before the 2017 alleviation intervention. After the cash transfers of the intervention (e.g., Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Working Family Allowance, Community Care Fund), the number of people in poverty decreased to 1.009 million and the poverty rate dropped to 14.7%, the same as in 2016. About 419,000 households are now in poverty (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2018). Although the poverty rate in 2016 and 2017 remained unchanged after the poverty alleviation intervention, the total number of people suffering from poverty increased from 0.995 million in 2016 to 1.009 million in 2017 (Table 1).

Tab. 1 - Hong Kong poverty statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty line (HK$)</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-person</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-person</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-person</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-person</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>19,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-person</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>20,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-person+</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>22,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-intervention poor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor households ('000)</th>
<th>582.2</th>
<th>594.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor population ('000)</td>
<td>1,352.5</td>
<td>1,376.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate (%)</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Poverty gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual total gap (HK$ Mn)</th>
<th>38,510.3</th>
<th>41,457.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly average gap (HK$)</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Post-intervention poor (recurrent cash)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor households ('000)</th>
<th>412.4</th>
<th>419.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor population ('000)</td>
<td>995.8</td>
<td>1,008.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate (%)</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Poverty gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual total gap (HK$ Mn)</th>
<th>19,937.0</th>
<th>20,576.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly average gap (HK$)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-intervention refers to no cash transfer has been given
Post-intervention refers to cash transfer (e.g., comprehensive social security assistance (CSSA), old age allowance and community care fund) has been given
Source: Census and Statistic Department, Hong Kong SAR Government https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/so461.jsp

In 2017, about 0.177 million children in Hong Kong were in poverty, with a child poverty rate of 17.5%. Notably, both the number of poor children and the child poverty rate rose, by 5,300 children and 0.3%, from 2016 to 2017 (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2018). Past census-data analyses have shown that poor children predominantly come from families with more children, from single-parent families (Cheung,
A distinctive feature of Hong Kong’s child poverty can be seen in the 2017 data: the additional 5300 poor children are from larger working households (e.g., four-person families), which are financially supported by a member holding low-skill jobs and taking care of elderly parents (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2018).

**Educational poverty in Hong Kong**

Are there structural opportunities for poor children to receive adequate education for employment in a knowledge-based society such as Hong Kong? In recent decades, both governmental and non-governmental entities have taken steps in this direction.

Since the 1980s, children in Hong Kong have received nine years – primary school to junior secondary school – of free, mandatory education. This policy is universal in coverage; thus, children of the poor have an equal educational opportunity to that of children from affluent families. Similar to the situation in developed cities such as Singapore, poor children in Hong Kong are more able to get a basic nine-year education.

Next, recognizing that the educational needs of children from disadvantaged families require more time and effort from teachers, primary schools are now allowed to adopt smaller class sizes when at least 40% of the children in the primary 1 and primary 3 are from families on welfare (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2006).

Also, in the era of information technology, the Internet is crucial for children, but tight family finances may limit poor children’s access to online information and may hinder them from acquiring computer skills. To counter this, a five-year free internet service is provided by two non-government organizations (NGOs) from July 14, 2001 onward. Other service initiatives such as the Toy Bank were also set up for children of low-income families (Tang & Wong, 2013).

Another measure, the Child Development Fund (CDF), an investment approach to child welfare services, was set up in 2008. The government has invested HKD 300 million in the CDF, aiming to break the intergenerational poverty cycle through easy access to non-monetary assets and creation of social capital. The fund comprises three components: (a) a two-year saving plan; (b) a personal development plan; and (c) a mentorship scheme. Volunteers from the business sector are recruited and trained by social workers of the NGOs to be children’s mentors. In other words, the CDF is child-focused and asset-based, and it has been a successful collaboration among the government, NGOs and the business sector. However, the number of beneficiaries (2,270 children) remains small, and parental involvement has been far from adequate (Tang & Wong, 2013). More importantly, the money saved may not eventually be used to meet the child’s educational needs.

**School Readiness: Importance of Pre-school Education**

Children from poor families are ill-prepared for schooling, in comparison with children of higher socio-economic status (Engle & Black, 2008). Their parents are less educated and may lack the knowledge and competence to train their children in self-care and to develop their cognitive and language abilities as well as interpersonal skills. Unsurprisingly, school readiness of poor children lags significantly behind that of children coming from families of higher SES. Hence, quality pre-school education is imperative in preparing poor children for primary school.

Government spending on nurseries and pre-school education in Hong Kong has long been grossly inadequate. Yearly expenditures ranged from 0.002% to 0.006% of GDP in 2010-2014; in contrast, the OECD average was about 0.37%. There are two types of pre-school education – nursery for children aged
0-2 and kindergarten for children aged 3-6. The former is overseen by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the latter by the Education Bureau.

Hong Kong has a huge shortfall in nursery service. For instance, in 2011, a total of 1,735 publicly funded nursery places were available to 101,659 children aged 0-2 (Bauhinia Foundation Development Centre, 2015). Pre-school education, whether nursery or kindergarten, was by no means mandatory before 2017, with most kindergartens run by NGOs or the private sector. High-income, dual-career parents in Hong Kong are able to employ domestic helpers (to look after their pre-school age children) and/or send their children to private kindergartens. However, the monthly school fees and other expenses of private kindergartens (e.g., books, outings and birthday parties) are too costly for poor families (Ma & Xia, 2017). These families have no choice but to look after their children themselves or ask extended family members for help. In view of these financial difficulties, the government provided cash coupons in 2007-2008 to such families, but the coupons could be used only at half-day (not full-day) kindergartens. In the same year, the government introduced the means-tested tuition-fee waiving scheme for children attending nurseries and kindergartens. In 2013, about 56.8% of children who are attending preschool (aged 3 to 6) received financial support through this scheme (Bauhinia Foundation Development Centre, 2015).

In 2017 the Hong Kong SAR government recognized the importance of mandatory pre-school education for children in general and, in particular, for children of disadvantaged families. The Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme (FQKES) was introduced in the 2017-2018 school year (Education Bureau, 2017) to replace the previous two schemes: (a) cash coupons and (b) the tuition-waiving scheme.

With the introduction of the FQKES, children of the poor in Hong Kong can now access preschool education without any financial barrier. Despite this significant policy change, however, other obstacles remain. The financial burden of books and extra-curricular expenses may lead parents to take care of their children themselves, rather than sending them to nursery or kindergarten. In addition, pre-school education is unevenly distributed across different districts in Hong Kong. A few districts home to many poor families (e.g., Sham Shui Po and Wong Tai Sin) have serious shortfalls in kindergarten places (Bauhinia Foundation Development Centre, 2015; Ma & Xia, 2017). The quality of the nurseries and kindergartens varies, too, depending on whether they are publicly funded or self-financed. Finally, although both a high diploma course on pre-school education and a part-time degree programme have been offered to improve the professional qualification of pre-school teachers, their income and social status are still lower than that of primary and secondary teachers. This is especially true for teachers in half-day programmes (Ma & Xia, 2017).

Future ahead

Education can transform life of children from poor families, not just in Hong Kong but around the world. Heckman (2018) has shown that, in countries such as Jamaica, investment in early childhood development of disadvantaged children can help to prevent the achievement gap, improve long-term health outcomes, and boost adulthood earnings in adulthood by 25%; furthermore, it is cost-effective, with rate of return on investment in quality childhood development for disadvantaged children at 7 to 10% per annum.

In view of the significance of early childhood development to children in general and in particular to children from poor families, the Hong Kong SAR government should continue increasing its investment in pre-school education – specifically, to bridge the service gap, there should be more nurseries for young children aged 0-2. Deliberate effort should be made to redress the uneven distribution of pre-school services across different districts, targeting especially those districts with the highest percentages of poor families. Further attempts should be made to improve the income and social status of pre-school teachers. Intensive training should also be provided to teachers at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels to equip them...
with necessary knowledge and skills in assisting children of the disadvantaged. Still, as Morrison argued (2002), increased social spending on education may not necessarily bring about positive educational outcomes. Thus, there is a need to delineate and identify outcome indicators to continuously assess, monitor and enhance the quality of pre-school education (Morrison, 2002).

Investment-oriented social service programmes such as the CDF should be expanded. Measures should be adopted to ensure that the savings will be used for the child’s educational needs. Social workers should continue to strengthen family support so that the child can be better prepared for pre-school education, as well as for the nine years of mandatory education. Family support programmes should aim to equip parents with knowledge and skills in child rearing, encourage and promote their active collaboration with teachers, and foster their physical and psychological well-being. Better access to health care services is equally important for families of the poor.

We have examined the government’s policy of changing pre-school education from a self-financed option to a universal free service, which has benefited children of the poor. However, there is no room for complacency. Remaining challenges – an inadequate number of places for children aged 0 to 2, uneven distribution of preschools across different districts, and varying quality of the education provided – should be addressed. Future pre-school education in Hong Kong must be developed according to the principles of equity, equality and consistency (Morrison, 2002).
Understanding Child Poverty and its Impact on Educational Outcomes in the Australian Context: Strategies to Address Disadvantage
Elizabeth Fernandez

Introduction

It is recognized that child poverty has long-term negative impacts on children’s developmental and wellbeing outcomes. There is growing consensus internationally that addressing poverty among children and young people is an urgent priority. Australia is a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the first of which is to reduce poverty by half for all children by 2030 (Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, 2017).

Poverty affects children in developed and developing countries (Unicef, 2012). The international literature on poverty differentiates between different dimensions of poverty such as income poverty and material deprivation, and additionally acknowledges different durations and severity of poverty. This paper draws on a broad definition of poverty which incorporates income, material deprivation and social exclusion. The percentage of children living in poverty based on the child poverty rate (i.e. income is less than 60% of the national median income) varies from one child in five in 41 high income countries including Australia, one in ten in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, and one in 3 in Israel, Spain, Turkey Romania and the United States reflecting higher poverty rates than the rich world average (Unicef, 2017). Using the child poverty rate of 50% of the national median income, and based on calculations before housing costs, Saunders (2015) estimates the poverty rate in Australia at 11.9%. An estimated 2.19 million Australians were living below the poverty line; of these 363 000 were children under 15. Scholars have sought to define and measure poverty through approaches that go beyond financial deprivation (Main and Bradshaw, 2012). Australian evidence based on the deprivation approach suggests households with children face higher levels of deprivation (Saunders and Wong, 2012). Forty percent of those below poverty line are deprived of at least 3 of 25 identified essential items (Saunders, 2015).

The negative effects of poverty have been summarised as follows: Children who experience poverty, especially persistent poverty, are at higher risk of suffering health problems, developmental delays, and behavioural disorders. They tend to attain lower levels of education and are more likely to live in poverty as adults (Conference Board of Canada, 2018).

Poverty is multifaceted, impacting children’s development from the early years into adolescence and adulthood. It affects children’s capacity to develop to their full potential through its negative impact on education, health, and overall wellbeing. Studies show that many people who were poor in their teenage years are also poor in their childhood, and will often carry this burden into adulthood. Elaborating on the experience of persistent poverty, Azpitarte (2013) notes that 15% of poor people are still poor 11 years later. This includes Indigenous Australians, those without High School completion, jobless households and those who live in disadvantaged areas. Biddle (2015) draws attention to the entrenched disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians living in households with income less than 20,000 per year estimated at 30%, which is 3 times the proportion of non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in low-income households and to experience unemployment. Educational disadvantage, discrimination, poor health, disability, intergenerational trauma, and social exclusion are factors implicated in their disadvantage (Ockenden, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2018).
Impact of Poverty on Educational outcomes

There is substantial evidence linking childhood poverty to marginal educational outcomes. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds have lower educational aspirations and require assistance and support with their educational needs. They are six times more likely to leave school without a qualification than those from higher income households (Griggs and Walker, 2008). A range of factors are identified to explain the relationship between poverty and education. Parental resources and family environments are influential in children’s educational attainment (Ansalone, 2001). Limited finances prevent families from providing children with an intellectually stimulating environment and educational material essential to their learning. Furthermore, children from lower income households live in crowded housing and disadvantaged neighbourhoods which constrain opportunities for studying. Other mitigating factors are poor access to early childhood preschool education and poorly resourced schools in disadvantaged areas.

Poverty impacts children’s education in significant ways. Poverty during early childhood has a direct association with negative academic outcomes (Magnusson and Votruba, 2009). Children who have experienced poverty have lower reading scores than children who were never poor. The children’s experiences in their early years impact the later stages of their lives. Early development may be compromised by living in impoverished conditions. For instance, a lack of nutrition during early childhood can lead to malnutrition, which is associated with poor brain development and various cognitive problems (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Poverty during adolescence is associated with higher dropout rates (Moore et al., 2009); those from poor backgrounds are one third as likely to complete high school. Young people from poor backgrounds also opt out of education to join the labor market at earlier ages to support themselves and their families. Children who are poor are more likely to come from families who have lower levels of education and are more likely to attend schools where learning resources are mediocre or lacking. The lack of cognitive stimulation in the family environment and poor physical and emotional health due to poverty undermine their educational attainment (Fernandez and Ramia, 2015).

A number of national and international studies have explored the relationship between child poverty, education, and general wellbeing. (Main and Bradshaw, 2012; Main, 2014; Montserrat et al., 2015; Redmond et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2018; The Smith Family, 2016). On a range of indicators, a quarter of Australian children and young people fail to meet educational milestones in the early years, school, and post school (Lamb et al., 2015). Particularly vulnerable groups are those from low socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young persons, those living in non-metropolitan areas, and those attending schools with a concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (The Smith Family, 2016). For example, one in three children living in Australia’s disadvantaged communities and one in five Year Three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children did not meet national assessment standards in Literacy and Numeracy (Hampshire, 2015).

Educational disadvantage commences in the early years and escalates through school and the post school experience. National data highlights the educational challenges for Australia’s disadvantaged children. Compared to 15.5% of children from advantaged backgrounds, 36.6% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not meet key developmental milestones in their first year of school. While 97.7% of children from high socio-economic backgrounds meet the national numeracy standard, only 60% from lower socio-economic backgrounds do so. In terms of schooling completion, 90% of young people from high socioeconomic backgrounds complete year 12 or equivalent, while only 60% of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds achieve the same. Furthermore, a mere 58.9% of 24-year olds from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds are fully engaged in higher education, training, or work compared to 83.1% from the highest socio-economic backgrounds (Lamb et al., 2015).
The relationship between deprivation and children’s wellbeing was explored in a recent Australian study. Saunders et al (2018) surveyed 2,700 students in years 7-10 from 52 schools using a child centric approach and an adapted Unicef’s Child Deprivation Index (CDI). In the CDI, children and young people are defined as deprived if they do not have the same items that are available to their peers (e.g. adequate food, appropriate clothing, room to study, activities, school excursions). The research found a negative relationship between attitudes towards school and school performance, and the level of children’s deprivation. Across all dimensions measured, children who live in families that do not have enough, who subjectively experienced being poor, or who are deprived of at least three of the items regarded as essential for children of their age have lower levels of wellbeing with respect to school connectedness, contentment with schooling and overall life satisfaction.

Further insights are provided by the Australian Child Wellbeing Project (ACYP) (Redmond et al., 2016). The ACYP project interviewed 100 children and surveyed 5,400 school-aged children, focusing on family, health, friends, and school. Young people in year 8 from materially disadvantaged backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with disability, young carers, and those who experienced school mobility were more likely to miss school. In this study six in ten materially disadvantaged children and four in ten indigenous children aspire to attend university compared to eight in ten non-poor (Redmond et al., 2016).

Poverty has a deleterious effect on children’s educational and social opportunities, and this is illustrated in the work of Monserrat et al (2015). Focusing on adolescents in secondary education, the research demonstrated that children in families disadvantaged by virtue of parental level of education, parental unemployment, material belongings, geographical location of residence, and immigrant background experienced significantly lower levels of subjective wellbeing than children of the same age who lacked similar disadvantage. The researchers go on to advocate for the provision of educational services and support to compensate for the deprived areas of the children’s lives.

**Strategies to address poverty and disadvantage**

The responses to child and family poverty reflect a range of strategies initiated by national Government and non-government organisations, as well as international bodies. Australia has a targeted tax and transfer system. In the Australian context there are *Universal Services* based on rights which include direct resources to families and their children and policies to improve labor market participation and outcomes for parents. Income transfers to the unemployed, sick benefits, supporting parent benefits, tax benefits, affordable child care, child care allowances, and subsidized housing are among the strategies the government employs to ameliorate the effects of poverty. The allocation of welfare benefits is considered to be well targeted, with 42% more benefits reaching the lowest 20% of households compared to the OECD average.

In addition, *targeted services* based on vulnerability such as early intervention and family support, child protection and parenting programs, and educational support are delivered to families. These interventions do not serve to eliminate poverty in the short term but are designed to ameliorate the effects of poverty and disadvantage on children’s cognitive, health and social needs with potential to reduce poverty in the next generation.

Policies and programs to enhance children’s participation in education and enhance their educational outcomes are other important strategies that are integral to poverty alleviation. There is a wide network of services offered within the non-government sector to support poor families and to enhance the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children and youth. The rest of this paper will showcase a specific national program, ‘Learning for Life’, delivered by The Smith Family, an Australian not for profit organisation, to 94 communities across Australia. The program adopts an early intervention approach designed to support
children and young people from low income families to achieve educationally and to transition to post school employment, vocational training, or higher education.

