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Developing a Creative Learning Format for Street Children

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Developing a Creative Learning Format for Street Children
by

Shazina Masud

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2019

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT

Developing a Creative Learning Format for Street Children

As the number of street children grow globally, governments and UN agencies are looking at solutions to cater to their needs of shelter, health and safety. Efforts to provide formal education to street children are not always successful. This project hypothesizes that equipping these children with essential knowledge in an informal but creative learning environment will allow them to live safe and productive lives. The prototype of the creative learning format is based on approaches and tools that have worked with children in other settings and has been modified for street children. The focus is on igniting the curiosity and creativity of street children to encouraging learning. The key element of the model is the learning environment which is a Mobile Learning system which brings learning to the location of the street children through a low cost mobile unit with a trained operator. The setting of the prototype is Karachi, Pakistan and the elements of the learning environment, the content and the tools have been designed to suit this context.



Your Signature

May 8, 2019

Date

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

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Dates of Approval:

May 8, 2019



Dr. Susan Keller Mathers
Associate Professor

May 8, 2019



Shazina Masud
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Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project (Developing a creative learning format for street children) as an online resource.

Shazina Masud

Name

May 8, 2019

Date

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my family and friends who knowingly or unknowingly supported me in completing this project.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Project Purpose and Description

The best invention in the world is the mind of a child – Thomas Edison

Children are adults of the future and those who will shape the world for us and for themselves. A sizeable population of children especially in the third world developing countries are not living in family structures or homes that are safe and nurturing for a variety of reasons and spend their lives on the street. Even though the definition below is a summarization of literature on Street Children by the researchers, it conveys the children's status in relation to the space that they inhabit:

Street Children are broadly categorized into two main groups – children who work on the street but who maintain family ties and return home to sleep and those with limited family ties that end up spending most of their days and nights in the street. (Abdullah et al., 2014, p.1)

Since street children are not tied to a strong family structure or at least not a family that has sufficient resources, their health, nutrition and education needs get overlooked. Most of the countries where street children are in high numbers are themselves resource strapped and cannot extend State services to this marginalized group.

After famine, perhaps no other global child welfare problem is as significant as the loss of human potential experienced by millions of children who are being reared outside the institutions of family and education in the often perilous street environment. (Lusk, 1989, p.55)

The reasons for the ever-increasing number of street children are manifold, ranging from lack of economic resources, migration, kidnapping, running away from home, addiction to violence including civil war etc. This makes these children extremely vulnerable to the elements which harm them and their peers and their propensity towards negative behaviors and potential for unemployment also increases. The problem is considered serious enough not only for affected city administrations and countries who attempt to counter this trend by mainstreaming the street children into healthier and productive spaces and activities but global agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO and their international partners have also been working to address this situation. However, from the preliminary research that I have done and the initiatives that I have seen being implemented within Karachi, Pakistan for these children, it seems that the approach has been limited to modifying the basic school model to suit the special circumstances of the street children – e.g. an open air “school” instead of one in a building; donation of books and materials rather than expecting the children to buy them; encouraging with free meals as incentive etc. While the street children initially seem attracted to these options, they drop out within weeks or a couple of months, and do not get the full benefit of an educational curriculum that normally spans many years. Thus, the limited time that they spend in such programs does not equip them for their future life and the “lessons” are soon forgotten. In Karachi, most of the initiatives to educate or support street children have been started by volunteers, philanthropists and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) rather than the state itself. Not surprisingly therefore, because of limited resources, these programs are neither scalable nor sustainable. Another gap of the on-going programs seems to be that little effort has been made to view the issue from the street children’s point of view to determine what they want to learn, how they want to learn and

where and when they want to learn, which could be the key to creating impact and ensuring sustainability.

My Master's project will focus primarily on the Pakistan context; the demographics, circumstances and the challenges of street children in this country. I will study the efforts that have been made in imparting learning, including basic education to this vulnerable group of children in Pakistan. Karachi, where I reside, is the most populous and urbanized city of the country, with a population of approximately 20 million and a per capita income of \$1513; it also has the highest number of street children in the country (Arifeen, 2017). The project will focus on street children, of ages ranging between 6 years to 12 years, so that focused recommendations for the learning environment, content and mode of delivery, can be made.

In the Master's project I will design a contextually relevant format for a series of "learning" activities that would creatively engage street-kids and empower them to lead a safe, enriching life, without having to be part of a structured environment like a classroom with specified hours for attending the sessions and a need for educational supplies. The proposed learning format, including suggested tools (generally described) would allow maximum flexibility to the street children to be part of the learning activity and would also be fun. The format's main goal would be to imbue the street children with a sense of curiosity, to be able to think creatively and "learn" organically as their environment permits and to bring them joy. The format is not being suggested as an alternative to education, rather as a precursor to it or a stop gap / lifesaving skill for those street children who have no option or resources to pursue even basic education, at the current point in time. The tools that will be suggested for this learning environment, will need to be administered by trained people in non-formal settings, however the trained persons will be part of the street children's environment rather than formal teachers. The

project will also attempt to suggest who these trained people will be and the possible non-formal venues where the street children can be approached. Since interviewing and consulting street children, who should ideally be the ones to indicate their preference would require IRB¹ clearance which would take more time than what is available for the completion of the Master's project, both the learning format and the tools and other details will be limited to suggestions.

The recommended design of the learning format would be based on an extensive review of global studies with a view to understanding the phenomenon of street children. The project will thus rely on a review of research and literature on how countries with a high incidence of street children have been addressing the issue of empowering these children to improve their lives through learning. A qualitative assessment of the efforts and approaches that have worked and those that haven't been effective will be carried out. I will also study the informal educational tools that have been effective when used with young children and suggest how they can be modified for the street children.

Tangible Product or Outcome of the Project

The outcome of the Master's project will be a research-based report where I will be using my own perspective and skills as a creative thinker to suggest a number of recommendations that would form the basis of piloting an initiative for this segment of children on a "learning format". The recommendations will broadly detail the approach, timing and occasion for the initiative, as well as a selection of tools etc. The Master's project however will just lay the theoretical foundation of the learning model. It will be carried forward later with proper supervision and permissions, by conducting a pilot that involves street children to gauge whether they themselves

¹ The Institutional Review Board (**IRB**) is an administrative body established to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of the institution with which it is affiliated. IRB clearance can take up to 2-3 months in some cases.

will be receptive to the format and tools etc. This phased roll-out is necessary considering the vulnerability of street children and to respect both their physical and psychological safety.

A secondary but critical output of the project will be to present a more nuanced and insightful description of the term “street children” which encompasses developments in theoretical studies and the practical realities of those children who seem to fit this appellation.

Personal Learning Goals

I will be using the updated version of Bloom’s Taxonomy, developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) to organize my project development process through the six levels that he has set out. The six levels are: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. In this way I will be able to apply and further develop my creative thinking skills. My second source of guidance for creative thinking will be the teachings of Dr. Gerard Puccio, Dr. Roger Firestein and Dr. John Cabra. Specifically, I will be referencing Creativity Rising (Puccio, Mance, Switalski & Reali, 2012) for designing the creative problem solving approach and tools that will form an integral part of the learning environment. This will go a long way towards my goal to internalize creative thinking both in my professional and personal life and will give me the confidence of using creative problem solving and creative thinking to other spheres of my life and also cascade it down within my organization and my cohort of family and friends. I will also be able to link my experience of working in the development sector with this project and see if I am able to transition from women’s health, where I have contributed over the last decade and use my skills for project development to understand and develop a strategy to address the learning needs of a very distinct, vulnerable segment of society.

Project Rationale

A life changing emotion that I felt around twenty years ago was the unexpected kick to my heart when I first laid eyes on my nephew, after an hour of him being born – stark naked on his stomach under a big lamp with eyes wide open, that brought tears to my eyes. As a single person with no children, I had never expected to feel such immense love for a child as I did when I held that little human. This helped me understand the strong bond that exists between a mother and child, between parents and their children and between families. I have witnessed how ensuring that these familial bonds stay strong, positive and nurturing help in the development of the personality of a child – more than expensive toys, money and even a higher level education. I view all young children to be the same as my nephews and niece – that they need that loving, nurturing bond in their early years to build their personalities and set them up for adulthood, just as they need basic sustenance and nutrition.

A significant group of children who are deprived of this basic family structure that would nurture their personalities are street children. I see street children every day of my life in Karachi, present both in what are considered as “posh” areas and in lower income localities. They are selling toys at street corners, cleaning wind shields of cars when they stop at a traffic light, working as assistants to car mechanics on the street side, serving customers at street side tea stalls and restaurants or just begging. These are beautiful, innocent human beings who have a long life ahead of them with no one to guide them, no one to nurture their minds and their personalities so they can lead happy, healthy and productive lives and break this cycle of deprivation. More tragically, they seem to be missing out on their childhood. Despite this, what is also fascinating about these children is their capacity to have fun and look happy in their

current circumstances. I want to be able to harness this capacity of theirs in a meaningful way that would add value to them and go some way towards building their lives positively.

Once the learning environment and the tools have been tested through a pilot, the expectation is that it will be scaled up either through development funds, philanthropists or the state itself. When that happens, the benefits of equipping street children with the ability to learn from their environment, to be able to safe guard themselves from negative influences which affect them both physically and psychologically, could lead to significant individual and societal benefits resulting not only in happier lives for the street children but economies for the city administration in terms of finances spent in rehabilitating this group of children when they acquire the status of adults.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Since the purpose of this project is to gain a deep insight specifically into the phenomenon of street children and its progression over time, the literature review explored three main areas. The first was the need to understand the nature of street children and how they are regarded by governments and development program implementers globally and for this I reviewed research and articles on the phenomenon of street children from Latin America to Asia (Bademci & Karadayi, 2014; Epstein, 1996; Rizzina & Lusk, 1995; Zarazadeh, 2013). Even though the issue of street children had been raised soon after World War II on a global level and many studies have been conducted by various UN agencies like United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_23757.html) and UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/children/study/pages/childrenonthestreet.aspx>), and by thought leaders such as Mark W. Lusk (1989, 1995) and Catherine Panter-Brick (2002), there has been very limited recent research on this group of children. One reason is perhaps the move “not to demarcate street children so radically from other poor children in urban centers” (Panter-Brick, 2002, p. 148). This was also critical to understanding and redefining the concept of street children. The second area of focus was to see the initiatives that were taken to address the challenges of street children to improve their lives in terms of leading a more enriched life. While my focus was not education per se, most of the studies that have been conducted on vulnerable, talented children including street children have been centered either on providing education in informal settings or bringing back drop outs to formal schooling. These proved very useful from the perspective of understanding the learning challenges of both the vulnerable children and the education system in different countries while highlighting what efforts did bring

about some positive change. Ken McCluskey's series of papers on the *Lost Prizes* project (McCluskey, Noller, Lamoureux & McCluskey, 2004; McCluskey, Baker & McCluskey, 2005) along with trials conducted in Turkey, Iran and India (Tiwari, 2007; Saini & Vakil, 2012; (Zarazadeh, 2013; Bademci & Karadayi, 2014) were very useful in this. The third area of review was to look at creative products, content material and approaches that had been tried in other settings and to modulate them to the context of street children in Karachi, Pakistan for informal learning. The most useful information in this area came from the approach adopted by Sugata Mitra (2017) in his *Hole in the Wall* project as well as Ken McCluskey et al.'s (2004), adoption of mentoring in the *Lost Prizes* project. While I have mentioned Mitra's TED video from 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk60sYrU2RU> in the bibliography below because it is the most comprehensive, in fact there is a whole series of them available on the internet dating back from 2010 when the first *Hole in the Wall* experiment started.