Learning for Life Core Program Components
- Biannual scholarship payment to families (for books, uniforms, excursions, IT needs)
- Smith Family Program Co-ordinator to work with family to assist in overcoming barriers and support the child's continuing participation and achievement.
- Access to range of short programs to target specific needs (literacy, numeracy, mentoring, learning clubs…)
- Parental engagement
- Reciprocity through partnership agreement with parents
- Beyond school approach
- Multiple partnerships – schools, community, business, government, sponsors to harness resources to promote children’s educational outcomes.
- Outcomes focus

A distinguishing feature of the program is its repertoire of diverse interventions targeting different stages of the young person’s educational journey to ensure balanced support across the lifespan. Illustrated below are the program’s investments at different stages.

Early years: “Let’s Count; Let’s Read”: Given that the early years of life lay the foundation for children’s future learning, school entry level maths and reading are addressed.

Primary Years: “Student to Student Reading Program”: This unique program targets children in years 3-8 who are behind in reading. It involves a young person reading to a younger child for at least 20 minutes at a time with the pair connecting over the phone two to three times per week over 18 weeks. Designed to improve children’s reading skills and reading age, the program is delivered to 1,100 children.

“Learning Clubs” offer a safe and supportive environment to provide homework support, improve reading and maths skills with tutoring support, and assist with other challenges in learning.

Secondary Years: 1 “Track career mentoring for students of Year 9-11”: Through Creative Enrichment and Learning Clubs, a range of cognitive and non-cognitive skills including perseverance, motivation, and self esteem are addressed to enable students to optimise learning opportunities. Exploring career and post school pathways is also part of the program, which also includes an Aboriginal Girls Program.

Post School Years: Tertiary monitoring, financial literacy, post school engagement in employment, and/or higher education or training are implemented as part of this program’s emphasis on continuous improvement and beyond school approach.

Parents and Carers: This involves tech packs and financial literacy. Parents’ engagement and shared commitment to improving children’s outcomes is an integral component of the program, which recognises that parental engagement is a stronger predictor of children’s success at school than their family’s socioeconomic circumstances (Fox and Olsen 2014) Many parents from disadvantaged backgrounds need support to be actively engaged with their children’s learning due to their lack of confidence, poor educational history, limited language skills, and unfamiliarity with schooling systems.

Children and young people participating in this program come from backgrounds of disadvantage and vulnerability:
- 38,000 are financially disadvantaged
- 20% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,
- 2 in 5 have a health or disability issue; 4 in 5 live in a family where a person has a disability,
- 3 in 4 come from a family where the primary carer is not in paid employment,
- 56% come from a family where the parent has not attained year 12,
- 55% live in a single parent family, 20% live with a grandparent or guardian,
- 3 in 10 live in a home with no computer or internet access,
- 1 in 5 in years 5 – 12 have attended 6 or more different schools.

**Outcomes**

Using an Outcomes Based Accountability Framework, the *Learning for Life* Program identifies long and short-term outcomes in terms of reading age, school engagement, attendance, cognitive and non-cognitive attainments, and post school pathways for individuals and particular groups of students. Attendance rates for all program participants, including Aboriginal children, show significant improvements.

In general, 1 in 4 experience considerable improvement in English grades. Year 12 (High School) or equivalent completion rates increased from 59.6% to 68.2% over 2012-2016 with 8,531 disadvantaged students being supported. In terms of post school engagement, 82% of participants who completed year 12 were engaged in post-school work and/or study. Program outcomes reflect a strong relationship between school attendance, school achievement, school completion, and post school engagement in work and/or study (The Smith Family, 2016).

**Conclusion**

This contribution profiled key aspects of child poverty and its multifaceted impacts with a particular focus on Australia and the various demographic groups that are disproportionately affected by poverty there. The paper also considered how the experience of poverty relates to educational outcomes and the general wellbeing of children. Poor educational outcomes have costly lifelong impacts on young people and the wider community, given the relationship between education, health, social connectedness and employment.

Government and non-government organizations strive in various ways to develop policies and interventions directed at producing labor market outcomes for parents, direct resources to children and families to ameliorate the effects of poverty, and strategies to improve children’s participation in education and their educational outcomes. Despite such goals and interventions, some children and families still fall between the cracks. An initiative of the Smith Family, a non-government agency, is to address the intergenerational nature of disadvantage and the multiple drivers of educational attainment that have been discussed. The program adopted an approach that involved the provision of investments throughout preschool, adolescence, and young adulthood to make a positive impact on children’s learning outcomes. It is a significant opportunity to improve educational attainment of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
The impact of inequality on children’s well-being
Carme Montserrat

Introduction
Referring to the quality of life of people implies considering both their material and non-material living conditions. Among the latter, subjective well-being emerges as a psychosocial (i.e. non-material) component of quality of life, that is life satisfaction, perceptions, values and aspirations that people have in relation to the main aspects of their lives, such as interpersonal relations, health, education and spare time, among other things (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976), believing that the subjective measures of social reality can be as useful as the objective measures in taking decisions and promoting social policies.

In the case of childhood, studying subjective well-being (Casas et al., 2013) implies, from the beginning, considering it as a stage of life with its own sociological characteristics. It is necessary to recognize children as active social agents and not only as passive subjects, avoiding the assumption that they can be researched and decisions can be made without them, as they are not considered sufficiently capable. Therefore, their opinions and assessments must be listened to and taken into account, which, on the other hand, are rights already included in the 1989 United Nations Convention. From this point of view, children can become key informants in scientific research and in the development of social policies that affect them to a greater or lesser degree. Furthermore, this perspective allows us to study the positive aspects of childhood for what they are in the present and not just for what may happen when they become adults, as it is more usual.

The growth of inequality
The Report Card 13 (Unicef, 2016) informs us that during the years of crisis in Spain there has been a stagnation or even a deterioration of the relative position of children who are at the bottom of both income and welfare levels. In other words, the gap between those in the top and those in the bottom has increased especially in the economic and life satisfaction dimensions. The report concludes that more unequal children are poorer and unhappier, adding that children live better where all are treated more equitably.

This inequality in life satisfaction (assessed in the report considering the population of 11, 13 and 15 years of age) remains stable in most countries and over the years, but in Spain the distance increases, considering how the average values stagnate and the values of the least satisfied children decrease a lot. In addition, among the least satisfied are the girls, especially the older ones. This trend calls for urgent attention.

It should be borne in mind that in most studies on life satisfaction, scores are usually high (above 8 on scales from 0 to 10), therefore low scores and their distance from high scores take on special relevance. The Spanish study by Casas & Bello (2012) already identified the group of boys and girls who remained “on the margin” and who presented lower subjective well-being than those who had parents with low occupation; economic and material deprivation; family instability; migratory background; feeling of insecurity at home or at school, and low participation in their daily life. It is these families and environments that changes and improvements should be directed at (Rees & Main, 2015).

Factors influencing subjective well-being in childhood
This section includes both material and subjective well-being factors. The former are basically obtained from official statistics and the latter are framed in two projects. On the one hand, within the framework of the second wave of the international survey Children’s Worlds (www.isciweb.org) where data have been collected on the subjective well-being of children in more than 15 countries ($4,000 at the age of 8, 10 and 12); in Catalonia (Spain) with a representative sample of 3,756 children, data on satisfaction have been obtained in
different areas of their lives, daily activities, use of their time, as well as perception and evaluation of their own well-being (Children’s Worlds, 2016). On the other hand, this same survey has also been administered to children living in the protection system (Llosada-Gistau et al., 2017). The factors identified in these studies that are present in children with low levels of subjective well-being are briefly mentioned below.

a) Material and environmental conditions

Spain is characterised by having one of the highest child poverty rates in Europe (see Fig. 1). For the measurement of poverty and social exclusion, the indicator AROPE (At Risk Of Poverty and/or Exclusion) is used as a point of reference, which groups together three components that measure the following: poverty, material deprivation and low intensity of work inside the household. Among the most affected groups are families with dependent children who are single parents or with serious employment problems, parents with low educational levels, who are in a migration process and households with high levels of material deprivation. Children in these situations are more likely to have low academic achievement, early school leaving, difficulty to find a work, obesity, mental health problems and less participation in leisure time activities. In addition, with regard to subjective well-being, there are studies that show the relationship between low levels of subjective well-being and these indicators described above, together with difficulties in accessing material resources (such as a computer, internet, books at home, clothes in good condition), or the fact of feeling satisfied with one’s own home and spaces (see more detail in Casas & Bello, 2012; Main et al., 2017).

According to Unicef (2014) the growing differential risk of child poverty with respect to the rest of the population is partly due to the problems of the labour market in Spain (with very high rates of unemployment i.e. 44% of young people under the age of 25) and the insufficient social protection network, characterised by a very low public investment compared to Europe and a limited capacity of social benefits to reduce child poverty. Thus, the percentage of expenditure devoted to the social protection of children in relation to GDP in Spain is 1.3 compared to the EU28 average of 2.3 (Eurostat, 2015). There are no
universal economic benefits for families and children, and support to the vulnerable population is very limited economically.

b) Perception of poverty. However, it is not only about the material conditions in which they live, but also their perception of them. Thus, in the study by Montserrat, Casas & Moura (2015), children who perceive their families as less rich or much less rich than others in their environment show subjective well-being that is far below the average. In addition, those who say they no longer care about their family’s money show greater subjective well-being.

c) The household. There are differences between boys and girls living with two parents, those living in a single-parent family and those in the protection system, especially in residential places, where the latter have lower subjective well-being (Dinisman et al., 2017; Llosada-Gistau et al., 2017). Studies indicate that these results may have more to do with changes and instability in the family or cohabitation household than with the family structure itself (Dinisman et al., 2012) as explained in the following point.

d) Instability in their lives. Having had changes of primary caregivers during the past year (father, mother, foster parent, educator), or having changed home, neighbourhood, country or school negatively affects their subjective well-being, too. Moreover, instability seems to affect girls more than boys (Montserrat, Dinisman, Baltatescu, Grigoras & Casas, 2015).

e) School. This area deserves special attention when it comes to inequality and well-being in children. In Spain, official data show that:

- 0-2 years: 34% of children at this age attend an educational service, with very few public resources of this type. On the other hand, in the 3-6 age group, attendance at kindergarten is nearly universal (97.1%).
- In higher education, the rate is 40.9%, higher than the EU average (38.7%), but with large differences by gender (male: 34.8% and female: 47.1%).
- On the other hand, the vocational training rate is 29.4% when the European average is 50%, so efforts must be made to make it an attractive alternative for young people and above all to fight against the problem of early school leaving, which is the highest in Europe (Graph 2).

Fig. 2 - Early leavers from education and training

Studies such as those of Bonal (2016) and Tarabini & Bonal (2016) show the role that education plays in the construction, reproduction and legitimization of social inequality, as well as the potential of education for the promotion of social mobility, development and equal opportunities, and therefore, its role as a driving
force for social change. These authors indicate that the reason why many education policies fail to solve the problem of inequality is because these policies are often not linked to economic development or poverty reduction. They believe there are two concepts that should be linked: the right to education, understood not only as access to compulsory education, and the academic success of all students. That is, the importance of educational equality from a social justice perspective (implementing policies to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged), but also its impact on the overall effectiveness of education systems.

The impact of situations of inequality in schools is reflected in the subjective well-being of children. Significantly lower levels of subjective well-being are shown by those who say they do not like going to school, or do not feel safe in school, or do not feel listened to by teachers, or are not satisfied with academic results or do not have a good relationship with classmates (Children’s Worlds, 2016; Llosada-Gistau et al., 2017). In addition, bullying situations stand out, with low levels of well-being on the part of the students who suffer from them (Savahl et al, 2108).

f) Interpersonal relationships and friends. Not being able to go out with friends, feeling that friends do not behave well with them (also linked to the previous point) or not having friends, also negatively affects their subjective well-being, a result that is in line with many studies that underline the importance of interpersonal relationships for vital satisfaction (Children’s Worlds, 2016).

g) Leisure time. The fact of not being able to participate in spare time activities, or not having spaces to have fun in the neighbourhood or in the village, or not having gone on holiday last year for at least a week away from home, are also aspects that negatively affect the well-being of children (Casas & Bello, 2012).

b) Participation. When children feel that they do not participate in the decisions that affect their lives, they also have lower levels of well-being (Llosada-Gistau et al., 2017). In addition, a significant proportion of the children surveyed said they are not aware of the rights contained in the Convention (González, Gras, Malo et al., 2015).

Challenges

Proposals for improvements of the policy agenda and actions provided by services and professionals should be aimed at promoting access and ensuring equal opportunities in the areas mentioned above. In other words, they should be aimed at developing policies that have an impact on reducing economic inequalities, since economic deprivation and the very perception of feeling poorer affect their well-being.

This also implies developing policies to support families, strengthening and favouring the social participation of children, improving the system of protection (both residential care and foster care) and stability in their lives. Taking care to avoid situations of violence in general and bullying also means working for their well-being. From the point of view of children, participating in leisure activities and relations with the peer group are aspects that acquire special importance and must be guaranteed.

Finally, working to increase equality of educational opportunities also means working for their well-being, knowing the importance of school for children, as well as the relationship they have with teachers and peers. In this sense, there are examples of programmes and studies such as those carried out by the Jaume Bofill Foundation (www.fbofill.cat/fundacio), dedicated to promoting initiatives, research and debates on how to transform education in Catalonia. It is also worth mentioning the commitment of Save the Children (2017), which has programmes in Spain focused on the promotion of education for children at risk (www.savethechildren.es).

In all these areas, emphasis must be placed on children being the main direct beneficiaries and actors, involving them as protagonists in the changes - ranging from systematic data collection to policy and programme design - in the disadvantaged situations in which many of them live.
Fathers in poverty in child protection
Marian Brandon, Georgia Philip and John Clifton

Introduction

There is a substantial body of international literature demonstrating the ways in which men are marginal in child welfare (Zanoni et al., 2013; Osborn, 2014; Clapton, 2009; Scourfield et al., 2015). Practitioners’ perceptions of men have been categorised as: a threat, as no use, as irrelevant or as absent (Scourfield, 2006). These earlier perceptions are still commonplace in contemporary practice in the UK and internationally (Campbell et al., 2015; Nygren et al., 2019). Alongside the marginalisation of men in child welfare practice is the accompanying and wider structural problem of poverty and the impact of austerity on family life and on services. In the current context of deepening poverty, welfare workers have been found, in the UK, to be doing little to recognise or address the inequalities faced by men and their families (Bywaters 2016, Bywaters et al., 2015).

There has been a rise, since 2010, in England, in the numbers of child protection referrals, substantiated child maltreatment cases, and in particular, a rise in the numbers of children in out of home care (Family Rights Group, 2018). Cuts to child and family services in England have meant that local spending cannot keep pace with the rising demand for children’s welfare and protection services (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2017). This situation has been termed a ‘Care Crisis’ with a prominent review noting that cuts to early help and family support services have affected the nation’s ability to intervene early and prevent problems in families escalating to the point of child maltreatment (Family Rights Group, 2018). During this period, Paul Bywaters and colleagues’ programme of research in England has examined the links between deprivation and out of home care. It has shown that poverty is associated, in complex ways, with an increased likelihood of children coming into care, amounting to a form of child welfare inequality (Bywaters, 2016; Bywaters et al., 2015; 2017).

There is a growing understanding of the effects that poverty has on families, their functioning and their outlook on life (Russell et al., 2008). Living with poverty not only damages physical and psychological health but also harms relationships, not least through the social isolation and feelings of stigma and shame that accompany poverty (Jack and Gill, 2013; Gibson, 2016). Men’s traditional identity as the main provider for their family constitutes a particular (and gendered) form of shame. From an ecological perspective, poverty has an impact at the individual level of the child and family, but also at the wider level of responses to families from child welfare and protection services (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Methods

The mixed methods study discussed here, aimed to provide insights into fathers’ and father figures’ engagement as caregivers and men in relation to both their child and to the child protection system.

The insights were intended to guide future practice and address some of the barriers to men’s engagement and involvement. The study involved, firstly, a quantitative, retrospective, examination of 150 children’s case files, from the point when a child protection plan was made, over 12 months from 2014-2015. The aim was to explore the extent of father involvement with their child and in child protection. The focus of this article is the second study strand, a prospective, year-long, qualitative ‘keeping in touch’ study with a separate sample of 35 men. Researchers were in regular contact with the men and followed their lives and involvement with child protection, intensively over twelve months between 2015-2017. Interviews, phone and SMS text contacts, provided rich data about the men’s real lives ‘with a focus on plot, story line, turning points and defining moments’ (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 61; Saldana, 2003).
More detail about the Nuffield Foundation funded study is available in a research report and article (Brandon, Philip & Clifton, 2017; Philip, Clifton & Brandon, 2018).

Findings

**Fathers’ Lives**

Life events affect men’s capacity and motivation to engage in the child protection process and to commit to being an involved father. The circumstances and preoccupations that fathers brought with them provided an essential context to how and whether they engaged with the demands of the child protection system and how they managed their fathering role.