I also took extensive guidance from *Creativity Rising* (Puccio, Mance, Switalski & Reali, 2012) for imbuing a creative approach not only in designing the proposed project but with the intention of introducing an adapted version of Creative Problem Solving (CPS) for the protagonists of this project. In conjunction I also used *The Accelerated Learning Handbook* by Dave Meier (2000) for designing my tools for the informal learning environment. The selected Bibliography listed below, though a bit extensive is key to my learning for developing the Master's project.

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Other Resources

In addition to the review of the literature, I will also be meeting relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and attend different informal activities in Karachi conducted primarily by volunteers and philanthropists in educating street kids to understand their approach, their

successes and challenges. I will be informally talking to the organizers to gain some insights on their perception of the profile and needs of the street children and their experiences in interacting with street children. Some of these organizations are:

- Initiator Human Development Foundation (IHDF): Started by a brother and sister duo on an empty plot of land for schooling poor children, including street children.
- Citizen's Education Development Foundation (CEDF): An innovative educational program that attempts to educate the poorest of the poor children living in shanty towns of Karachi.
- Zindagi Trust: A non-profit organization that is working to improve the quality of education in Pakistan and encompasses education of working children as part of its goal. The school system that has been developed focuses on arts, sports and more importantly health and abuse awareness workshops which will help in the development of similar material for implementation in a non-formal setting, as part of my Master's project.

My sounding-board buddies Rumman Ahmad and Mary Clark, the course advisor Dr. Susan Keller-Mather along with my course cohort will also be a source for exchanging ideas through discussions as I develop and finetune the final outputs of the project.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

The project will take place during 2019 Spring academic semester between February to May 2019. I will be conducting my primary and secondary research based in Karachi, Pakistan where I am currently residing.

The foundation of my project will be based on a fairly comprehensive study of the literature on street kids which encompasses global learning and also that which is specific to Pakistan. This will be the first phase of my work plan and the bulk of the review is expected to last through the month of February till the time Sections 1-3 are submitted. The literature review during this month is largely going to determine the approach that I will adopt for the project.

Phase two of my project will cover the period between mid-March and the first week of April 2019. During this time, I will focus on creative thinking processes to develop a prototype of the learning environment and the tools for the street children. This is the time I will be more actively engaging with stakeholders, primarily the CSOs listed in Section 2, for their inputs on their experience with street children and also testing my ideas with them.

Phase three of the Master's project spanning approximately the last three weeks of April will be devoted to fine tuning the details of the learning environment and the tools and documenting the outcome, learnings and conclusions for finalizing the Master's project report itself on this topic.

Project Timeline

Phase	Period	Activity	Estimated Hours
I	Feb 11 th - Feb 24 th	Review the literature and meet at least one CSO and finalize the Concept note	10 Hours
	Feb 25 th – Mar 2 nd	Continue review of studies on street children and creative problem solving approaches in non-formal settings. Meet one CSO.	20 Hours
	Mar 3 rd to Mar 11 th	Write and finalize section 1-3 of the Master's project paper	24 Hours
II	Mar 12 th to Mar 30 th	Synthesize learning from the two main areas and start formulating recommendations	48 Hours
	Mar 31 st – Apr 4 th	Develop and formulate the Learning format and tools.	12 Hours
III	Apr 4 th – Apr 29 th	Prepare presentation for CSOs and present to at least one of them for feedback. Fine tune learnings and recommendations and complete the Master's project paper.	36 Hours

Evaluation Plan

In order to evaluate my project, I plan to present it to at least two civil society organizations from Citizen's Education Development Foundation (CEDF), Initiator Human Development Foundation (IHDF) and Zindagi Trust, who it seems would have some

understanding of the dynamics of street children in Karachi, even though it is not the group of children that they actively engage with. During the course of the Master's project, I will also be sharing my approach with my sounding board partners and my cohort. I will request assessment from both these groups of the viability of my recommendations. If they find the approach to be creative as well as practicable, then I will consider the project to have achieved its purpose.

Criteria to Measure the Effectiveness of the Achievement

Since the output of the project is a report with a set of recommendations, the effectiveness of the project will be assessed by the completeness of the report. If I am able to clearly enunciate the challenge, define my vision and recommend solutions in the report based on some creative, original ideas which can be defended when presenting to relevant stakeholders then I will consider the output as effective.

Importantly, my own learning from this project is also a major goal. If I feel confident that I have exhaustively researched the issue and my conclusions are drawn from a position of reliable knowledge, then I will consider the output to have been a success.

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

This Master's project has two outputs, the primary is to suggest a creative learning format for street children consisting of an overview of the learning environment and learning tools to be used for developing life skills of these children and imbuing them with curiosity. The second but more foundational is modulating a nuanced description of "Street Children". I will start with the secondary outcome as the classification of this group of children directly impacts the solution that has been developed for a creative learning environment for these children.