Most of the fathers (24/35) were living economically precarious lives with diminishing access to state welfare benefits, with insecure work and increasing debt. 15 were not working and claiming welfare benefits and a further nine were in temporary or insecure employment. Only seven men had regular, contracted, work but often this was poorly paid so that balancing debt and financial commitments was for most of these men ‘a bit of a struggle’. The small minority of men in a better financial position were able to use their resources to move accommodation, offset financial damage from relationship breakdown and balance working and caring responsibilities for children by reducing their working hours or employing extra help.

Well over half of the men (20/35) reported a significant illness, disability or other impairment. A number of men lived with chronic physical health conditions and many others reported various mental health challenges including depression, anxiety, chronic stress, substance misuse, instances of self-harm and panic attacks. In line with Bywaters’ findings, there was little in the fathers’ accounts to indicate that social workers or other members of the multi-agency team were addressing the inequalities inherent in their precarious circumstances or taking account of their health issues (Bywaters, 2016). These problems in fathers’ lives were compounded by practical problems, especially those associated with housing, and the interconnected emotional stresses of maintaining and losing intimate relationships. All of these issues had an impact on the men and on the children they were parenting.

**Fathers’ relationships and living conditions**

Fathers’ life stories revealed how key transitions and turning points played out in their lives. The complex networks of relationships surrounding fathers meant that men were continually balancing, sometimes conflicting, demands to maintain their income, meet the needs of their children, and their current intimate relationships, whilst negotiating contact with ex-partners and non-resident children.

A common pattern at the end of a relationship was for fathers rather than mothers to leave the shared home. Being without stable accommodation after a relationship breakdown hindered fathers’ ability to maintain a relationship with their children and heightened the risk of their lives becoming even more precarious. We found that the quality and intensity of a father’s relationship with his children correlated with the strength of his determination or ‘agency’ as a father in dealing with the authorities. Fifteen fathers were judged to be exercising some degree of agency, with 18 others largely resigned to playing a limited role in their child’s life. *I feel like a dad in the sense that I am doing something for my kids, I don’t feel like a dad in the sense that my kids aren’t here* (Mark).

Most men claimed to have a close bond with their child. Some had significant responsibility for their child’s day-to-day care but many delegated the main care to female partners (Doucet, 2009). Working fathers were divided between those committed to involvement in day-to-day care and those who were more comfortable in the world of work. Fathers who had stepped in to take on their child’s care because the child’s mother was unable to do so safely, mostly emphasized the practical actions they took to re-balance
their children’s disordered lives and restore routine. They were wary of allowing social workers or others to work with their children on emotional issues. Instead, they believed that their everyday commonsense care promoted children’s happiness.

Being taken into account by professionals and exercising agency was hampered by the assumption of the primacy of mothers’ relationship with children (Doucet, 2004; 2009). This assumption was found among social workers but also among the mothers and fathers in the study. Even in the gender equal northern European countries, fathering remains a ‘choice’ for men, unlike being a mother and caring for children which is perceived as central in women’s lives (Nygren et al., 2019).

Messages for Practice

The five following messages aim to encourage better engagement with men, for the benefit of their children.

1. Not working effectively with fathers is a problem for two key reasons.
   Firstly it fails to support and value men’s parenting in its own right and the importance of fathers to children’s wellbeing. Secondly, it represents a failure to hold men and women equally to account for the safe care and wellbeing of their children. Effective engagement with fathers has to both hold men accountable and directly value their parenting on its own terms. Most fathers, like most mothers offer a combination of strengths and weaknesses in their parenting. But there remains a greater willingness to work with the weaknesses and potential risks for mothers than for fathers.

2. Gender matters
   Father engagement requires thinking critically about parenting as gendered. Fathers and mothers encounter different expectations, sanctions, rewards, opportunities and constraints as parents. A more gender sensitive approach to working with families and to service design and delivery would help to build more effective working relationships with fathers and support men’s parenting.

3. Gatekeeping
   Welfare services and processes can produce gate-opening and gate-closing moments (Trinder, 2008). This includes things that professionals, mothers, fathers do to ‘open the gate’ to let men in, and ‘close the gate’ to exclude or absolve men from parenting. In this way opportunities are created, or at other times missed, to include fathers, to be curious, to respond, or to review what their involvement could be.

4. Time and Timing – whose time is it anyway?
   The timing of when, and how social workers seek a man’s perspective, or include him in an assessment has practical and relational consequences for the direction of the case and the working relationship between social workers and men. Fathers experienced social work time as both ‘rushed and slow’. Official timeframes and deadlines can lead to fathers feeling that their lives and experiences are undervalued. Inflexible timings of, for example, professional meetings, fail to recognize the pressures on fathers and on their time, particularly in relation to work commitments.

5. Persistent Curiosity
   Practitioners can, and need to apply curiosity, persistence and skill to hearing fathers’ stories. Hearing a man’s story should be seen as routine and valuable, rather than as an additional or unmanageable task. Individual workers need to be supported, at an organisational level, to be in direct contact with fathers and to build relationships - particularly with non-resident fathers. Without a good knowledge of men’s lives and their past, any decision-making about children’s care and safety will be limited. This underlines the need for persistence and flexibility in relationship building with men. The encounters between men and social workers are dynamic and interactive and within the relationship, either or both
can trigger change. In this respect both men and social workers should be seen as accountable for making the relationship work and involving men in their children’s lives.

Conclusion

The pressures of increasing poverty have been shown to impact negatively on family life. In parallel, in England, rising numbers of children have been taken into state care in response to perceived rising levels of child maltreatment. Even before austerity, fathers were marginalized in child welfare practice. This limits their opportunities to achieve a positive role in their children’s lives and be truly accountable.

At a time when more children are entering out of home care, the potential of half of all parents is still not being creatively explored or realized. The study reported here provides a fine grained picture of the processes and circumstances that hold fathers back, but also ways in which practice and policy changes could counter these factors, challenge fathers to make a difference for their children, and seek to change the circumstances which undermine active parenting.
Child Poverty in the United Kingdom
Colette McAuley

Introduction

In the UK at present, poverty is a hotly contested policy area. On the one hand, recent government policy has led to a decade of austerity to reduce the level of welfare dependency and increase the number of people in work. In this discourse, the impact is seldom considered or even denied. Responsibility for being in and escaping poverty is largely viewed to lie at the individual level. The belief in meritocracy means that any failure is deemed a personal failure (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018).

In contrast, we have the speech of Gordon Brown (former Prime Minister) in Edinburgh in March 2018 – ‘It is time to awaken the entire country to the devastating but virtually ignored and, to many, invisible rise in UK child poverty which is on the road to doubling since 2010…it has now reached epidemic proportions…and is already the biggest social injustice of our generation.’ In this discourse, explanations of poverty are largely viewed to lie at the structural level and reducing inequality in society is a major area of concern.

In the latest available government statistics, 4 million children (30%) in the UK live in relative poverty, after housing costs have been taken into account (McGuinness, 2018). Up until 2010 there was a reduction in the number of children living in poverty in line with the Millennium goals. However this has not been sustained. Current government would argue this is due to the economic pressures on the country. Others would hold the position that, if this is not addressed now, there will be significant problems in the future.

The impact of poverty on parenting-lived experiences

It has been argued that there is a gap of understanding between current government and the reality of families living in poverty. The propensity to blame those experiencing poverty for their own predicament has a long history but it is a trend that has developed with renewed vigour (Shildrick et al., 2016). Not only are parents portrayed as being responsible for their own misfortunes but they are also accused of ruining the life chances of their children (Rose and McAuley, 2019). One arguable reason for the lack of informed debate about the impact of poverty on families is the absence of voices of the families.

Four UK qualitative studies published between 1998-2016 were reviewed by Rose and McAuley (2019) to elucidate the impact of poverty on parenting. These studies were selected as they provided rich detail from parents of their lived experiences. They include the accounts of seven residents on a housing estate in Glasgow (Holman, 1998); an extensive UK-wide study about parenting in poor environments which included qualitative interviews with 40 parents (Ghate & Hazel, 2002); the study by Zipfel and colleagues (2015) which provided the stories of 22 people from across the UK as evidence to parliament on more recent poverty and inequality; the ethnographic study of foodbank use in North East England which included 80 interviews with people using the foodbank (Garthwaite, 2016). The key findings of the reviews will now be explored.

The multiple problems parents in poverty face

The experience of life-changing events such as bereavement, job loss or relationship breakdown can be ‘tipping points’, as Garthwaite (2016) found in her study of foodbank use. Such events can precipitate people not previously living on a persistently low income into financial crisis:

Anna [a foodbank user for herself and her child] had… been running a self-employed craft business but that started to fall apart as a result of her mental health deteriorating after she left [employment
in the police force. In the space of six months, Anna was struggling with her mortgage repayments and found she could no longer afford the TV licence, her car tax and eventually, food for herself and her 11-year-old daughter, Daisy. (Garthwaite 2016, p. 102)

Bullock and Parker (2014) discuss how problems of disadvantage can combine and accumulate:
If a disadvantage is severe it is generally multiple. If it is multiple it is generally severe. However, there are complicated ways in which severity and multiplicity combine… Although the assessment of degrees of severity has been a prominent feature of welfare and medical systems, its multiple character has tended to be overlooked. Yet, if anything, it is a more complicated concept (and reality) than severity (Bullock and Parker 2014, pp.4-5)

Thus, the problems being described by parents can be seen as cumulative, compounding and, for many, enduring, with poverty underlying and further compounding their difficulties and hardships.

The struggle to provide the basics of family life
The parents’ accounts talk graphically about the daily challenges they confront as they struggle to make ends meet and the difficult choices they have to make to provide the basic necessities for their families. These include fundamental issues of how to feed and clothe their families and keep their homes warm enough:
‘Poverty is a terrible thing. I just cannot cope with what I am getting in income support. I just wish I could feed and clothe my children but it is impossible with what I receive.’ Anita, widow with 7 children. (Holman 1998, p.96)

Parents also describe how they go without adequate clothing themselves in order to ensure their children have clothes and shoes for school:
‘My husband hasn’t even got a coat because I just haven’t been able to buy him one. That’s not fair I know, but it just means him having to wear two or three jumpers when he goes out in the winter just so they [children] can have school shoes.’ Mother, bad accommodation, large family. (Ghate and Hazel 2002, p.208)

The foodbanks become a source of welcome variety of food that parents cannot normally afford:
When Ronnie brought the food over [at the foodbank], Daisy [aged 11] asked if she could have a look at what was in the bags. She started rifling through them excitedly, saying ‘Oh look Mam, we’ve got corned beef.’ Daisy looked up at me and said ‘We haven’t had meat for six weeks’. (Garthwaite 2016, p.118)

The importance of supportive communities and relationships
The level of support available in a neighborhood, such as informal support from personal networks, family and friends, is often voiced by parents as making a critical difference to their coping either with unanticipated crises or with long standing difficulties. Such support can make the unbearable possible, even in the most difficult of circumstances. One mother explains how she is supported in her community:
‘Everybody is about and they’re interested in my well being – they are just there for you; if you need anything they’re there. They’re supportive, not just financially, I mean – my mam has nothing really but if they’ve got it, they’ll give it. If you need emotional support, they’re just there. They’re willing to have [child] every week, they would have her every weekend for me… It’s the same with a lot of
families up here. There’s quite a lot of extended families on this estate…” Mother, sick child. (Ghate and Hazel 2002, p.121)

Those parents without such accessible kinship and friendship networks, especially lone mothers, are the parents who are most hard pressed when they have nowhere to turn.

**The impact of poverty on parents**

A pervading theme in parents’ accounts is the effect financial stress has on them, while they are struggling at the same time with multiple other hardships. It affects their view of themselves as individuals and as parents. For many it can be seen to erode their sense of self-worth and self-confidence, often accompanied by anxiety and depression:

Denise similarly talks of how fed up she feels:

‘I am stuck in most of the time… I can’t remember having new clothes for myself. My sister hands me on some of hers. At times I do get really fed up and think I can’t be bothered. Then I might have a bath and go to bed for a wee greet [weep] to myself. We’ve got each other and we’ve been together six years.’ Denise, married, three children, low income, poor housing. (Holman, 1998, p.109)

At the same time, parents are acutely aware of the way they are branded by others as ‘shirkers’ and ‘scroungers’ and ‘feckless parents’. They know the criticisms levelled at them for what are considered unhealthy and ‘expensive’ habits or bad choices. Smoking is one example:

‘Must have my cigs or I can’t get through the day. I hate it that people say that because you are on social security you shouldn’t smoke. But it’s like Valium, it calms me. I wish I could give it up. I have tried and failed.’ Erica’s diary, husband long term ill health, four children. (Holman, 1998, p.75/76)

Keeping pets can be another reason for criticism:

‘With the dogs, I’d hate to let them go, we’ve given them a good home for years but I’m having to buy a cheap bag of pasta and I’m feeding them pasta in with their dog food… Even just getting the dog food is a bit of a feat because it’s a 15 kilo bag of dog food, which is the cheapest way to feed them. I went on the bus yesterday for it and there were men on the High Street aghast that I was carrying a 15 kilo bag of dog food and three bags of shopping.’ Anna talking of the lengths she went to so she and her daughter could keep their two greyhounds. (Garthwaite, 2016, p.68)

Garthwaite observes that ‘blaming people for smoking, having dogs, tattoos and flatscreen TVs not only stigmatises people using the foodbank, but it also detracts from the bigger picture of the everyday hardship people face…this denial of a right to make choices or have luxuries strips away basic human dignity’ (Garthwaite, 2016, p.68).

Further, parents describe how they not only experience public service systems that let them down, but their problems and difficulties are compounded when they encounter bureaucratic and unsympathetic responses from individual officials. This can leave parents desperate and relying on putting together ‘a patchwork of provision’ to keep them going (Zipfel et al., 2015, p. 24), as in Mary’s story:

Mary used her benefit payments to buy the uniform essentials [for three children because the school clothing grants were late] and, when her money ran out, she rang the Scottish Welfare Fund to ask for an emergency payment. Their response was that she should have waited for the clothing grants rather than using her benefit money. They did send an emergency payment but it wasn’t enough to cover heating and food until her next benefit payment, and this is why she was referred to the
Food Bank. She didn’t want to come to us but, as she said, she couldn’t send the children to school without uniforms. Mary’s story. (Zipfel et al., 2015, p.11)

In their stories, parents explain how poverty combines with multiple hardships to make their lives full of stress, uncertainty, exhaustion and fear, with detrimental consequences for their own physical and mental health.

As David Utting, in his report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on Family and Parenthood, observes “Living on low income in a run-down neighbourhood does not make it impossible to be an affectionate, authoritative parent of healthy, sociable children… it does, undeniably, make it more difficult” (Utting 1995, p. 40).

Rather than the pervasive negative images of parents living in poverty, these studies provided clear evidence of caring, responsible parents eager to give their children every opportunity possible and endeavoring to do the best they can for their families in these challenging circumstances (Rose and McAuley, 2019).

**The impact of poverty on children and their school lives**

There has also been growing concern about working class children’s experiences of inequity in the education system (Reay, 2017). There are regular reports of teachers purchasing food, clothes, a mattress and paying for funerals as child poverty becomes the norm in some English schools (Tickle, 2018).

Poverty and child outcomes are causally related to core child development outcomes, particularly cognitive developmental and educational outcomes. The timing, duration and community context of poverty are all important with early experience of poverty, longer durations of poverty and higher concentrations of poverty in the community leading to worse child outcomes (Chaudry and Wimmer, 2016).

**Early years and parenting programmes in England**

Much of the work on early intervention is focused on the important stages of neurological development in the period from conception to the age of two years. At this time the brain is developing rapidly and early parent-child interactions are important for this development. For a useful overview of targeted and universal early years services (0-5 years) offered in England, see House of Commons Briefing Paper No 7647 (2019).

For parents who had children with or at risk of developing cognitive, behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, the government rolled out The Parenting Early Intervention Programme to all 152 Local Authorities across England. These parenting programmes were intended for children aged 8-13 years. They included well known programmes such as Triple P, Incredible Years, Strengthening Families-Strengthening Communities, Families and Schools Together and the Strengthening Families Programme (10-14 years). For details of the evaluation of the overall Programme, see Lindsay and Strand (2013).

**Future Research**

In a recent Children and Youth Services Review Special Issue on Child Welfare and Well-Being: The Impact of Poverty the Editors highlighted the particular absence of a direct focus on poverty in child welfare research (McAuley and Rose, 2019).

There is a need to draw attention directly to the increasing rates of child poverty, the impact on children and their families and how we might address this. Substantial further research, which includes the lived experiences of those affected, is clearly called for.
On Effectiveness and Outcomes
Anat Zeira

Social welfare agencies or programs are typically organized to serve specific target populations such as children at risk, individuals with mental illness, victims of domestic violence or people living in poverty. As a rule, these services have broad goals that guide their work with all their clients. For example, a case management program for people with mental illness may focus on maintaining the clients in the community and on avoiding unnecessary institutionalization. At the same time, each client unit has idiosyncratic needs. For example, one person may need help around work placement while another may face communication problems. To effectively help the clients, workers are called to address both aspects of treatment goals - the program’s and the client’s (Zeira & Blythe, 2001). Consequently, professionals and policy makers constantly look for better ways to support families, to prevent children from being harmed, or treat them when needed. In addition to financial support, several programs, services and policies aim at achieving outcomes in this areas: a) home-based prevention programs; b) community-based parenting programs; and c) out-of-home placements.