Definition of Street Children

Background

According to latest estimates there are 25 million out of school children in Pakistan while 1.5 million children are homeless, most of them concentrated in urban cities. According to a news report ("UNHCR to rehabilitate street children in Karachi", 2017) there are 30,000 to 50,000 homeless children in Karachi which is 0.25% of the city's total population. While this may sound a small percentage for a city of nearly twenty million people, it is precisely the huge number of people with its related issues like lack of housing, basic utilities, educational and health facilities, excessive traffic, pollution, crime and insufficient security coverage that makes the street children's lives so vulnerable. The political government of the province, recognizing the problem of the growing number of street children has banned beggary and plan to create shelters for the rehabilitation of street children. However, without a detailed plan or budget for these actions and a complete understanding of the reasons for the children being on the streets, some of whom live there with their siblings and extended family, it is unlikely that there will be any significant progress in this area in the foreseeable future. Sociologist J.F. Longres (1981), emphasizes that – "the ways in which a social problem is defined by a constituency will be a major factor in determining the policies and programs which are designed to address the

problem” (as cited in Lusk, 1989, p. 56). Thus, the definition of Street Children and the perspective that the government and the civil society take to address the social phenomenon of “street children” becomes really significant. Fortunately, extensive research has been done on the phenomenon of street children in Latin America, Africa and Asia which allows for drawing parallels to the Pakistan context and accelerating the process of developing a strategy to improve their condition and arrest the number of street children from continuing to grow.

Critique of the appellation “Street Children”

An extensive review of literature on street children reveals that many different appellations were given to this group of children in different countries, at different times. The most well-known and persecuted of which were the *gamin* in Bogota, Columbia and *tigueres* in Brazil (Lusk, 1989). Most of these street children while spending the majority of their time in the street did maintain ties with their families, some even close ties to the extent that they did not sleep in the streets. Those children who did sleep in the street were either abandoned by their families, had homes too far away from where they were earning their living to make it feasible to return home every day or had found interim shelters like vacant buildings or rehab centers to shelter at night. These children faced extreme hardships in the 1980s including sex abuse, police brutality, coercion to be part of criminal gangs and murder.

In her critique of the literature and approaches towards street children in developing countries Catherine Panter-Brick (2002) remarks that “the term street children itself has almost disappeared from the welfare and analytical literature”, though children are still seen on the street. The term, according to her “obscures heterogeneity” of the children; does not correctly portray the movement of these children; the term itself is “pejorative” and it excludes other children who face similar conditions e.g. poverty, deprivation etc. Most of her criticisms are

sound as can be seen in Appendix A, a table compiled by Wernham, M., Geerinckx, S. & Jackson, E. (2005) as part of a manual for Police Training on Child Rights & Child Protection adopted by UNICEF. The table lists the factors that cause children to turn to the streets ranging from poverty, to migration to social discrimination. The problems that these children face are physical, psychological and social which mold their character over time and manifest in a range of behaviors that are largely viewed as disruptive and negative in society.

UN framework of Street Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. Later in December 1994, expanding on this resolution the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution 49/212 on the plight of street children, (<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49r212.htm>), expressing concern on the growing number of street children and the killing and violence against them. The resolution entreated governments and civil society to go beyond legislation and to tackle the problems of street children and to take measures to “restore their full participation in society, and to provide, inter alia, adequate nutrition, shelter, health care and education”.

UNICEF has established a definition of street children which is quoted widely, (Lusk, 1989; Panter-Brick 2002; Rizzini et al. 1995; Saini et al. 2001; Zarezadeh, 2013) that highlights a distinction between children *in* the street and children *of* the street. Children *in* the street are primarily those who work on the street as young entrepreneurs trying to earn an income through selling small objects or providing services but maintain contact with their families and return home at night. Conversely, for children *of* the street, the street is their home, they have no other abode because they have either been abandoned, are orphans or have run away from home.

While this definition is currently widely accepted by sociologists and researchers alike, and has been adopted for this Master's project, as explained earlier some researchers including Panter-Brick (2002) find the distinction to be too simplistic.

Creative Learning Format

Vincent Ruggiero defined thinking as “any mental activity that helps formulate or solve a problem, make a decision, or fulfill a desire to understand. It is a search for answers, a reaching for meaning.” (Ruggiero, 2007, p.4). It is this type of intellectual thinking that is purposeful and directed towards solution that is essential for survival by those who, because of their circumstances and lack of resources are faced by adversary and challenges on a daily basis. Dave Meier's (2000) approach of intellectual learning seems to be a corollary of Ruggiero's definition giving it a practical form:

The word Intellectual indicates what learners do in their minds internally as they exercise their intelligence to reflect on experience and to create connections, meanings, plans and values out of it. It's the creating, problem-solving and meaning-building part of a person. (Meier, 2000, p.49)

In the case of street children, their vulnerability is amplified because of their youth and the necessity to take on the mantle and responsibilities of adulthood very early in their life. The proposed learning format is designed primarily to encourage and motivate street children to develop their “thinking” skills that would help them move beyond the interactions resulting from this intervention to develop their own solutions in response to their daily challenges and improve the quality of their life. The proposed format defines a learning environment for the street children as well as learning tools that would be made available and, in some cases, administered through trained facilitators.

Learning Environment

The learning environment will ensure that it is firstly flexible and mobile and secondly, safe for the street children and that it does not expose them to any negative effect as an aftermath of the training activity.

Flexibility and mobility

Flexibility in terms of time and place where the learning will take place in order to ensure that street children would actually be able to access the learning opportunity, without having to worry about transportation or of inappropriate timing that would affect their activities related to earning money. Mobility in terms of the learning environment to move around the city and provide coverage to as many street children groups within a day as possible.

In order to ensure this a mobile setting is being proposed around the street children where they normally work. This will be done initially by equipping two auto rickshaws (Illustrative pictures - Appendix B) with the learning tools and equipment which will be driven to where the children congregate, whether this is in a street where there are mechanic shops and the boys work there or small tea shops and restaurants where the children are involved in tea making and cleaning jobs or around traffic lights where both young girls and boys try to earn their living by cleaning wind shields of cars, selling balloons, toys and flowers etc. The rickshaw is a three wheel vehicle, with a small engine, using Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) mostly driven in South Asia for relatively short distance travel. Rickshaws operate in urban centers of Pakistan and are rented or hailed by people who do not have their own conveyance and want to move from one place to another. It has capacity for seating three people in the back on a bench-seat and the driver typically sits alone in the front compartment. The body of the rickshaw is part metal and part canvas and in most cases is heavily decorated. Because of its size a rickshaw can

enter narrow streets and also park in tight spaces. In rare cases rickshaws are also used just for transporting goods from one place to another, as long as the cargo is not very heavy or too voluminous, as it can affect the balance of the vehicle. In short, rickshaws are an economical mode of transport, have the ability to reach deep into heavily populated areas, are familiar to the community and have enough space to accommodate equipment and also offer seating for two to one or one to one interaction, if required. Rickshaws have been used for purposes for social work previously as well, so communities generally are not suspicious of them.