The “64 million dollars” question is - how do we know that we are achieving the desired client's outcomes and program's goals? How can we explicate the possible causality between professional actions and outcomes? Using poverty as an example, measuring the so called objective measures is fairly trivial. Poverty is defined by either an absolute standard (based on the amount of money required to purchase a defined basket of goods) or a relative standard (based on the fraction of the average income). Hence one it's relatively easy to determine if a person is above or under the poverty line. However, does it mean that the person has what s/he needs for a decent living according to his or her subjective perception? The remainder of this article will discuss the complexity of such attempts to measure the subjective aspect of outcomes.

How to measure subjective outcomes?

Objective outcome measurements are most likely reliable and valid across individuals and they have a good external validity across contexts. For example, the income (in Euro) of an individual is not subject for interpretation. But in order to measure the subjective facet of an outcome, the construction of a common language - across individuals and across settings or jurisdictions - is required. Achieving such a common language involve a process. It starts with conceptualizing the problem followed by describing the intervention (Zeira & Rosen, 2000). Fig. 1 presents the building blocks of the logic process of describing and conceptualizing this process.

Fig. 1 - The process of intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The population and problems:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics: age, family status, immigration status, education, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems: housing, employment, mental/health, addictions, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The intervention/s:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical basis of the programs: family centered, behavioral, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics: short/long term, home-based, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The outcomes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal: improve self-esteem, increase income, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental: reduce neighborhood crime, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These steps are necessary to show that actions are not random and that they are all have causal relationships to the desired outcomes (Zeira, 2006). Evaluating this part of the process will be best conducted by using mixed measures (e.g., empirical ‘hard’ data and feedback on impressions and feelings).

**The relevance of outcomes**

An outcome is defined as a product, or as a condition for which the professional’s intervention activities is directed. Outcomes can relate to the behavior of clients, their feelings and thoughts, or situations related to their own life and the life of significant others.

The emphasis in the definition of the term “outcome” is on the causal relationship, whether direct or indirect, between a professional activity and its product. In other words, an outcome of treatment is a product that is causally related to the professional activity. Some of these outcomes will be ultimate, and mark the achievement of the goals of the treatment. Other outcomes are considered intermediate, which mean that they enable the continuation of treatment and create the necessary conditions for the client and/or his environment for the operation of additional interventions in order to achieve the ultimate outcome (see Berry et al., 2007).

Consequently, there are several issues to be considered before an evaluation of the outcomes effectiveness could be carried out. For example: Is this outcome reasonable to attain? Are there enough resources allocated to achieve the outcome? Is it reasonable to achieve the outcome in the timeframe of the program? Is this outcome the priority of the client? the agency? of the region? or of the society at large? Other outcomes’ dimensions include:

a. Explication of the meaning of the outcome. For example - *the capacity to carry out a job* in terms of cognitive ability or education needed for the carrying out that job; *job stability* in terms of days, weeks, months, or years; *satisfaction from a job* in terms of salary or happiness.

b. Framing the outcome in time. For example - how long will it take to achieve that outcome? Is it a short term or a long term outcome?

c. Defining the type of outcome. For example - is it a final outcome which will lead to the conclusion of the intervention? Is it an intermediate one that will require further intervention?

Taking into account these dimensions and their meaning will in turn have an effect on the design of the evaluation of the outcomes. A similar process of explication should be conducted for the interventions employed:

a. Explication of the theoretical basis behind the interventions that are employed.

b. Are there any the policy guidelines that might restrict some actions?

c. Where will the intervention take place? For example - is it a home-based intervention, where professionals are expected to make regular home visits? Is it a community-based intervention that necessitate the regular availability of a common space? Or is the intervention part of an activity taken in another social institution such as a school or a rehabilitation center?

d. What time frame pertains to the intervention? For example - how long will each session last? What is the duration of the entire intervention in weeks? What is the total number of meetings?

e. Are there any specific techniques that are needed? Will they require training? Is there a readymade manual?

Once these all of these issues have been clarified, and once an understanding of the relationships between populations' characteristics and outcomes has been reached, the next phase of designing the evaluation could be addressed.
Measurement key issues

The first step in the evaluation process is to decide on the measurement tools. Two key features should guide this deliberate selection: the extent to which the measure is valid and reliable.

Reliability pertains to the measurement stability over time (i.e., avoiding random error) and validity refers to the measure’s accuracy in terms of its meaning (avoiding systematic error). These two interrelated constructs are crucial to the internal validity of the evaluation. Increased reliability and validity could be achieved by using measures with known psychometric traits and that have already been tested in other research and projects. Furthermore, whenever possible simple tests such as Cronbach’s alpha should be used.

Following the selection of the measures, the design of the evaluation is the next phase. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the question revolves around the causality between the professional’s actions and the extent to which the desired outcome had been attained as a result of such actions. Therefore any design must consider the question of internal validity. When designing the evaluation questions such as (Zeira, Reithoffer & Blythe, 2006): how many times the outcomes measure will be used? will there be a control group? how do we know that the intervention had been carried out as intended? should be addressed. At times, such decisions involve ethical issues of denying interventions from needy populations, issues that must be resolved. In addition the external validity should be considered. The degree to which the specific intervention may be relevant or useful for other populations, settings or jurisdictions is crucial. Many times resources that are critical to a successful implementation of an intervention are available only in a certain context. For example, carrying out an innovative intervention under experimental conditions may yield different results when being carried out under regular conditions.

Measurement errors can result from various sources. Whenever a measurement issue is detected, every effort needs to be taken to remedy. Firstly, the measures needs to be feasible applicable and suitable to the target population. A self-report survey to 10 year old children needs different language than when the same topic is addressed to adults. Secondly, similar considerations should be applied to differences between professionals and clients, or policy makers and clinical providers. A measure could be at times over sensitive (i.e., too detailed) or lack sensitivity (i.e., use only one general item). Lastly, whenever possible multiple measures should be used to complement one another. For example, asking a teacher about a child’s educational skills could be used to complement formal achievements scores such as grades and psychological tests.

Conclusions

Every implementation of an intervention could benefit from its evaluation. However, evaluation becomes necessary as part of implanting a newly developed intervention, or whenever an intervention is being implemented in a new context. An intervention could yield positive outcomes in one context, but could be ineffective or even harmful in another. Therefore, evaluation is vital for reaching sound decisions in practice.

Moreover, not every data collection about practice could be considered as an evaluation. Gathering data without careful conceptualization often is a wasted effort and a waste of dear resources such as public funding and professionals’ time. Evaluation of interventions is a planned and purposeful action aimed at understanding the causality between professional activities and attainment of desired outcomes. It is best conducted when there is a collaboration between partners. When the evaluation team joins clients and service providers to learn and to document the process of the intervention it increases the likelihood that the result accurately reflects a true picture of both the process and the outcomes. However, such formative evaluations are useful mostly when a new initiative is introduced. Later on monitoring the process to ensure adherence to intervention and recording outcomes will suffice. Another point is related to the assortment
of tools and methods that are used for the evaluation. Mixed methods helps increasing the validity of the
data, just as using various scales and measures for the same outcomes do. Likewise, using interviews and
protocols provide different angles to look at the same phenomenon.

Knowledge is a vehicle for making social changes, and it is a powerful one. Evaluation of program
effectiveness that is based on thoughtful consideration and understanding of the clients' problems and of
the nature of intervention will yield in turn a better knowledge on the best way to deliver the intervention
to different audiences. Yet, it is imperative that knowledge about such effective interventions will not remain
the property of those who generated it in the first place. Researchers and professionals alike should
continuously search for ways to maintain sustainability of the program. They should assure the effective
continuance of a program after its initial implementation. In this final phase they must find ways to scale up
the program. For example, an evaluation study of a new program had yielded positive outcomes and clients
showed improved life satisfaction. What is needed to scale this program up? What is needed to allow this
program to operate independently as part of the service? How will the funders of this program will know
that the next waves of clients served by this program will enjoy the same benefits? Here, we have more
questions than answers. However, thinking about these questions, and the attempt to address them will
improve both practice and its evaluation.

Finally, knowledge and especially newly developed one needs to be disseminated. There are several
ways of doing so that differ in the target audience. Following systems theory notion, the first circle is among
peers and colleagues. Some of them may have been partners to development of this knowledge and may
have insights and useful comments. The second circle is of professionals and stake holders on the regional,
national and international levels. Some will be interested in replicating the intervention with similar
populations and social problems in their jurisdictions. Lastly, is the academic community. Exposing
evaluation efforts to the larger scientific community grants the necessary prestige needed for continuous
funding of interventions that have shown effectiveness in changing people's quality of living.
Part 3
Italian Experiences and Perspectives

Fund for contrasting child educational poverty: genesis, results and strategy
Carlo Borgomeo

The Fund for contrasting child educational poverty is the result of an agreement between a group of bank foundations represented by Acri (as indicated in the art. 1 of the Law 208, 28th December 2015), the National Forum of the Third Sector and the Government. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 29th April 2016 by the President of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Economy and Finance, the Minister of Labour and Social Policies and the President of Acri. The Fund started with a budget of 360 million euros for the three-year period 2016/2018 to support measures aimed at removing economic, social and cultural obstacles that prevent the full achievement of educational processes by minors. At the end of 2018 this Fund was extended for a further period of three years (paragraph 478-480 art. 1 Law 145 of 2018), with a maximum amount available of about €85 million per year.

To implement the programs of the Fund, in June 2016 “Con i Bambini” (“with children”) was constituted, a non-profit social enterprise owned by Fondazione Con Il Sud, which was entrusted with the task of implementing the goals of the Fund. To this end, “Con i Bambini” published two calls for proposals in 2016, one in 2017 and one in 2018. During the development of strategies underlying the calls for proposals, the aim was to promote both actions and programs for developing and consolidating the educational communities and to activate local social networks for supporting children and their families, and both individual programs aimed at children. “Con i Bambini” also work for building the necessary conditions to encourage synergies between the Fund and the measures adopted by the Government to fight against poverty.

In this way, an experimental initiative characterized by strong innovativeness with respect to the traditional instruments for contrasting poverty has come to life. A new way to fight against child educational poverty, derived from a public and private synergy. The main novelty of this initiative indeed is that the financial resources that support it are mixed: private resources come from Italian bank foundations, which paid €30 million a year for three years for this goal, in addition to those of the State, which decided to increase the overall budget through a tax mechanism (a tax credit on the foundation profits) that led it up to €120 million per year, for three years. Another important innovation was the decision of the State not to play any role in the management of the Fund. The management is regulated by a private entity with a “public vocation”, that is responsible for regulating the mechanisms for distributing resources, evaluating projects, monitoring and assessing the impact, all of which are carried out with transparency and public procedures.

“Con i Bambini”, from 2016 until today, has promoted the following calls for proposals:

- Call “Prima Infanzia” (Early Childhood) (0-6 years), published in 2016 and aimed at strengthening and integrating educational and care services for children aged between 0 and 6 years, with a specific focus on vulnerable children and families;
Call “Adolescenza” (Adolescence) (11-17 years), published in 2016 and aimed at promoting prevention and contrasting phenomena related to early school leaving of adolescents, in the age group between 11 and 17 years, with particular attention to those living in high-crime areas;

Call “Nuove Generazioni” (New Generations) (5-14 years), published in 2017 and aimed at promoting the wellbeing and harmonious growth of children, especially those at risk or in vulnerable situations, or living in particularly disadvantaged areas and territories, ensuring effective educational opportunities, developing and strengthening alliance, skills, work and innovation capacity of those who have educational responsibility and are requested to activate early interventions to prevent discomfort and social exclusion:

Call “Un Passo Avanti” (A step further) (0-17 years) published in 2018 and aimed at encouraging virtuous processes of social innovation to fight against child educational poverty. The idea behind the call for proposals is rooted on the assumption that there are experiences, project hypotheses and potentially innovative programs, that are in tune with the mission of contrasting educational poverty, but which cannot be framed in the three previously published calls for proposals. The concept of “innovation” is difficult to define unambiguously, even if, taking into account the goals of the Fund, interventions capable of triggering new processes, generating new relationships and providing original responses to fight against child educational poverty are to be considered innovative.

The calls for proposals have been divided into 2 groups of projects depending on their regional/sub-regional dimension (ranking A) or their multi-regional dimension (ranking B) with an equal allocation of the available resources. In any case, projects that did not reach a sufficient score (60/100) in the evaluation process were not eligible for funding. In 2017, “Con i Bambini” also implemented two further initiatives:

Initiative devoted to earthquake areas. During 2018, the initiative launched in 2017 in favor of those who live and work in the earthquake areas of Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo and Lazio started to operate. It aims to support them, with a logic of participatory planning, in the co-construction of projects and in the launch of educational actions aimed at fighting all forms of child educational poverty, at creating cohesion in the educational communities affected by the earthquake and at encouraging innovation in actions, methodologies and approaches of educational intervention in these territories. The goal is to start a process of reconstruction of the educational community and educational strengthening shared with the associations and communities of the regions concerned. A mechanism of participatory planning is involving the private social sector, volunteer associations, schools, municipalities and all educational actors in each specific territory. With this initiative, 6 projects have been financed.

Co-funded initiatives. The goal, through this initiative, is twofold: on the one hand, to attract additional resources for contrasting educational poverty in Italy, on the other hand, to encourage a positive debate with the experiences implemented by other subjects, enriching each other’s knowledge, practices and experiences on issues related to the fight against poverty. The call was addressed to private providers, interested in starting a process of collaboration, in order to promote and support projects coherent with the goals of the Fund. The co-financing entities were able to propose to “Con i Bambini” their own project idea in favor of children and young people of one or more age groups between 0 and 17 years, providing a budget that, in case of approval, “Con i Bambini” would double. The initiative was divided into two phases. The first phase, which ended on 28th June 2018, concerned the collection of project ideas, presented by the co-financing entities. These ideas were examined by the Strategic Steering Committee inside “Con i Bambini”, which approved 17 projects. In the second phase, a process of co-designing of the individual initiatives started (also through specific on-site training carried out by Con i Bambini staff), during which
the Third-Sector organizations charged of managing the projects were identified, with the task of coordinating broader partnerships.

The first projects funded by the Fund have taken their first steps in recent months and therefore, of course, no data are yet available on the impact assessment (which is mandatory for all funded projects). In the process of project selection, however, a deep analysis of the following elements, which constitute the common ground for all approved projects, has been implemented:

- consistency with the general goals, the scope of the calls and adherence to the needs identified in the specific contexts;
- a partnership with skills and experience that are appropriate to the implementation of the actions proposed in the project;
- adequate elements related to sustainability and continuity of the actions to be carried out;
- effective methods and tools for monitoring the activities to be carried out and evaluating the expected results;
- enhancement of the role of the school, as a central actor in the children’s growth, and active involvement of families in the educational process;
- elements of innovation of the initiatives to be carried out in contexts with a high presence of the phenomenon identified.

A more detailed analysis of the projects funded by “Con i Bambini” identified some qualitative elements considered as the basis for the growth and improvement of the service provision for children aimed at fighting poverty:

1. **Strengthening and widening of the educational services and the access to care and education for children 0-6 years old.**

   It consists of two aspects: actions aimed at improving the conditions of access and attendance to early childhood services; the provision of integrative services. Significant examples are: the strengthening of existing services; the creation of new services complementary to those already existing; the involvement of vulnerable families (e.g. families benefiting from the SIA – Support for Active Inclusion) and/or families in territorial contexts in situation of disadvantage; the adoption of a multi-service approach and a “taking care” approach to increase the existing provision of services overcoming the service fragmentation.

2. **Tackling and preventing early school leaving.**

   This implies interventions (personalized and/or additional to the traditional ones) aimed at preventing early school leaving, with particular attention to the transition from one level of education to another. Significant examples are: prevention and contrast of school dropout and abandonment (with workshop activities to strengthen motivation and attachment to school environment, or for children with irregular school attendance / abandon through alternative and unconventional methods compared to traditional classroom lessons); counselling activities to increase awareness and sense of responsibility in the choices to be taken (through individual or group counseling, skills evaluation, counselling services, specific pathways, etc.).

3. **“To re-appropriate” the school and/or the “common areas”.**

   It takes the form of two aspects: actions that support an “open school” model, i.e. a welcoming and safe physical space, open to the community; activities for taking care of the “common spaces”, where to live with positive models for the use of leisure time and the promotion of active citizenship and legality through the direct involvement of children and adolescents who are the target of the intervention. Significant examples are: the creation of a school that is open to the territory, that is able to actively involve students, school staff, families and communities, through a variety of activities (training courses aimed at the territory, extra-curricular activities, cultural events and public initiatives, redevelopment and improvement of school spaces to improve their usage; care of the “common spaces” (e.g. abandoned places saved by students, school staff, families and communities and made them
available to the community); monitoring of the effective and constant involvement of children and parents, “guardians” of spaces and protagonists. For this kind of intervention, there is a widespread use of participatory planning by young people at all stages of the process (from the identification of spaces to the definition of the activities to be carried out), including through the method of the “competition of ideas”.

4. The “educating community” and the hubs with a high-density educational activity. It implies two elements: the presence of actions that involve all social actors and educational bodies in the specific territory, as well as the organizations belonging to the project partnership; the involvement of different actors in the process of growth and education of young people. Significant examples are: active participation of educational bodies (formal and informal); the involvement of stakeholders external to the partnership; strengthening the role and competences of all actors involved in the educational process; clear definition of roles of all actors involved (partners and not); involvement of further territorial actors, external to the partnership; awareness of the local community in each specific context, through events, courses, seminars; presence of training and information activities addressed to the different actors of the community; promotion of the circularity of information, in order to create, on the one hand, awareness in the community and, on the other, to strengthen its identity; presence of dissemination activities for returning the results to the community, in order to build a collective “memory”; drafting of a shared document describing the service available (called “carta dei servizi”), protocols, agreements among the different bodies involved in the project.

5. Active involvement of families and parental support. This implies an active involvement of parents in the activities provided by the projects, through actions aimed at supporting parenthood or aimed at accessing services by parents. Significant examples are: involvement of parents in workshops for children (e.g. setting up spaces, costumes, participation in events, support to trainers) and in the choices of children (in the transition phase and during the school pathways); specialist support for parents (training courses, seminars, events on specific themes, self-aid groups, home visiting, individual counselling, families supporting other families, counselling service, psychological service, employment support and service guidance, work-life balance and social needs).

6. Innovation. It implies the presence of innovative elements, both in terms of content and services provided in the projects, and new processes developed or to be developed. Innovation is often referred to the territory in which the project is to be carried out or to the activities normally carried out by the partners, since “ordinary” actions can constitute an innovation in very disadvantaged contexts. Significant examples are: adoption of new pedagogical models and interventions; new synergies among territorial organizations not used to work together; interventions aimed at target subjects not previously involved.

All the activities carried out during the first three years of the Fund and the amount of money allocated are detailed in Table 1.

Tab. 1 - Projects funded and contributions awarded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call for Proposals</th>
<th>Proposals</th>
<th>Funded projects</th>
<th>Funds allocated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call “Prima Infanzia”</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>62,239,180.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call “Adolescenza”</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>73,373,574.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call “Nuove Generazioni”</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>66,059,018.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-funded initiatives</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiatives in earthquake area</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,600,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call “Un passo avanti”</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>Work in progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,757</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>204,281,773.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the calls have considered, in the allocation of resources, a territorial distribution that takes into account the different regional socio-economic conditions. The territorial dimension represents one of the aspects that it is important to consider, a map to the national system of services for children and adolescents.

As already described above, the projects started to operate a few months ago and, at present, there are no quantitative data on the impacts produced by the actions funded in the local territories. Some quantitative information, however, is known and constitutes a useful element for reflection. If we look at the following table, that shows the aggregate data of the resources allocated with the four initiatives promoted in year 2016 (Calls “Early Childhood” and “Adolescence”) and 2017 (Calls “New Generations” and “Participatory design in Earthquake Areas”), it is possible to observe a lower project capacity in some regions (Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia, Trentino Alto-Adige, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, Molise).

Tab. 2. Regional distribution of projects received and funded years 2016/2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of projects arrived</th>
<th>Total number of projects funded</th>
<th>% funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abruzzo</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilicata</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabria</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia-Romagna</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friuli-Venezia Giulia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liguria</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardia</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molise</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piemonte</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puglia</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardegna</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilia</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trentino-Alto Adige</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valle d’Aosta</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (regional)</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totale (national)</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Strategic Steering Committee of the Fund4, given the experimental nature of the initiative and considering the diverse and multiform contexts in which it operates, defined as a priority the development of a strategy for evaluating the impact of projects, compared to the characteristics of the individual actors involved and taking into account the specific nature of the various projects. On the basis of this mandate, “Con i Bambini” has drawn up the guidelines for the impact assessment with the aim of harmonizing the final results of the evaluating organizations and encouraging a comparative analysis of the impact of the

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4 The strategical choices of the Fund are insured from a committee (“Comitato di Indirizzo Strategico”), composed of 15 members: the president, decided by the Prime Minister’s Office; a representative of Economy and Finance Ministry; a representative of Labour and Social Policies Ministry; a representative of Education, Universities and Research Ministry; four representatives of the foundation, designed by Acri; four representatives designed by “Forum Nazionale del Terzo settore”; three specialists for statistics: two designed by SFOL - Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavorati (from 1st december 2016 INAPP - Istituto Nazionale per l’Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche) and one designed by EIEF - Istituto Einaudi per l’economia e la finanza.
different projects. These guidelines have defined the main principles that should guide the evaluation analyses as listed below:

- **Methodological rigor**: clear and contextualized indication of the methodological models that guide the evaluation research. The evaluation model proposed by the evaluators must be strictly connected and coherent with the specific characteristics of the interventions (nature and needs of the target groups, intervention strategy, activities, goals) and, at the same time, clearly oriented towards a theoretical paradigm. Therefore, the impact assessments must always report a methodological contextualization that considers the theoretical approach, the reasons for choosing among different methodologies, the goals and the evaluation questions, the implementation phases and timescales, the tools and techniques used, the human resources involved and any dissemination activities.

- **Social impact**: evidence of the actual change generated on the target groups with respect to educational poverty and the general outcomes on the local communities involved in the project. Three main criteria have been defined, related to the goals of the project, to the reduction of educational poverty and to the main territorial effects. In addition, the social impact of each project must be analysed in relation to the specific goals of the specific call for proposals or initiative promoted by “Con i Bambini”.

- **Dissemination and learning**: the analysis on the impact (lessons learned and recommendations) and their dissemination among the different levels of actors involved in the project. In particular, the “lessons learnt” component should highlight and describe those aspects of the project that worked or not, and a “recommendations” component with the main operational, strategic approach and policy planning indications should be reported. The impact assessment report should be sent to “Con i Bambini” within 24 months after the end of the project.

Finally, during the year a reflection has started, with the collaboration of some evaluating bodies, for the setting up of a meta-analysis on all the activities funded, aimed at identifying the strategies that will prove to be most effective in the fight against educational poverty and orienting public policies. The modelling effort required to the evaluators will allow the identification of clusters of intervention models and the adoption of a comparative perspective between projects that insist on different needs and/or in different territorial contexts.

**Concluding remarks**

Obviously, a full and meaningful evaluation of this big initiative can be made in a few years’ time, when data on the effects and overall impact of the interventions will be available. However, some important characteristics and peculiarities of this initiative can already be pointed out.

The **first** is that the establishment of the Fund to fight against child educational poverty is a powerful “advocacy” action. The issue of child educational poverty, even though it is now beginning to be present in the political debate, is still too little present in public opinion. At most, there are actions derived by the need to overcome significant situations of inequality, to recognize a fundamental right that is denied to too many children. But there is not a collective awareness that this is an absolute priority in the policies. Without investing in human capital there is no future for an overall development.

The **second** is the choice not to consider the issue of educational poverty as only a “school issue”. Schools have a decisive but not exclusive role. The problem must be shared by the community: for this reason, we insist on the term “educating community”. For this reason, a central role of third sector organizations is present in our projects. For them, a great challenge, for policies, a great opportunity.

The **third** is the experimentation of a public dimension that overcome the traditional private/public administration alternative in welfare policies. In the great and irreversible crisis of traditional welfare this can be a decisive aspect. The Fund is a public intervention (in terms of goals, methods of implementation,
procedures) but at the same time far from rigidity and self-referral of state interventions and it is able to implement promotion, accompanying, networking, awareness inside the territories. An innovative private/public partnership can be very important to indicate innovative pathways for a new welfare. To judge the effectiveness of this approach, we are waiting for the overall results, but we can already evaluate its efficiency, in terms of: timely interventions (about 2,000 projects evaluated and more than 200 approved in two years with a newly structure); a great capacity for dialogue with the proposers; operating costs that are considerably lower than those of similar interventions.
To innovate social inclusion practices in Italy and Europe
Giuseppe Guzzetti

Some data

The percentage of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe varies among different countries. In 2016 the worst situations were recorded in Bulgaria (40.4%), Romania (38.8%) and Greece (35.6%). The lowest values were recorded in Czech Republic (13.3%), Finland (16.6%) and Denmark (16.7%). According to Eurostat, the value in Italy in 2016 was 28%, which is very high but in the middle of the ranking. Therefore, 17 million people are at risk of poverty in Italy.

More in detail, one in ten Italians suffers from material deprivation (at the beginning of the crisis, in 2008 this percentage was 1.5%), while 20% had an income below 60% of the average national income (this value has also worsened over time); 11.7% belong to households with very low labor intensity (against 10.4% in 2008). All these indicators are higher than the Eu average values, that equal 7.5%, 17.2% and 10.4% respectively.

Poverty in Italy

Economic crisis in the last years has deeply affected the condition of families and children in Italy. In 2017, around 1,778,000 families and 5,058,000 individuals were estimated to live in absolute poverty in Italy. The incidence of absolute poverty was 6.9% among families (from 6.3% in 2016) and 8.4% for individuals (from 7.9%). Compared to 2016, absolute poverty has therefore grown in terms of both families and individuals, and both values are the highest in the historical series starting in 2005.

In 2017 the incidence of absolute poverty among minors remained high at 12.1% (1.208 million children, 12.5% in 2016); it was equal to 10.5% among the families with at least one minor child, remaining widespread among those with three or more minor children (20.9%).

The incidence of absolute poverty has increased mainly in Southern Italy, both for families (from 8.5% in 2016 to 10.3%) and for individuals (from 9.8% to 11.4%), especially due to a worsening in the municipalities of metropolitan areas (from 5.8% to 10.1%) and in the smaller municipalities with up to 50,000 inhabitants (from 7.8% in 2016 to 9.8%). Poverty has also increased in the centers and suburbs of the metropolitan areas in Northern Italy. The incidence of absolute poverty decreases with the age of the reference person in the family. The minimum value (4.6%) was estimated among the families whose reference person was over 64 years old, the maximum value among the families with reference person under 35 years old (9.6%).

Relative poverty has also increased compared to 2016. In 2017 it affected 3.171 million families (12.3%, compared to 10.6% in 2016) and 9.368 million individuals (15.6% against 14.0% in the previous year). Like absolute poverty, relative poverty is more common among families with 4 members (19.8%) or 5 members and more (30.2%), especially among the young ones: it reached 16.3% if the reference person is under 35 years old, while it fell to 10.0% in the case of a reference person over 64 years old.

6. According to Istat, the absolute poverty threshold represents the monetary value, at current prices, of the basket of goods and services that are considered necessary for each family.
7. Relative poverty represents economic difficulties in having access to goods and services, with respect to the average economic level conditions in the area or the nation.
Tab. 1 - Indicators of absolute poverty, by geographical area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North 2016</th>
<th>North 2017</th>
<th>Center 2016</th>
<th>Center 2017</th>
<th>South and Islands 2016</th>
<th>South and Islands 2017</th>
<th>Italy 2016</th>
<th>Italy 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor households</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>1619</td>
<td>1778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident households</td>
<td>12,306</td>
<td>12,338</td>
<td>5,299</td>
<td>5,315</td>
<td>8,192</td>
<td>8,212</td>
<td>25,797</td>
<td>25,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor individuals</td>
<td>1,832</td>
<td>1,928</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>2,359</td>
<td>4,742</td>
<td>5,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident individuals</td>
<td>27,562</td>
<td>27,538</td>
<td>12,001</td>
<td>11,995</td>
<td>20,995</td>
<td>20,763</td>
<td>20,688</td>
<td>60,220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incidence of absolute poverty (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Our translation from Istat, 2018

Poverty in Milan

There are no available official data to precisely quantify poverty in families with minor children in Milan. Using Istat (Italian national institute of statistics) data and relying on some simplifying assumptions, it is possible to provide an approximate quantification of this phenomenon.

In particular, by assuming that the poverty rate among individuals and families in Milan is equal to the average rate in North-western regions, absolute poverty can be estimated to affect around 33,000 families and over 100,000 individuals in Milan. By assuming that the poverty rate among minors and families with at least one minor equals the overall rate in Northern Italian regions, over 11,000 families with at least a minor and over 21,000 minors can be estimated to be in absolute poverty in Milan.

Thanks to analysis carried out by Fondazione Cariplo within the QuBi Program, in cooperation with the city municipal administration, considering 21 different databases concerning people who receive income support measures (2016 data), 19,703 minors can be estimated to live in absolute poverty, corresponding to 1 in 10 minors. The actual number of minors in absolute poverty is however probably higher, since many families in poverty do not access income support measures they would be entitled to.

Main initiatives of Fondazione Cariplo in Southern Italy

Fondazione Con Il Sud is a non-profit private entity established on November 22th 2006 thanks to the cooperation between bank origin foundations and third-sector and volunteering organizations, to promote social infrastructures in Southern Italy, i.e. social cohesion pathways and good network practices to foster development in Southern Italy. Since 2016 Fondazione Cariplo has devoted an overall amount of around 31.4 million euro to support the institutional activities of Fondazione Con il Sud.

QuBi Program – A recipe against child poverty

At the end of 2016, on its 25th anniversary, Fondazione Cariplo launched a relevant challenge: defining a triennial 25-million-euro program to fight child poverty in Milan, involving the whole city. During 2017 the program, besides the investment of Fondazione Cariplo (12 million euro), benefited from contributions of Fondazione Vismara (5 million euro), Intesa Sanpaolo (3 million euro), Fondazione Invernizzi (500,000 euro) and Fondazione Fiera Milano (300,000 euro), totalling 20.8 million euro. The remaining resources (4.2 million euro) will be collected through a fund-raising plan involving businesses and citizens. The Program is active thanks to the cooperation with the Municipality and some third-sector entities such as Caritas Ambrosiana, Banco Alimentare and Fondazione Pellegrini. The goal of the intervention is to gather businesses, institutions, public and social private entities and citizens, to start coordinated actions capable of fighting the poverty of families with minors over time.

9. More at: https://ricettaqubi.it/
Axes of Program intervention:

- **Knowledge – Taking a snapshot and analyzing absolute poverty in Milan** (from estimates to actual data)
  Goal: knowing how many poor families live in Milan and how many of them access services and support measures made available by the public administration and third sector.

- **Reduction in the costs incurred by families to address their needs:**
  Specific and innovative actions aimed at fighting food poverty
  Maximizing the recycling of excess food, identifying new channels of distribution, also thanks to technological innovation
  Other actions to access primary goods/services (e.g. access to specialized and preventive health care – in particular dental care)

- **Promoting integrated (public-social private) systems for taking care of beneficiaries to build paths of improvement and/or exit from poverty**

Main interventions carried out/supported so far:

**DATI axis:**
- in cooperation with the municipality of Milan we performed a first analysis of families in poverty that were receiving public income-support benefits in 2016 (see above);
- a work has been started with the first implementing partners of the Program (Caritas, Banco Alimentare, Fondazione Pellegrini) to improve the collection of data on beneficiaries and to enhance the understanding of the support capacity of the city;

Within the Fighting food poverty axis, we have financed:
- the first “Emporio della Solidarietà” (Solidarity Store) of Caritas Ambrosiana in Milan, in the Barona neighborhood (we are considering with Caritas the possibility of setting up new Stores in the city);
- two short-chain hubs for collecting and redistributing excess food in cooperation with Banco Alimentare; since October 2018 the intervention is carried out also with the cooperation of Food Policy (Milan municipality), Assolombarda and Politecnico;

**Axis Promoting integrated care systems:**
- Launch of the “Al bando le Poverità!” (“Banning poverty”) call (published in May 2018 with an overall budget of 5 million euro) aimed at increasing the capacity of territorial (public e social private) actors of networking and building a system capable of addressing the problems and needs of the community in a more effective way, with specific focus on poor families with minor children. The Call develops in three phases: Phase 1 – Collection of ideas (June 22nd, 2018): 27 neighborhood networks sent their “recipe” against poverty; 488 participant organizations; 23 recipes were valued positively and could access the second phase; Phase 2 – Accompanied planning (from September to November 2018): co-planning aimed at implementing ideas started in early September, with the active presence of a social worker as the reference for territorial services and the support of a facilitator; Phase 3 – Implementing projects (from December 2018 to November 2020).

More we have financed:
- The third edition of the “Fondo Famiglia Lavoro” (“Family Work Fund”) of the Archdiocese of Milan, aimed at work reintegration of people in poverty (chiefly thanks to the activation of work internships);
- A first intervention taking care of families in poverty: re-integration in the labor market of some diners of the Ruben Restaurant of Fondazione Pellegrini, by engaging them in restructuring two apartments that will house families with minors that are facing a housing emergency (in collaboration with Cooperative Spazio Aperto Servizi).
Fund To Fight Child Educational Poverty\textsuperscript{10}

The Fund was established in 2016 on the basis of an agreement among bank origin foundations and the Government, with the aim of supporting experimental interventions aimed at removing obstacles of an economic, social and cultural nature that prevent minors from accessing educational processes. The Fund is financed by the foundations, which will benefit from a tax credit for payments made. The social enterprise “Con I Bambini” was entrusted with the allocation of the fund’s resources through calls, while strategic choices were defined through a specific Steering committee in which bank origin foundations, the Government and third-sector organizations are represented. The expected result is the definition of an overall national strategy for fighting against child educational poverty with long-term effects, starting from the outcomes of the local initiatives supported by the calls. The definition of a national policy can also make use of the evidence resulting from the impact evaluation activities that the selected projects will be required to include from the initial phase of submission of proposals.

The first three calls – Prima Infanzia (“Early childhood” – focusing on children 0-6 years old), Adolescenza (“Adolescence” - 11-17 years) and Nuove Generazioni (“New generations” – 5-14 years) – have made available 202 million euro.