The Mobile Learning Service (MLS) will go to previously mapped locations where 3-5 street children congregate on a daily basis. The mobility of the learning service will not only be in terms of bringing the learning to the street children physically, it will also ensure that the timing of the arrival of the MLS as well as the duration it stays at a particular location is suited to the routine of the street children and is flexible in the sense that some days it can be at a particular location in the morning time and at others in the afternoon or evening, if that is the need of a particular group of children. As the core idea of this learning format is to engage children intellectually and to pique their curiosity, the duration of the intervention can vary from 15 minutes for a particular session to a maximum of one hour. The “class room” is envisaged to be the place where the children are – it can be the pavement around the traffic light where the children can use / play with the tools that are provided including using chalk or paint to draw their creations; the back room or the outdoor sitting area of the tea room or the mechanic workshop where the street kids work, using the walls – which are normally unpainted or shabby, to paint and draw, when that activity takes place.

The MLS will be operated / driven by a person (male or female) trained in communicating with the street children, using the learning tools where required and collecting

basic data and information related to the activities, that would ensure that there is continuity in interacting with the same cohort of street children for a sustained period of time and the changes in their learning capacity and behavior can also be analyzed to ensure that there is progress and if any change is required in the tools / manner of providing the learning, then it can be done in time.

Safety and security

Primary consideration for the safe environment of street children is physical security in terms of location where the learning activity will take place. This includes the area that is selected for delivering the training, safety from the traffic (buses, cars etc.) plying in the area, electric wires and poles and other obstructions in the shape of semi-finished buildings, debris etc. Protocols for selecting a safe place for carrying out the training will be defined for the MLS.

Secondary consideration for the safe environment of street children is to ensure is safety from other people around the street children including from the team that administers the training, people that the street children associate with in their routine interactions in the street and as part of their “family”, as well as guardians and the older street children who would not be part of this intervention. This is to ensure the psychologically safe and do not suffer mental or physical abuse. Street children are typically not registered at birth and as a first step, each child will have to be enrolled in the MLS program and their details like name, age and some infographics related to their interest, their aspiration and their challenges will be taken and recorded electronically. In addition, some details of those whom they are closely connected in their immediate circle will also be taken to determine who are the formal or informal influencers in the child’s life. This can be more than one person. Once this determination is made then an initial conversation between the MLS operator and the influencer(s) will take place, in which the

MLS operator will outline the purpose of the intervention and its modalities so that there can be support from the “Influencer” for the street child who is enrolled. This will be essential as parents and guardians depend on the earnings of their children and if there is any indication that someone is trying to stop their children from earning, then these parents and guardians could present the biggest obstruction to the whole intervention.

The second group of people who will be identified and sensitized will be those who are not directly connected to the child but are regularly present in their environment. These are policemen, shopkeepers and small business owners and in some localities residents whose houses are close to where the street children are based. A group orientation for these community people will be held giving an overview of the MLS intervention including the expected outcomes of the learning initiative.

In order to provide an option for the child to access help both for personal safety and for general guidance, a couple of phone booths (example at Appendix C) at child height will be strategically installed in the area where the intervention is taking place. This phone booth will be connected to a 24/7 call center that is currently operational in Karachi and which handles general medicine queries and offers counseling for psychological disorders. The service is provided by Aman Health Care Services (AHCS) and a short code 9123 is promoted nationally to users who can call this number from their phones to get free and immediate diagnostic advice.

[\(https://www.theamanfoundation.org/program/aman-telehealth/\)](https://www.theamanfoundation.org/program/aman-telehealth/). The trained nurses at the call center give solutions to callers that can be treated through over-the-counter (OTC) medicines or referrals to doctors and medical centers for more complicated cases. The call center is also connected to the only Emergency Medical Care Service (EMS) in the city. The operators at this call center are already trained in counseling on Life Skills for adolescents and young children

and they will be given additional training and information about the MLS initiative and also the landmarks and facilities available in the area where the MLS intervention is happening. Once the child picks up the phone, s/he will be directly connected to the call center, without having to dial a number or make any payment. The call center operator asks some basic questions of the caller in order to register them and then responds to the query. The street children will thus have access to a trained, adult medically qualified person not only to respond to their medical and psychological issues, without any cost, but will also be able to ask for help in case there is physical danger to the children, in which case the call center will connect them to the relevant law enforcement agency, or ask questions related to the area which the call center can respond to on the basis of the on-line maps available to them.

A helpline service was launched by one of Pakistan's major mobile telephone services – Telenor in collaboration with Child Helpline International as part of its global effort towards helping children deal with cyber bullying and helping children stay safe on-line through providing support from trained child counselors (<https://www.3gca.org/child-helpline-international-telenor-team-help-children-pakistan-stay-safe-online/>). While this service helps to give an example of how to engage with children through a helpline and resolve their most pressing issue regarding their own fears and safety, it does not reach to children who would not have access to phones and internet and the ability to pay for the call. Telenor also worked with a local non-profit organization, Initiator Human Development Fund (IHDF) on a pilot to provide support to poor and uneducated men, women and children through a helpline called “Meri Helpline” which literally translated means “My Helpline” (<https://www.initiator.org/#/project/1>). However, its effectiveness in actually reaching out to the children and resolving their issues has not been measured so far.