Moreover, the tool “Co-financed initiatives” has been started, an experimentation aimed at attracting supplementary resources by promoting initiatives that are co-financed by private financing entities.

Fig. 1 – Let us donate energy

Call “Let Us Donate Energy”\textsuperscript{11}

The call, resulting from the cooperation between with A2A and “Banco dell’Energia Onlus”, supports projects aimed at fighting poverty, with specific reference to vulnerable people that have suffered job loss, bereavement, illness. Two editions of the call have been launched, one in 2017 and one in the 2018:

- Total amount allocated by Fondazione Cariplo in the two editions: € 2,000,000;
- Total amount allocated by “Banco dell’energia” in the two editions: € 2,000,000.

The call supports projects that are able to identify early and support economically vulnerable families, to prevent them from falling into poverty and allow them to try pathways of exit from need. The indirect goal

\textsuperscript{10} Total amount of the Fund: € 120 million. Number of participant bank origin foundations: 72. Overall contribution of Fondazione Cariplo (years 2016-17-18): around 67 million euro. More details at http://www.conibambini.org/

\textsuperscript{11} Data on the first edition: 15 projects selected for a total cost of 3.4 million euro. 2 million euro: contribution of Fondazione Cariplo and “Banco dell’energia”: 189 organizations involved, 2,500 people taken care of 6,000 beneficiaries overall.
of the call is to identify models to intervene as soon as possible. And to build effective pathways to recover. A monitoring plan will accompany the projects throughout their duration, varying from 18 to 24 months.

**Two Suggestions about Poverty in Housing and Work**

**Housing**

- Talking about Europe, it is worth mentioning that last year we were hosted by the European Parliament.
- Social housing does not mean housing for the poor, it is rather a fundamental tool for middle-income people. If they also fall into crisis, not being able to afford market rents, they also risk becoming poor.
- Social housing is thus not only an answer to the housing problem, but also a shelter to prevent other people from experiencing worse conditions than those they are currently experiencing. We cannot only consider the poverty of those who are affected by the phenomenon, we also need to prevent other people from becoming poor.

The increasing housing emergency and the need to find effective solutions to tackle it were the focus of the audition “Towards a sustainable socio-housing market in Europe: what experiences from the Italian model?” that was held in Brussels on June 27th, 2017.

On that occasion, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione Housing Sociale presented the Italian system of housing welfare: a model, successfully tested in Lombardy and launched at the national level, that could inspire the future EU policies, thus sustainably addressing the problems linked to social housing in Europe.

Opening the debate, the Vice-president David-Maria Sassoli highlighted that “with over 120 million people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the issue of housing emergency is as present as ever in the European Union. A figure that fully represents the dimension of a phenomenon, which is a social emergency for Europe and which requires effective and innovative interventions. Some indicators are alarming: the number of people on the waiting list; gap between demand and supply; exorbitant number of young people still in their parents’ homes; increasing number of overcrowded houses. Social housing, understood as the initiative aimed at offering affordable housing and sustainable housing solutions, is a political urgency. In this context, Europe cannot be said to be unrelated to the topic of accessible and sustainable housing policies. Public institutions are called to defuse the spiral of speculation in real estate and housing construction, which is exacerbating social inequalities. The absence or insufficiency of decent housing does not occur by nature, and is not incurable”

“The future and the serenity of the people are based on three fundamental and concrete factors: home, work and health. One of the problems that our country and Europe face is the growing demand for affordable and decent housing. Private market prices and conditions are often prohibitive for single-income families, young couples, retirees, nonresidential students and immigrants who regularly live in our communities. The Italian social housing model was introduced about 13 years ago in Fondazione Cariplo, which experimented and implemented it together with the Social Housing Foundation and other operators; it is an example of how a foundation creates social innovation. It shows that you can build quality houses that are also affordable”.

But how to meet the increasing demand for affordable-price housing in a context that is marked by less public financing available to support housing policies and by uncertain financial markets?

The first ethical real estate fund, created by FHS, operating in Lombardy since 2006, initially collected 85 million euro from public and private investors, and nowadays it is worth over 500 million euro. The success of the model inspired the Integrated System of Funds (SIF), introduced by the National housing plan in 2009. The SIF has collected a total amount of 3 billion euro and currently constitutes a national fund, the Housing investment fund (FIA) managed by CDP Investimenti Sgr. Amounting to 2 billion euro, the FIA invests in local real estate funds, managed by other asset management companies, through
shareholdings up to 80%. It is currently one of the most important impact-investment programs in the world.

*Work: Neet People*

In July 2018, Fondazione Cariplo presented the Neetwork project to the European Commission, a proposal aimed to limit the phenomenon of young people who are not in education nor in employment. Over 2 million young people aged 15 to 29 are in this situation in Italy, 239,000 of them in Lombardy alone.

Essentially, the Neetwork project provides for a paid internship lasting 4-6 months in a non-profit organization in Lombardy, an opportunity aimed at re-activate vulnerable Neet people. These are young people aged 18 to 24, who are not in education, have completed (at most) middle school, have been unemployed for at least 3 months and are not enrolled in the Garanzia Giovani (Youth Guarantee) program.

Also in this case, the European representatives showed great interest in the model presented by Fondazione Cariplo. NEET people are present in all European countries, but everyone considered our method as innovative and effective.
Support actions for local projects
Gilberto Muraro

Innovations from the collaborative debates

The Fund for fighting child educational poverty is the arrival and restarting of local pathways that the foundations have created in their respective territories. The results of these investments found an international synthesis in the Tfiey (Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years) project carried out in the years 2013-2015, managed in Italy by Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cariparo and Fondazione Con il Sud. These Foundations transformed the results into a joint call (“Childhood, First”) by launching 10 projects of innovative services for children 0-6 years old aimed at reducing inequalities in service access. The Fondazione Cariparo supported three project experiences in the provinces of Padua and Rovigo.

The activities (Tfiey and projects) proved to be an extraordinary practical and strategic incubator that facilitated the activation of the national Fund and the choice of its independent management, through Fondazione con il Sud and the social enterprise “Con i bambini”.

This international conference held in Rome represents a part of this pathway, to fuel the debate among foundations in the institutional setting of the Senate, to define further goals to be achieved and, above all, to avoid the risk that a major investment and national experiment does not stabilize and implement the best and most sustainable solutions, those that really can contribute to substantially innovate policies for children and families in our country.

Actions supporting projects

The cultural pathway of the foundations must necessarily be brought into local actions. For this reason, Fondazione Cariparo supported the actors in Padua and Rovigo that deal with children, supporting the development of skills and local aggregations aimed at strengthening joint efforts. In particular, the support focused on project solidity and quality, by proposing training seminars and in-depth analysis of the contents of the various calls for proposals, the processes, the methods and tools to be used to facilitate the elaboration of project ideas on educational poverty. The aggregation of capacities was also favoured in order to strengthen local partnerships. Participants were provided with tools to better focus project ideas together with individualized tutoring in order to think about the choices made.

The level of participation and the interest were high as well as the satisfaction for the opportunities offered, flexible and focused on the innovations needed to better respond to the needs of the territories with appropriate strategies. Participants thus avoided the risks of fragmentation that often occur in these projects.

The level of planning capacity of the territory has thus increased. In the specific case of the Fund calls, the implementation planning paths have been challenging for the partnerships, mainly because of the complexity of the calls and the deadline for presenting the proposals. However, the possibility of making a difference came from the enthusiasm and skills acquired in terms of planning, from the local networks created during the group activities.

These aspects will not be neglected in the future activities of Fondazione Cariparo, aware that capital should not be wasted but used in the strategic planning and the local planning. There will be therefore opportunities for mutual exchange, to feed the community of practices to share strategies/solutions and better transfer social results in the territory.
Community of practices

Community of practices means learning environments and sharing of knowledge and solutions consistent with the problems of the territory, enhancing the capabilities of local communities and sharing the potential to be exploited. Hence the sense and the value of cultivating them as a community of concrete actions that are necessary to ensure social impact to project investments. Participants develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the territories, without remaining inside their own activities and projects.

Fondazione Cariparo believes that it is a potential to be expanded and promoted with innovative actions, knowing that those who implement them can do so together with others, in a community that recognizes the efforts needed to improve the human capital involved as well as the social impact of the actions carried out. It is therefore a valuable opportunity for implementing positive social relations and solidarity, it is also potential available to address other challenges, that today focus on educational poverty and that in the activities of the foundations extend to other areas of social interest.

Concluding remarks

International comparison allows us to broaden our reflection beyond the borders of our country to encourage genuine social innovation.

The proposals and the funded projects show a great need for strategic thinking and the awareness that the huge resources made available will have to be matched by greater results given the huge professional and voluntary commitment requested by the projects. They will help beyond the short term, bringing fruits in terms of future sustainability, thanks to the indexes of social impact.

In this way, the potential of the Fund and the results achieved over time will be valuable not only on an Italian scale but also on a European and international scale. The Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years was a point of arrival and restarting, the same will occur with the Fund that is a point of no return for qualifying the services and policies for children and families in our country.
Starting from young children... to build, together, a European priority
Francesco Profumo

This initiative is a very challenging opportunity to reflect and debate on one of the issues that Compagnia di San Paolo and other Italian foundations discussed for some time:
- “why and how to invest in early childhood?”
- “what are the most effective policies to do this?”
- “how to move from innovative and effective practices supported by foundations and the Fund to fight educational poverty towards permanent public policies in Italy?”
- “what are the structural tools to be used at European level?”.

We have known “why” for a long time: on the one hand, international evidence and research indicate that the first years of children’s life are decisive for their whole life, health, educational pathway, employment, ability to interact, citizenship skills.

Neuroscience tells us that 90% of a person’s brain development occurs within the first 5 years of a child’s life. In this age group (0-5 years) the brain creates 700 synapses per second (Shonkoff, J. 2009), i.e. the connections that underlie the cognitive and functional skills of the person (such as creativity, constancy, ability to address problems and resolve conflicts). Skills that other studies consider the main ones needed to address the work today and especially after 2030.

From an economic point of view, research reveals how investment in the first years of life turns out to have positive effects considering the overall resources spent, i.e. to produce high returns, for two main reasons: longer periods of return and action less affected by the reduction in damages. Heckman has shown that 1USD of early childhood investment has an effect of 7USD over time.

Evidence also tells us that cognitive inequalities between rich and poor children begin as early as at the ninth month of life, with consequences that can be traced back to the educational pathways or subsequent school dropout of children (Barnett, Tarr, Lamy & Frede, 2001). Therefore, investing in quality services for the first three years of life can also serve to reduce inequalities and produce positive effects on linguistic, cognitive and social skills (Melhuish, 2014). Finally, some studies have shown that investing in quality in the first years of life leads to even more significant results for children from families in various situations of hardship (Delboca, 2014).

On the other hand, it is possible to analyze some data on how much we are currently investing in early childhood. We focused, in particular, on how much these investments, or the lack of investments or inefficiency of investments affect in specific children belonging to frail families.

Hence the need and the urgency to act, how? As Italian, European and North American foundations, this need and urgency have been translated, starting in 2013, into:
- the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years, a transatlantic network that has been able to transfer knowledge (only evidence-based studies and research) to practices and policies in early childhood, stimulating the debate and exchange of ideas among politicians, academics, service managers and professionals in a free and critical way.
- the International Transatlantic Forum (in which Compagnia di San Paolo participated since the beginning) led us to activate a national debate, through the Italian Transatlantic forum, i.e. the activation of working groups and reflections in Italy, that in turn allowed about 500 participants, politicians (at different levels – governmental, parliamentary, regional, municipal), academics, service managers, professionals, representatives of the third sector and associations of parents to begin building a “community of practices”
on these issues, through the development of publications, selections of practices and ideas, data collection, 
etc.

What about the results? Certainly an important contribution to the reflection on the “integrated system 
of education 0-6 years” included in the Law called “The good school”. In this regard, Fondazione Zancan 
and Compagnia di San Paolo have been heard on these issues at the Italian Parliament Commission on 
Childhood and Adolescence: meetings were organized with those who were involved in drafting the Law in 
the specific session dedicated to early childhood services, and highly innovative projects such as those 
launched within “Infanzia, Prima” (“Childhood, First”), a joint initiative of Italian foundations that had already 
invested in the Italian Transatlantic that we promoted and supported.

In the “Infanzia, Prima” initiative, promoted by Compagnia di San Paolo, through its ZeroSci 
Programme, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione con il Sud, the scientific partner Fondazione Zancan, and in 
collaboration with Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo, we supported 10 projects in which 
the challenge was working with children and parents of families in difficulty, developing innovation aimed 
in particular at the following fields:

- ability to improve access and use of early childhood services for children and families (in particular: 
the projects in Roma - Tor Bella Monica, Lamezia Terme and Catanzaro, Scampia in Napoli, Lecce, 
Messina);
- ability to activate in a generative way (contribution to the result) the families to whom the services are 
addressed (in particular the projects of: Scampia-Napoli, Lamezia Terme/Catanzaro, Moncalieri);
- ability to integrate services (educational, social, health, cultural) aimed at early childhood (in particular 
the projects in Pioltello and Messina);
- ability to involve and enrich the networks on the territory, also with the involvement of new subjects 
(in particular the projects of Alzano Lombardo and Genova, Lecce);
- Ability to identify and implement alternative mechanisms to support the costs of services for early 
childhood (Moncalieri and Firenze).

With methods and processes used in a systematic and shared way, starting from preliminary analysis, 
planning, goal definition, monitoring and evaluation of key performance indicators for the specific project 
and cross-sectional for all projects, to the implementation of activities, to the networking among projects, 
to the progressive capitalization and dissemination of the innovative outcomes of these projects. The 10 
projects, almost at the end of their two years, report back to us:

- not only results (output) but also and above all important outcomes, indicating that practices that provide 
for greater inclusion of poor children are possible and can be sustainable with the contribution of parents, 
local community, integrated services;
- useful indications for other similar practices, but also for policies at local and regional level for greater integration of 
services, for the enhancement of alternative mechanisms to support early childhood services 
(administrative solutions, “hanging” culture, special funds co-participated by public/private bodies, 
etc.);
- very useful indications for the innovations that are to be supported within the Fund to fight child educational poverty 
(both in the already approved call for proposals for early childhood, and in the one entitled “Un passo 
Avanti” – “A step forward”).

In addition, these 10 projects are also demonstrating new spin-offs and positive externalities:

- 7 of the projects obtained support under the calls for proposals of the Fund to fight child educational 
poverty, thus bringing their experience also in favor of projects carried out with other Italian subjects;
a community of practices has been formed among subjects that contribute to the different projects that exchange, think and evaluate together;
“innovation poles” have been formed, which can promote the exportability of models and processes also in other Italian contexts that could be linked and integrated into the other “innovation poles” promoted by the new call of the educational poverty fund.

Therefore, the steps we have taken as Italian Foundations have been from a community of international practices on early childhood issues (with a focus on frail families – Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years) to a community of national practices on the same issues (Italian transatlantic forum), which has:

contributed to Italian politics (Law on the school);
promoted 10 innovative experimentations in Italy (Infanzia, Prima);
influenced and nurtured the thought underlying the educational poverty fund (call “Prima Infanzia” and call “Un passo avanti”).

The question now is: how can we further contribute to Italian structural public policies on educational poverty (and, specifically, those relating to early childhood), also in view of the fact that from 2019 a new three-year period of the Fund has been launched?

Through the impact assessments provided for in each of the projects of the Fund to combat child educational poverty, interesting and scientifically rigorous indications will emerge.

We need a meta-analysis of the individual impact assessments, a coordinated and rigorously based reading of the indications that will emerge from the assessments carried out at the level of individual projects.

An even stronger collaboration between the Fund and the Government and Parliament is necessary to assess whether and how to progressively acquire the results and indications of the Fund into the real Italian structural policies.

It is necessary to think of a role for Italian foundations that, together, can promote the capitalization, valuing and dissemination of the outcomes of the projects supported by the Fund and the transition from “projects” to “stable processes” in a long-term perspective.

Finally, one more step is needed: why and how do we “link” all this wealth of practices, evidence and policies on educational poverty, related in particular to early childhood, to European thinking and planning? Why to act in a European context? This was indicated by the presentations of the international speakers (including non-European ones) at this conference:

the numbers of children at risk of poverty, which we have in common and lead to the need to structure ourselves in an appropriate and joint way with respect to the risk of poverty; the Spanish speaker has provided us with data on Spanish children at risk of poverty, but Italy follows immediately afterwards with 32.8% of children at risk of poverty (Eurostat); but beyond the numbers similar representations of the faces of child poverty in Europe emerge (educational poverty, material deprivation, cultural poverty, etc.);
the similarity of the difficulties and obstacles faced in different international/European contexts with respect to child poverty, to those we faced and discussed in Italy starting from the Transatlantic forum (enormous differences between regions and territories in Italian regions with respect to services dedicated to early childhood, the problem of sustainability of services, the need for more appropriate training of operators for quality services).
What can be done together

The contributions highlighted the possibility of putting in common the analysis on the forms and conditions of poverty. It is necessary and possible to structure a “joint epidemiological analysis” on the poverty of young children with common indicators, not only able to measure the “damage”, but also – overturning paradigms – to let us think in a constructive way on the “possibilities/opportunities” for young children that we have a common responsibility to ensure.