Learning Tools

The foundation for the learning tools and the content of the learning modules being described in this section is based on the principles of creative thinking skills that would encourage the street children to adopt “thinking” as defined by Ruggiero (2007). In order to incorporate creative thinking both divergent and convergent thinking skills will be incorporated throughout. To paraphrase, “divergent thinking is defined as a broad search for many diverse and novel alternatives” where the mind is allowed to stretch and explore all possibilities without judgement while convergent thinking is a “focused and affirmative evaluation of novel alternatives” which allows for analytical thinking and helps to narrow down the options to “bring order and to make sense” (Puccio et al., 2012, p. 46). The tools will allow for a thinking process that encourages the “dynamic balance” of divergent and convergent thinking for each key MLS module so that the street children are able to acquire the skills of creative thinking by practicing them enough during the six month period, to apply it situations that confront them later in life.

The learning tools will cover a range of activities and levels, the application of which will be defined by the age, background and interests of the street children. Each group of street children may comprise of children belonging to a range of ages, from both genders and varying interests. An intervention with one cohort is planned for a six month period with thrice weekly encounters which is a total of 72 interactions of 15 to 45 minutes between the MLS and the cohort.

The learning tools have been conceptualized based on Meier’s (2000) Activity-Based Learning (ABL) using the SAVI approach. The acronym stands for Somatic - Learning by moving and doing; Auditory - Learning by talking and hearing; Visual – Learning by observing

and picturing and Intellectual – Learning by problem solving and reflecting. The SAVI learning approach advocates utilizing all four senses and practically one's entire body for learning. This approach is particularly appropriate for young learners as it "awakens the body, improves circulation to the brain, and can have a positive impact on learning" (Meier, 2000, p.41). Therefore, it suits the nature of children who generally find it difficult to sit in one place for a long time. As will be noted later in this section nearly all the tools being used in the MLS are designed to engage all four senses of the street children, however letters denoting each sense (S,A,V,I) expected to be utilized has been mentioned in front of each tool, for ease of understanding.

The SAVI approach to learning has been combined with learnings from Sugata Mitra's (2013), Hole in the Wall experiments in India which demonstrated children's ability to understand complex issues when they work together in small groups without overt supervision of an adult. This has helped in determining the size of the street children's cohorts, the time duration of the sessions, the tools to be used in the MLS as well as the level of supervision by the MLS operators and mentors.

The final influence while designing the content of the learning exercises as well as the tools was Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (1956) in its revised format. Agarwal (2019) taking Bloom's taxonomy as the basis for formal education strongly disputes that fact-learning leads to higher level learning and concludes:

The students' higher order learning increases most from higher order retrieval practice, or no-stakes quizzes with complex materials that engage students in bringing what they know to mind. Although fact quizzes were beneficial for fact learning, they did not facilitate

higher order learning, contrary to popular intuition based on Bloom's taxonomy (Agarwal, 2019, p.189).

The Master's Project's prime purpose is to encourage learning for the street children a portion of which does need remembering facts and signs in order to survive in the hostile environment that these children inhabit, so the MLS will still spend time on the first two aspects of learning as depicted in Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) i.e. *Remembering* – which would require recalling key elements from the street children's environment; *Understanding* – which would be assessed by their ability to reproduce in their words / other expressive means what has been imparted in terms of concepts to them. However, higher level content will also be designed for the third stage of *Applying*, to test whether the children are able to translate the concepts they have learned to other situations with which they may not be entirely familiar. Street Children in the five to nine years age range will be exposed to the first two levels of learning in the taxonomy while street children in the ten to twelve years age range will be graduated to the third level of learning so they can determine their next steps in life after the six month MLS intervention is completed. It may not be possible for children younger than ten years to have the self-efficacy of making their own decision and charting out a course for themselves, till they are slightly older.

The tools have been conceptualized so that the material can either be administered individually or some modules can be combined and similarly, the method of delivery can be suited to the preference of the children. For example, if the children prefer videos, then the majority of the modules can be delivered in that format to that cohort, if they prefer to draw, then that is the tool that will be employed and if they prefer story telling then this is the tool that will be most frequently employed. Some of the tools can be used and practiced by the children

independently once the concept has been introduced by the MLS. The broad categories of the content of the learning modules and the tools of delivery are given below:

Learning Module Content

The content of the Learning Module described below is based on inputs from different groups that are working with children from the streets as well as those belonging to lower socio-economic and has been detailed fairly exhaustively at this stage because input from the street children is still to be obtained that would help in refining it, further. The primary focus is to keep this learning module distinct from what is normally taught as part of the educational curriculum be it rudimentary education or higher level. The other factor that is integral to the modules is the consideration of culture and language, which defines the contextual framework for this project. While the project focuses on street children in Karachi, the city is the biggest metropolis of the country that attracts migration from all provinces – both from cities and villages. This means there is a mixture of backgrounds, languages and customs that need to be considered and an approach that would be able to communicate to the majority of the street children, has to be adopted. Keeping this in mind, the modules have been designed on the basis of the environment of the street children rather than their origin or ethnicity. If needed, these nuances will be added later. The unifying language of Pakistan is Urdu, and all modules / tools are designed in this language. However, as the children are not educated and do not know how to read or write most tools are either designed without words, have an audio accompaniment or the MLS operator will provide the instructions. In case of numerals, Arabic numerals (1,2,3...) are more commonly used – so these will be used rather than Urdu numerals.

Life skills

The largest module for the street children will be focusing on Life Skills. Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) is recently being introduced in the curriculum for children aged 10-12 in the province of Sindh – which is where Karachi is located. Selected topics from the approved LSBE curriculum will be modified for the street children, addressing the following aspects:

- Self-awareness and self-realization
- Importance and significance of verbal and non-verbal communication – This includes how to say “no” firmly.
- Recognizing and acknowledging feelings
- Basic understanding of ethics and human rights
- How to keep one’s self safe
- Nutrition and balanced diet
- Understanding puberty and sexuality
- Grooming and hygiene
- Importance of decision making and taking responsibility
- Health and medicines – This section includes dangers of addiction: smoking / drugs/ alcohol etc.

Understanding signages and symbols

A practical requirement of surviving in the streets or living on the streets is to have an understanding of the different signages in the environment so that they are able to navigate the streets safely as well as understand what they are imbibing, touching etc. Some of the more critical ones which will be included are:

- Traffic signals and signs

- Signs in buildings (washroom / elevator / Exit etc)
- Poison / Danger / Electric current
- First Aid / Hospital / Police Station / Other key services

Understanding money and how it works

The extent of the topic to be covered will be customized to the age of the children in a particular cohort. The various denominations of the Pakistan currency will be covered. The role of banks; the advantages of earning and prioritizing and planning expenses; savings and investment.

Informal occupations

The street children are not likely to get formal education that would make them eligible for formal work opportunities. However, that does not mean that they cannot generate income for themselves and their families and live a productive life. Creative ways of helping them discover and nurture their talent and passion will be shared. Where possible role models will also be invited to talk to the children. Some of the professions that do not need extensive educational certificates and degrees are singer / dancer / artist / entrepreneur / fabricator of homemade toys / sewing / plumber / electrician / carpenter / cook etc. though knowledge and expertise is needed. This project will help children identify the area that they want to grow in and then connect them either with volunteers of the chosen profession to act as

Creative thinking

As explained earlier, this is the most critical part of the learning modules as it will equip the children for the future, beyond the MLS cycle of six months. The basic creative thinking principles will be embedded in all the modules except where actual *remembering* is the key output, for example, in the module related to the signages.

Learning Tools

The learning tools are designed in a way that they require minimum facilitator intervention. Thus, after the first set of instructions or explaining the basics of the physical equipment being provided to a certain group of children, it will be the children themselves who will be in charge of learning. As Meier (2000) and Agarwal (2018) emphasize that higher learning is not something that a learner memorizes but something that they help create, all the tools listed below will develop in different ways depending on how the children themselves build on them. The results of the outputs will be summarized however, to provide a learning feedback for the operators of the MLS allowing them to modify the learning tools over time for optimum learning.

Storytelling, songs & story boards

Rationale. Story telling has been used as a learning tool starting from very small children to even adults for hundreds of years. Young learners exercise their imagination through stories. They “can become personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations” (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 1992). Short stories are also effectively used as a teaching tool that identifies gender issues and other such stereotypes (Décuré, 2013). The routine way of using this tool is to read a story to the child to familiarize them with different words or encourage their fantasies or to illustrate a theory or a concept. However, storytelling can be participative as well if the story-board approach is used and the participants can build their own sequence of events and come to their own conclusions, which can later be discussed by the facilitator. This concept applied for children who play video games is being termed as “interactive story authoring” that allows a student to build interactive stories where the “reader” is an active participant in the story (Carbonaro, 2008). The advantage of this

kind of story telling is that it builds on your imagination encouraging creative thinking – helps you to diverge as there is no judgement and the discussion at the end aids convergent thinking by the participants agreeing on a few plausible endings.

Medium. The method used for the story telling can be a video or an animated movie shown on the computer tablet, reading from the book or telling a personal story by one of the group members. A number of animated videos focused at children in the Pakistan context have been developed that aim to provide basic learnings on cultural and ethical values in an interesting way. One of the series is “Quaid sey baatain” or talking with Quaid (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OLuuGT34Gk>) which are short videos based on the edicts and principles of the creator of Pakistan as a nation, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, fondly given the appellation “Quaid” meaning “The leader guide”. While not all the videos in the series are appropriate for the street children as the protagonist depicts a child belonging to the middle class, some general issues on cleanliness, honesty, accepting diversity etc. fall within the topics of the training module. There are other videos that were made by translating Sesame Street in Urdu titled “Khul Ja Sim Sim” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-95bzWVPng>) as well as in Hindi, which is a language spoken in India very similar to Urdu, titled Galli Galli Sim Sim (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0tCcEWplUQ&t=157s>). All these videos are available on open source YouTube. The stories and the story board will focus on the content of the learning modules.

Methodology. Children will be provided with a situation and a limited number of characters. They will be asked to develop their own story within a specified time. Options would be either to draw the story or to say it out loud or any other form of expression that they find convenient. In some cases, this exercise will be for individual street kids and in some cases the

entire group will be asked to develop the story. After the stories have been developed, either the children will select the ending that they liked best and they will tell their reasons for their preference or a 3-5 minute video will be shown to them on the subject. The length of the exercise will depend on the topic that is being covered but will not exceed 45 minutes.

SAVI category. S, A, V, I

Board games / puzzles

Rationale. Game-based learning is used extensively in the development sector to convey concepts as well as to encourage thinking on critical issues. As the intervention areas are low resourced and the target group is either not literate or does not have access to computers or electronic phones, traditional board games are adapted to provide the necessary information. This includes games played traditionally by the community as well as games universally recognized – e.g. Snakes and Ladders, Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit, Flash cards and pairing cards etc. These games can be enjoyable, motivating, engaging and interesting for the players. The games are played by a small group of two to four players and the learning is expected to go beyond the end of the game. Bankauskas (2000), recounts an interesting experiment she conducted in her own class of kindergartners where she started with using checkers and tic-tac-toe with her class as a means of teaching them mathematics. However, the children showed interested in learning chess, and though they were very young, by gradually introducing the chess pieces to the children, they were able to pick up the game. While the teacher intervention in the easier games was low, it became more intense when teaching chess. The outcome of learning chess was that the children learned how to plan and strategize and were introduced to basic critical thinking.