We can share the best practices tested in different countries and also those that have emerged in the context of European projects (the Compagnia di San Paolo, for example, is completing, with the Fondazione Zancan and many European partners, an experiment on the integration of early childhood services).

This is possible only if we are able to measure the standards of response and outcome of these practices, if we are able to recognize the actual outcomes, measure them and encourage them in a European space. When solutions are rigorous, they are measurable and they give us the opportunity to measure parameters of European citizenship for children.

How far can we go in Europe?

One of the most important and, at the same time, challenging opportunities for the future of the Fund is the link with European policies on social innovation and inclusion and research.

Together, as Italian and European foundations, as part of the consultation processes that the Commission has structured with the various stakeholders, we could contribute to the processes of drawing up the future financial and thematic programming instruments of the European Union post-2020, calling for child educational poverty to become one of the issues at the heart of the European political priorities for the period after 2020.

Similarly, child educational poverty and issues related to education could be promoted as one of the “missions” currently being defined within the planning tools of post-2020 research policies, which some European foundations are helping to outline.

In short, the sharing at European and international level of tools for analyzing the phenomena of child poverty, the definition of reliable tools rigorously evaluated in their outcomes and structured advocacy actions can allow us to affect future Europeans on these issues, recognizing that fighting child poverty and ensuring adequate European citizenship is one of the most important missions that we have in common in Europe.
Part 4
Critical issues and challenges for assessing outcomes and social impact

The Italian contribution through the Educational Poverty Fund
Giorgio Righetti

This publication aims to highlight the initiatives that have been put in place at the European and national level to contrast the serious problem of child educational poverty.

My task is to illustrate a specific initiative carried out by the bank origin foundations, in partnership with the Italian Government and the third sector, called “Fund for contrasting child educational poverty”. But first, it is important to briefly describe the role of bank origin foundations in our country particularly in the field of education and training.

There are 88 Foundations of banking origin in Italy. These were created following a process that started in 1990 with the so-called “Amato Law”, which is the starting point of a process whose outcome was, according to the creator (Mr. Amato), largely unknown. That law represented an experiment and, as it is the case for all experiments, the results were uncertain. The idea was to make the Italian banking system more competitive in a context of free competition at European level. Our market was characterized, in particular, by the presence of Savings Banks, Pawnshop Banks and public-law institutions, which, because of their origin, lacked an element whose absence potentially restricted competition: shareholders. These institutions, which represented the highest expression of the idea of solidarity of our communities, an idea rooted in the experience of municipalities that characterized the history of most of our country, were no longer able to keep up with competition in a context of change. A change was necessary, but safeguarding the two valuable elements of these banks: being able to carry out banking activities and paying attention to the needs of communities. A crude and unprepared legislator would have risked compromising the second valuable element for the exclusive benefit of the first element. But fortunately this was not the case, because the architecture envisaged by the legislator, although perhaps not with full awareness, made it possible not to disperse, in the change, the valuable assets of these institutions. Two subjects were born: one carrying the value of banking know-how (transferee bank) and the other carrying the idea of solidarity and philanthropy.

Prof. Lester Salamon from John Hopkins University, who has been studying for years the phenomenon of privatization processes that took place around the world and which have given rise to philanthropic subjects, and who has surveyed hundreds of them, said: “Per noi studiosi di filantropia e del settore non profit, o terzo settore, la Legge Amato, e le fondazioni che ne sono emerse, sono avvenimenti di portata storica. Infatti, grazie a questa legge, l'Italia, le cui risorse filantropiche private pro capite erano fra le più basse in Europa, si è trasformata in pochissimo tempo in quello che è forse il principale Paese europeo in termini di risorse filantropiche pro capite controllate da fondazioni d'erozazione private” [To us, scholars of philanthropy and non-profit sector, or third sector, the Amato Law, and the foundations that emerged from it, are events of historical significance. Thanks to this law, Italy, whose private philanthropic resources per capita were among the lowest in Europe, has transformed in a...
very short time into what is perhaps the main European country in terms of philanthropic resources per capita controlled by private supply foundations].

Subsequent regulatory interventions, in particular the Legislative Decree 153/99, better defined and clarified the role, governance and operating methods of the Foundations, which are, it should be remembered, private non-profit bodies with full statutory and managerial autonomy. In particular, it defined their institutional mission, which is the pursuit of goals of social utility and the promotion of economic development. It also defined a set of so-called admitted sectors, in which the Foundations can intervene. Among these sectors are education and training.

Since the full activation of the Foundations following the aforementioned Legislative Decree 153 in 1999, this sector has been among those most affected by the interventions of the Foundations, having benefited from funding of about 3 billion euro, in tens of thousands of projects involving schools, organizations of the third sector, local authorities. Of this amount, 360 million euro have been allocated to the “Fund for contrasting child educational poverty”.

The Fund was created on the idea and impulse of Acri, the Association of Foundations, which proposed it to the government in 2015. The appreciation for this initiative meant that the Stability Law (now Budget Law) 2016 included the establishment of the Fund, financed by bank foundations and stimulated with the provision of a tax credit in their favor up to a maximum of 100 million euro per year for three years. The Fund has a historical value on the theme of contrasting child educational poverty. I shall recall four elements, among others.

- It is for the governance and implementation that has been put in place. Strategic governance has been entrusted to a committee equally composed of government representatives, bank foundations and the third sector. At operational level, the implementation was entrusted to a private entity indicated by Acri: the social enterprise Con I Bambini, owned 100% by Fondazione con il Sud. I believe that the willingness of the Government to experiment with a public-private partnership in which the implementation is delegated to the practices in use in the private sector is a great act of trust and, at the same time, a proof of awareness that, in full respect of transparency and sharing the strategic goal, the private sector can guarantee more rapid and effective results. A “transfer of sovereignty” against the current political trend. Acri’s choice of Fondazione con il Sud through the social enterprise Con i Bambini, also is a unique experience of partnership between foundations and the third sector, a clear proof not only of the Foundation’s confidence in its ability to face and overcome this serious challenge, but also of its willingness to show the effectiveness of a good practice that “from the South” spreads throughout the country.

- It is for its purpose: we have always been aware, in setting this measure, that no matter how large, resources would not be enough to solve the problem. Hence the experimental nature of the initiative, which is a genetic element of the Fund. But this experimentation is not convenient, in the sense that it is defined as experimental because there are not enough resources to intervene in a structured and permanent way to solve the problem. It is experimental because we have been aware from the beginning that it was necessary to identify innovative and unprecedented paths to address the problem. And the Fund makes it possible to use all the public and private energies to identify effective paths that can subsequently be adopted in public policies. It is therefore an experiment in the strict sense of the term: experimenting to deliver to the public the best practices that can then be adopted structurally.

- It is for the originality of the approach, that puts into practice the consolidated theoretical teachings episodically tested. They suggest that the theme of educational poverty is not a problem of individual institutions (the school), but a problem of the entire educational community and that it is necessary to
call together all educational agencies, starting from families, schools, civil society in its different forms, local institutions, children themselves who should be the protagonists and not only the beneficiaries.

- Finally, it is for the focus on measuring outcomes and impact. From the very beginning of the initiative, it was decided that, because of the experimental nature of the initiative, which needed measurements in order to identify the most effective projects, that could become a policy, it was necessary to implement processes of impact assessment. For this reason, each project will have independent evaluation agencies that will monitor their outcomes and measure their impact. In addition to this, independent monitoring and ex-post evaluation of the funding body is in place and, last but not least, a meta-evaluation process that aims to measure the overall impact of the Fund.

The resources of the Fund

_Bando Infanzia (2016)._ The national call, addressed to third sector organizations and to the schools, aims to expand and strengthen educational and care services for children aged between 0 and 6 years old, with a specific focus on vulnerable children and families and/or those living in disadvantaged areas. The call for proposals aims to improve the quality, access, usability, integration and innovation of existing services and to strengthen the main skills for the well-being of children and their families. The call funded 80 projects for a total of 62.2 million euros and involved 1,500 partners.

_Bando Adolescenza (2016)._ The national call, addressed to third sector organizations and to schools, aims to promote and stimulate prevention and contrasting early school leaving of adolescents in the age group between 11 and 17 years. Through the combination of school activities, extracurricular activities and leisure time, innovative and integrated solutions will be experimented, aimed at preventing and contrasting school leaving and dropout, as well as at enriching learning processes with contents and experiences, developing and strengthening social, relational, sports, artistic-recreational, scientific-technological, economic and active citizenship skills, and contrasting the development of addictions and bullying. The call funded 86 projects for a total of 73.4 million euros and involved 2,700 partners.

_Bando Nuove generazioni (2017)._ The purpose of the call is to promote the well-being and harmonious growth of children in the age group 5-14 years old, especially those at risk or in vulnerable situations (economically, socially, culturally) requiring projects that can promote and develop personal, relational, cognitive skills. The projects must be able to have a significant impact both on their training and social inclusion paths, through joint actions “inside and outside school”, developing and strengthening the alliance, skills, work and innovation capacity of those who have the responsibility for education (“educational community”) and preventing various forms of difficulties at an early stage: early school leaving and dropout, bullying and other phenomena of youth distress. The call funded 83 projects for a total of 66 million euros and involved 2,000 partners.

_Earthquake areas initiative (2017)._ Intervention in the earthquake areas of Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo affected by the 2016 earthquakes with the aim of encouraging the processes of strengthening communities so badly affected, through the development of services and initiatives that are able to create favorable conditions of growth for children so badly affected by the earthquakes. The initiative of participatory planning developed 6 projects that involved the main organizations and institutions of the territories. A total of 2.6 million euro was made available.

_Co-financing initiative (2018)._ In order to widen the scope of the initiative both from a financial point of view and in terms of involvement of other funding bodies, in 2018 an invitation was launched to private entities to co-finance interventions to fight child educational poverty, matching the Fund resources made
available by other private entities. The response has been significant and so far 16 projects have been approved for 8.2 million euro by foundations and companies.

Call for proposals Call4Ideas (2018). A two-stage call for ideas for measures to combat child educational poverty is being issued now. There are no pre-defined themes of intervention, but the aim is to collect innovative proposals. 70 million euros are made available.

Conclusions
To date, 271 projects have been approved with a total funding of 212.5 million euro with an average of 784 thousand euro of financing per project. Most of the projects have already started: Conibambini is not limited to providing resources, but it also accompanies the projects, without prejudice to the distinct roles, and creates networks between the different partnerships, with the aim of exchanging knowledge and experience and to strengthen the subjects that have come into play with the initiative.
Critical issues and challenges for outcome and social impact assessment
Tiziano Vecchiato

Introduction

Outcome and social impact evaluation do not have an easy life in the current society. They are highly recommended and pursued, but it is not always worthwhile to carry them out if their results can be used against those who have the responsibility to perform them. It is a double-edged sword which, if well used, encourages the improvement of practices, project actions and the financing of human services.

It is therefore useful to compare the criticalities and challenges, having in mind that together they are the narrow door to make a difference. We will see how they enrich the comparison of experiences on a large scale, international as in this case, to better connect them in a technical and strategic sense in the final part of this contribution.

Critical issues

The first critical point results from the growing attention to social impact assessment. It is discussed in many places, supporting the need to be the protagonists of its implementation, but with experiences that in the short term cannot accumulate, unless the specific and original sense of impact evaluation is trivialized, by replacing it with representations that favor the promises without implementing it. It is important to value the communicative scope of impact evaluation but with actual results, with reliable and measured indices, not only narrated. It is also important not to reduce the technical and strategic scope of necessary steps, which require transparent curricula, rooted in expertise on “social impact evaluation” with transparent and credible results. This first critical issue can be addressed with a reliable grammar and syntax on how to measure, how to assess, how to evaluate, dealing with methodological problems applicable to different contexts and with comparable indices.

International comparison is a useful ground to understand if and how to integrate solutions, avoiding seductive and short-term practices. The European debate has partly facilitated this task, highlighting the need to avoid simplifications. These occur, for instance, when general indicators are not sensitive and applicable to different problems, and when “a priori” metrics are used, which are independent of the objects and problems to be measured. In both cases the risk is to confuse the means (indices, metrics...) with the goals, the human and social benefits to be achieved.

Other questions concern the actors who should judge not themselves but the fruits of the practices they have carried out. That is, they should talk about the fruits, not about the trees that have produced them and how they have budded and bloomed. Indeed, promising phases are not always followed by the hoped-for fruits. Moreover, if evaluations are satisfied with proxy indexes, approximate, based on trends (of buds, flowers ...), they confuse the potential with the results. Potentials are necessary and important conditions, but they are not sufficient to measure the impact and certify it.

The focus of evaluation is on the fruits, on the benefits for the final beneficiaries, for the local communities. Everything about the producers and the processes used is useful but not sufficient to talk about impact. Hence the need to reverse this frequent and inappropriate perspective in order to make the results of the evaluations credible, avoiding unreliable results that are in contrast with the technical and ethical aims of the social impact evaluation. In a world where everything is used to accredit producers of interventions, events, projects, innovations, ..., even social impact evaluation can be easily exploited for purposes other than its own.
The second critical point is the difference between outcome and impact. If the term “impact” is used as a “consequence” of a certain action, intervention, project, policy, ..., everything that follows would become “impact”. But in the logic model everything that “follows” can assume a different consistency of output, of outcome, of impact, that is of direct benefit for the beneficiaries, of widespread benefit for the local community. In the result we are dealing with quantities that describe the capacity of transforming input (the available resources) into the output (goods and/or services produced), that is, we are in the area of material transformations. In the outcome, the benefit is not the production of goods/services but the modification of a condition of existence of a target population, i.e. good (outcome) for the benefit of the beneficiaries. We are no longer in the sphere of productivity but in that of effectiveness. Output indexes are not proxy indexes of outcome: therefore they cannot be measured through associations of meaning but with indexes that describe in a direct and appropriate way the benefit achieved. It is not only measured with satisfaction but with consolidated results.

The third critical point has to do with the difference between outcome and social impact. First of all, it is a difference in scale, since the shift is “from a result to a benefit” to an advantage that does not concern the producer of the good but its beneficiaries. They are composed of the well-identified target (the direct beneficiaries) and the enlarged target, which extends on a social scale in the communities of the direct beneficiaries. The impact is thus positioned in the social space that extends from the person to the community, between the direct beneficiaries and the living space in which others also benefit from what has been achieved, as the stone thrown into the pond having a double force which is directed towards the bottom and widens to concentric centers. The maximum force of the stone is concentrated in the point where it falls, i.e. it has a gravitational trend that technically represents the measure of direct outcome, while the lateral push represents the centripetal good to the advantage of the social space where the action, the intervention, the service, the project are carried out.

Their difference is described by outcome and impact indices. It is therefore a critical issue that must be addressed with the competence and methodology necessary to identify the direct good and the widespread good. The distinction is not always easy because between the person and the community the differences widen incrementally as does the amount of light in the passage from night to day. It is a difference that can be measured incrementally, using specific metrics. It is better not to confuse outcome with impact, because the price to pay is too high in terms of substance and credibility.

The challenges

After identifying the main criticalities, the challenges that put social impact evaluation to the test are positioned where social problems are bigger, where their intensity is greater. Among these, poverty and, in this specific case, the fight against educational poverty, are very challenging for two reasons: the technical and methodological difficulties of handling many variables at the same time and the difficulties deriving from the lack of convincing evidence. For too many years, it has been thought that the main determinants of outcome and impact are economic transfers, but, following the map proposed by Vanna Iori, there are other factors that amplify and make the field of evaluation more complex. They have to do with differences that are geographical, gender, educational, social, relational, emotional, digital, parental poverty, violence, abuse, maltreatment.

The characteristics of the map proposed by Vanna Iori are its demographic extension (based on geographical and gender criteria), existential intensity (educational, social, relational, emotional deficits), technological intensity (technology separates, isolates, is a source of digital and material violence), educational intensity (parental and adult inability that can become violence and abuse). It is an extended map that allows the geolocation of poverty and it is articulated so that it aggregates different human, parental and social
difficulties, proposing in this way coordinates to orient oneself in a suffering humanity, reduced to an abstract category (poor and/or poverty) that is addressed with material aids, interventions, transfers, administrative solutions. The social impact of these solutions is poor and a waste of resources. This is confirmed by the risk of poverty in Italy, which rose from 19.6% in 2006 to 22.9% in 2016. In 2016, the reduction in the risk of poverty after transfers was only 5.6 percentage points in Italy, compared to 8.6 in the EU, 10 in France, 8.8 in Germany, 7.2 in Spain, 13.7 in Sweden and 12.2 in the United Kingdom. In 2005 3.9% of Italian children were in absolute poverty, in 2016 12.5%. It happens in a society unable to reproduce itself, that is, undergoing a strong demographic crisis, which paradoxically concentrates the major poverty indices in the first phase of life. In the decade 2006-2016, poverty increased mainly among households with younger heads of the household (up to 40 years of age), while it decreased among households with heads of the household over 65 years of age. A further paradox is recognizable in the trend of welfare spending, which increased and reached 62 billion euro in 2016 (+21% in 5 years), reaching over 1,000 euros per capita (Istat, 2018, 2019). It is thus an effort that provides a worsening picture, with social suffering increasing over the years. Unfortunately, the many resources allocated to the fight against poverty with national, regional and local funds have not reversed this trend and, on the contrary, in some cases, have contributed to amplifying geographical and gender differences as well as differences in the access to available resources, with performance results incapable of achieving corresponding outcomes and social impacts.

It is therefore not just a material challenge, but a profoundly human one, which cannot continue to rely on cash transfers that are ineffective for target groups and incapable of addressing the challenge of social impact. The very idea of measuring impact by separating the “treated” and the “untreated” is a first cultural and political defeat. Poverty is not overcome by means of the aid received (“treatment”) but by sharing the challenge, helping to help oneself, investing in developmental tasks during younger age, valuing all abilities and not only the resources available. The challenge is won with the poor, without them it is impossible, they are not “treated” but people, only their abilities can produce generative social return starting from the aid received.

If the approach is only material, the proof of the outcome evaluation is going to lose from the outset with inappropriate practices because they are inadequate to deal with the problem. They can contain it and sometimes make it chronic, with side effects not to be underestimated. Possible ways and worlds of valuing skills and empowering each child and each person to “contribute to outcome and social impact” need to be compared. Limiting oneself to comparing the “ways of giving and receiving material aid” has too often been reduced to a mere methodological exercise, interesting for the proponents but with inconclusive results.

Educational poverty has rightly been identified as a social plague of our time to be countered by a national strategy to face the challenge (Barbero Vignola et al., 2016), but avoiding the simplifications and methodological materialism that emphasizes the means and not the potentials available, investing on capacities. The national fund to fight against educational poverty has repositioned the challenge on the educational field, the privileged field to cultivate life, skills and not only needs. By its very nature, it is a generative environment of life, which makes its way through material and relational difficulties, while parents, teachers and other adults do not protect and promote enough.

These challenges are unequally distributed in our country and traditionally are thought to be in disadvantaged areas, thinking that the problem depends only on greater or lesser economic development. But greater economic development is not always synonymous with greater human development and greater protection of children. The international comparison describes a great contradiction: the rights of children are not in the first place in societies where aging and conflict between generations prevail.
Perspectives from comparing experiences

The international comparison provides us with some keys to understanding, starting with the epidemiological one concerning the condition of children in poverty. Joyce Ma analyzes the different conditions of poverty and helps us to understand how the 17.5% “poverty rate” takes on the profiles and concrete living conditions of different forms of child poverty, of large families, of single-parent families, of malnutrition, of children who do not have access to primary education and do not have access to early childhood services. They are taking place despite the Hong Kong government’s introduction of “universal free preschool” for all children. The map of poverty also considers the difficult access to health services, education, information, digital networks ... which are not opportunities but obstacles that separate children in poverty from the society in which they live. For this reason, the problem of educational poverty must be considered in its short and long term consequences, in the possibilities of study and work careers, in family paths and in the inequalities that characterize them. The major efforts to overcome these critical issues in Joyce Ma’s analysis are concentrated on the provision of services, expert accompaniment, inclusive pathways, and aid aimed at overcoming economic barriers, in particular to facilitate access to the educational offer and enrich the relational and social capital of each child. The leading idea is that educational poverty does not arise from a lack of parenting skills, but from the lack of the necessary and precious opportunities for children and parents.

The scenario of problems and possible strategies is no different in Australia, of which Elizabeth Fernandez describes the epidemiology and the efforts, institutional and professional, to combat inequalities and more specifically the behavioral disorders associated with difficult childhoods and long-term poverty. The differential between indigenous and non-indigenous people contributes to aggravate the conditions of deprivation that do not depend on lack of means but on unequal social citizenship. Also in this case the consequences are transformed into impoverished and suffering sociality from the first years of life, with Child Well Being deficits that can be estimated in the short and long term, at an economic and social level. The strategies put in place are a mixture of institutional and social efforts promoted by NGOs. Institutional attention is focused on aid to the neediest part of the population with 42% of aid going to the poorest 20%. It is not an easy result if we consider how far our country is from it (9% of public cash transfers going to the poorest 20% of the population). Moreover, it is not at all easy to adopt politically patient choices, that is, choices positioned beyond the exchange transfers/consensus. It is necessary to be aware of the challenge: to reduce the effects of poverty on the children and young people who live in this condition by intervening early on the food, cognitive and health disadvantages, that is, by opposing everything that can condemn them to long-term poverty. The synthesis is to offer “Learning for Live”, i.e. help and opportunities to get out of it and look to the future with the necessary confidence to succeed. But to do so, a different paradigm is needed to move “from answers to solutions”, bearing in mind that output has no value if it does not produce outcomes and costs are wasted if they do not produce lasting benefits. In particular, it is necessary to avoid transfers without services, which are the main source of systemic waste of the available potential. It can take place in a country that has confidence in its future, that faces the challenge of “Outcomes Based Accountability”, promoting a systematic exercise of responsibility on the outcomes for children and parents and on the effectiveness of their investments.

The experience proposed by Carme Montserrat is not only Spanish, since it is part of an international network of Well-Being monitoring, focused on the conditions of positive growth in many countries. The idea of being able to do this has had a long gestation, since the coordinator, Asher Ben-Arieh (2001), developed it and tested its feasibility at the Chapin Hall of Chicago University, an international meeting point for scholars working in different countries and disciplines interested in childhood and conditions of positive growth.
Carme Montserrat knows that it is not easy to talk about quality of life for those living in severe deprivation and therefore stresses the need to use material and immaterial criteria to talk about it, among them, the subjective well-being of children is of primary importance. It is not the same thing to feel loved or not loved while living with less than necessary, when everything becomes more precious and it is more natural to distinguish the useful from the necessary and the superfluous. It is an experience that acquires concrete, vital and direct dimensions, such as feeling loved, being and remaining in good health, living positively with the little available. In these experiences trust and hope do not make a difference but are the difference, especially for those who live the difficulties of exclusion and inequality, not feeling excluded but living the life-giving force of affections and of the little that seems enough. For this reason, development tasks are a compass for operating, by verifying if and how much they are addressed in life paths. It is seen in the game, when differences are reduced or amplified in relation to the abilities of each child. Also for this reason, in the fight against educational poverty, it is necessary to wisely balance the material and immaterial factors because together they bear fruit, preventing the material ones from institutionalizing children and parents within care pathways. The growth of inequalities is not an announced and unavoidable destiny if we take into account that the fight against poverty achieves the greatest results in the first few years of life. In short, from the comparative analysis on Well-Being a precious and strategic factor emerges, it is the sense of well-being and loving kindness that protects, reassures and encourages and, precisely for this reason, can be better valued in practices to combat child poverty. This is highlighted by Colette McAuley when, together with Wendy Rose, concludes “Rather than the pervasive negative images of parents living in poverty, these studies provided clear evidence of caring, responsible parents eager to give their children every opportunity possible and endeavoring to do the best they can for their families in these challenging circumstances” (Rose and McAuley, 2019).

It is a perspective that Marian Brandon and his colleagues push to existential limits, talking about vulnerable families, in some cases dangerous ones, where poor children are extremely so, because of educational deficiencies, insufficient attention, parental disabilities, conflicts and violence that they witness and in some cases suffer. For this reason, institutional care practices often separate them twice from the family: by removing them from their parents and by keeping them away from the abusing parent. It is reasonable when the risk is such as to make it necessary, but in some cases the marginalization of fathers can produce double damage, limiting the possibility that they can recover in paternity that is in the ability to live “a positive role in the lives of their children by learning to be more responsible towards them”. The problem is not only cultural but also technical and methodological, given that traditional professional practices operate in a surgical way in the problematic existential conditions, separating and transplanting the sick part to protect and heal it. But the excess of separation, without verifying the possibilities of reunification, does not allow “testing the fathers”, offering them the possibility to make a difference, to restart with their children, working on the disabilities that compromise the active parenting of both parents. As we said above, in these cases the problem of the fight against educational poverty is taken to existential limits, where hope is exhausted and does not seem to offer ways out, but precisely from these studies residual and fundamental possibilities are amplified to face the challenge on the relational, parental level and not only with the prevailing satisfaction of material needs. The main problem is to make room for life and not only preserve it from the risks that impoverish it.

From the international understanding of the problem, a significant figure emerges on a European scale, where the distribution of data on child poverty is consistent with the rates of early school leaving, i.e. in addition to the damage there is a greater effect represented by the worrying erosion of human and social

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12. According to Oecd, early childhood education and care services in Italy can contribute to reducing child poverty by 75% among the children who attend these services.
capital in the early years of life. For example, epidemiological data on the distribution of child poverty conditions in Spain are not very different from those in other developed countries (large families, single parents, parental unemployment, low schooling, migration...) and in general there is a critical relationship between low level of subjective well-being and difficult access to services, information, opportunities to improve their social status. The main criticalities are associated with family instability, unstable conditions, the place of life, school instability, relational instability, lack of free time and participation, intra-family conflicts. In essence, it is difficult to live in an unstable way, poor in certainties and loving relationships, it is a source of existential discomfort, of insufficient confidence to face the difficulty of growing.

The greatest possibilities are concentrated in the chance of considering simultaneously the material and immaterial factors of inequality and deprivation, to think differently about the nature and modalities of aid and conditions, effectiveness in the short, medium and long term, without confusing strategies to alleviate suffering with problem solutions. If the solutions are transfers, they are a source of methodological materialism that destroys large quantities of resources, not only in our country, without results and without counteracting the progressive and tragic increase in unequal child poverty\(^\text{13}\). Solutions are indeed something deeper and more demanding. They result from the possibility of fighting poverty with the poor, with their skills, with their well being. We need practices in “generative contribution to the result” that are realized in helping everyone to help themselves, i.e. with generative practices of human, social and economic value (Fondazione Zancan, 2014). Simmel had anticipated this over 100 years ago with the distinction between Gesellschaft (society) and Gemeinschaft (community), noting that the institutions assist the poor and the community helps them\(^\text{14}\). It is also the possibility that emerges from the dichotomies used by Marie Connolly Cinzia Canali and Marzia Sica to describe the positioning of effective action between the individual/society in formal/informal spaces of action.

Anat Zeira summarizes the meaning of this research and how to deal with problems by putting the reasons of effectiveness before those of giving undifferentiated help. It is the sense of a responsible knowledge that necessarily asks itself how to really help, in a beneficial sense, avoiding the approaches interested in the pathological anatomy of the problems, deluding itself that this cannot be enough to solve them. Unfortunately, this is not the case, especially with poor children and young people exposed to the risks of emotional and mental deprivation, violence at home and outside ... that is, to forms of poverty made up of lack of means, humanity and hope. The action programs described by Anat Zeira are made up of professional and therapeutic practices, not by mere welfare interventions, bearing in mind the fundamental question: how to use what we do and how effective are our interventions? It means adopting a double positioning, ethical and strategic, for professional action and it means reasoning by outcomes and not only by services, questioning the exercise of responsibilities and the finalization of the resources used. Poverty is not a threshold, a criterion of inclusion/exclusion to give/not give available aid, it is an existential condition of suffering to be alleviated and reduced, with measurable benefits, without being satisfied with practices that only reduce damage. The challenge is in fact greater and has to do with different types of outcomes to be achieved. The author describes the methodological steps needed to envisage measurable outcomes and share them, to do research and practice together. For this reason, it questions the collection of data that do not meet the challenge, that accumulate knowledge but unable to define the problem and measure the results. It reminds us that “Knowledge is a vehicle for making social change” and that every effort to measure and evaluate the results favors greater appropriateness in the choices and practices to realize them, that is a more responsible use of the available resources. Finally, she points out that the possibility of sharing positive

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\(^{13}\) The percentage of children in absolute poverty in Italy dramatically increased from 3.7% in 2008 to 12.6% in 2018.

results is also a way for spreading trust, feeding responsibilities, learning from mistakes without repeating them, opening up new paths for research.

It is the sense of dialogue that we document here between different cultures and approaches, so as not to treat poor children as a residual category, a social damage or a welfare practice. The comparison, in the final part of this collection, focuses on Italy, starting from the practices of the national fund to combat child poverty and, even before, from the choices of a group of foundations that have prepared and made it possible. The turning point was the joint work during the Tfiey (Transatlantic Forum for Inclusive Early Years). It started as a transatlantic and European forum and, along the way, has also become a national collaborative path. It turned out to be a real feasibility test, which indicated the possibility of agreed practices at national level, to make the fight against child exclusion and poverty a national priority and not just a necessary action at local level. In this way, it has been possible to better address what the foundations are used to require of those who receive targeted funding: reporting on the exercise of responsibilities during its use, documenting the results achieved, representing them in terms of outcomes for beneficiaries integrated with measures of social impact. The question is not insignificant as it concerns current activities resulting from best practices to be consolidated and it also concerns innovative activities called upon to move from simple ideas to the evaluation of their feasibility and social return. In both cases, the problem concerns the fruits, their measurement, the benefits for the beneficiaries and its communities. The need to invest in outcome and social impact evaluation arises from these questions and from these potentials.

From outcome to impact evaluation

We have seen that outcome evaluation is the focal point and the most critical issue to optimize the exercise of responsibilities. The outcome prognosis anticipates the possible good, prefigures it and puts it to the tests for its achievement. The next step is to understand how the good for the recipients can go beyond, extend to their living space, become good for the community, transforming itself into a social impact. The difference between outcome and impact considers the extension from the person to the community. It is not an easy step, as it became evident in an international seminar in Oxford on the topic: “Evaluating Change Over Time” (13-15.7.2009)

of human and economic value for the communities. On a technical level, it focuses on differences over time and communicates them in a transparent way. It is not therefore a proxy practice, approximate approach, satisfied with the opinions of the beneficiaries and / or other stakeholders. It is not satisfaction but realization, it is not marketing and storytelling, but measurement with independent indices and reliable metrics to ensure confidence in the results of social investment (Social Impact Investment Task Force, 2014; Vecchiato, 2016).

Fig. 1 – Related value-transforming systems

In fig. 1 the value-transforming systems are described in two phases related to each other. The first is the classic one, where the focus is on resources and strategies to optimize their use and performance. The second is focused on benefits and in particular on the transition between outcome and impact. Together they describe the passage from the transformation of value towards its humanization, that is the passage from the government of the means to be used towards the capacities and benefits to be shared on a specific scale (the outcome for the beneficiaries) and on a wider, social scale (the benefit for the community).

After a season in which efforts have been directed towards the standardization of impact measures, the comparison between countries and evaluation centers has highlighted the need to avoid unjustified simplifications, so that the indices used are consistent with problems, conditions and strategies. A promising approach is the GIA (Generative Impact Assessment) method because it allows to measure the generativity that is distributed between the outcome and the social impact achieved. Generativity is a measure of “contribution to the result” that does not depend on who carries out the project actions but on the beneficiaries, therefore it is a precious value because it is achieved “with the people” who experience the problems. It provides evaluation of the surplus achieved through generative practices. The outcome and impact indices obtained can thus be managed by parallel comparisons (horizontal benchmark) and longitudinal comparisons (performance spread over time) using alpha, beta and gamma indices (Fig. 2). In Figure 2, they are described in progression to isolate advantages of a different nature, thanks to interventions (alpha), relationships (beta) and the “contribution to the result” (gamma) provided by the beneficiaries, who are vulnerable, fragile but possess original and precious abilities that can multiply the value of the social impact achieved.

In the evaluation model proposed by Fondazione Zancan, the metrics, as mentioned above, use alpha-type indices (the direct outcome of the actions carried out), beta-type indices (the additional outcome of the personalization of the service for the benefit of the beneficiaries), gamma-type indices (the additional value made possible by the “contribution to the social outcome” of those who are concerned). The latter is technically “generative impact” because it does not depend on the quantity and quality of the resources provided as input but on the “contribution to the result” from the person to the community. It is a multiplier
of value, recognizable in the progression that goes from the “production of value” to its “socialization” because:

- it gives a picture of the current and subsequent skills, foreshadows the margins available for performances of existential interest (specific outcomes) and socio-economic interest;
- it describes the effects in terms of output (final results) and throughput (intermediate results);
- it describes the specific and overall sustainability of the action;
- it describes how much the choices made have been able to fructify and their return for people, the environment and sociality.

**Fig. 2 – Generative progression of value**

**Conclusions and perspectives**

The comparison among countries and stakeholders has enabled us to gather ideas, solutions and perspectives. They show us the way to follow for the benefit of the great work aimed at fighting educational poverty. If well carried out, it can produce positive results and represent a point of historical discontinuity in our country, necessary to move from “inconclusive planners” to strategic and patient investments, finalized and generative of trust and value for the new generations.

They are absolutely necessary for our country, starting from the exercise of responsibilities and going beyond the proper administration of resources. It is a necessary change of perspective to move from the logic of means to that of ends. Both are important but, without contributions of responsibility and capability, without integration between rights and duties, the return on investment does not become profitable, fruitful and generative. These are three necessary conditions to measure outcomes and impacts, to obtain real benefit indices for those most in need and for communities more capable of cultivating life (Thiey, 2016). If evaluation documents the increase of value and the ability to socialize it, it provides valuable “good” on a technical and ethical level, highlighting in a transparent way how much the beneficiaries have contributed to tackling the problems and overcoming them. Their input is generative, additional in terms of capacity and value, which are both fundamental. It is essential for the great work that we are experiencing and carrying out in construction sites where the logistics of means is transformed into “logistics of capacities”, that is, into a systemic environment that generates opportunities and value for the new generations.
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