Medium. Board games for the street children with the themes from the learning module will be designed in Urdu for them to play. Some games are already available that have been

designed specifically for children, centered on folklore and traditional stories. One such organization is storykit.com which combines storytelling and board games. Snakes and Ladders can be used to metaphorically teach children the do's and don'ts of different actions, while monopoly can introduce learning on how to handle money and spend it judiciously. Other medium would be to give a riddle and ask the children to solve it either by drawing the solution or by working together and then making a model of the solution on the lines of mind mapping or system's mapping.

SAVI category. S, A, V, I

Meditation / yoga / physical exercise

Rationale. Street children typically face exposure to a lot of negative influences which includes violence, prostitution and psychological bullying as well as issues of malnutrition etc. They are prone to react to these intensely negative factors either by retaliating through violence or developing deeply psychological issues. An experiment in Sagaing Region in Myanmar, “Giving street kids a chance” (Thein, 2016), introduced, among other things a fifteen minute meditation session for the street children attending classes at the center, to improve their ability to concentrate. While conclusive research on the effectiveness of yoga and meditation for children in general and street children in particular is not available, according to Greenberg & Harris (2012) based on their meta-analysis of the subject, “the different techniques share a focus on sharpening concentration or attention, building emotion regulation skills to effectively manage stress, and gaining self-knowledge. Some practices consciously focus on building empathy and compassion”. Similarly, there is a general recognition that exercise is good for children and should be practiced regularly. Richard et. al. (2018) citing the findings of a study conducted on 140 fourth grade students came to the conclusion that students enrolled in a

creative exercise program with non-linear pedagogy for three months, increased their cognitive and motor creativity. While providing physical exercise routines, be it yoga and meditation or other format in the street can be challenging, there are opportunities to practice them in areas where there may be an empty plot of land available, as “manipulation of constraints, variability, improvisation, and problem solving appear to be key principles for developing creativity among children”.

Medium. The yoga and meditation exercises will be conducted initially by trained MLS operators as well as volunteers who are yoga experts. It is also possible that videos for yoga and meditation are shown on the computer tablet that is part of the MLS toolkit. Suggestion for non-linear exercise routines that are creative and more a physical expression of the children that would help them to expend their energy but also introduce balancing, coordination etc. will be suggested, encouraging the children to design their own routines but then to follow them regularly. This is essential for achieving sustained results in improving the mental and motor capabilities of the children.

SAVI category. S, A, V, I

MLS support system

The MLS will recruit operators for the MLS rickshaws and train them on the various modules of the learning modules as well as how to interact with the street kids and their immediate circle of people. Recording of data for the feedback loop will be a critical part of the training. In addition, there will be an outer circle of volunteers who will support the MLS.

A cohort of volunteers who will act as mentors to the street children, both male and female will be available on-line for interaction. The MLS operator will be able to connect the child with the mentor through the computer-tablet that will be part of their tool kit. The mentor

can provide focused support for the duration of the MLS program or extended support beyond the MLS intervention, based on the need of the child. McCluskey et al. (2004), analyzed the Lost Prizes project conducted in Canada, which sought to reconnect with students who had dropped out from college and reignite their talents. “The flexible, off-site program features career exploration, creative problem solving (CPS) and a formal mentoring component” (p.88). The distinguishing element of Lost Prizes was that it showed the power of mentoring, when it was provided through trained mentors and was sustained over time. In the project some of the mentors literally adopted their mentees much beyond the scope of the original undertaking. The mentors were trained not only on how to provide mentorship but also in creative problem solving so they could help their mentees to move from their current state to an aspirational state and chart their course to the new reality. While Lost Prizes was focused on encouraging the drop-outs back to education, similar mentoring can be effective outside educational institutions if it occurs in the “eco-system” of learning (McCluskey, 2004).

Mentors will form a critical part of the MLS in order to ensure that the efforts that are being made in developing and delivering the learning to the street children is not lost and bears fruit in terms of building the character, personality and thinking of the children and helping them move away from the street in a positive and productive manner.

The MLS will invite other volunteers to be part of its eco-system for example trained doctors and nurses who can give basic lessons to the children on first aid and can also run some basic tests at location to ensure that the children are in good health. This could also include provision of vaccinations, general reviews of blood pressure and blood sugar etc. Volunteers who can teach varied skills like singing, drawing, photography, dancing and free form exercise will also be invited though a strict criterion of selecting these volunteers will be maintained to

ensure that the street children are not exposed to people who could have a negative impact on them either physically or psychologically.

Conclusion

While street children are considered as part of the broad category of children who are deprived and live in poverty their needs are fairly specific in terms of developing their learning and thinking skills. Most street children assume the role of earning their living or partially supporting their family's earnings very early in life which does not allow them opportunity and the time for formal education. If they do get education, it is extremely delayed and very basic.

The design of the MLS is conceptualized to completely keeping the peculiar lifestyle and needs of the street children in Karachi in the center. It provides a means for the children to awaken their desire to think, to improve their situation within the resources that are available to them and to dream for a better life for which they feel empowered to chart their course. The MLS solution is not resource intensive and can be deployed using community resources including the rickshaw and the trained operator. The content of the MLS is based on educational, psychological and creative research and experimentation and the results from the MLS prototype itself will provide learnings that will be incorporated to constantly improve the model.

SECTION FIVE: LEARNINGS

Experiments in the “Hole in the Wall” (HiWEL) conducted between 2000 to 2005 in India and later in other settings including Bhutan for children aged between 8 to 14 years showed that “Irrespective of the ethnicity, culture and country, an identical - and possibly universal – self-organized learning mechanism seems to work with children vis-à-vis the Internet”. (Mitra & Dungwal, 2017, p.275). This is perhaps one of the most extensive experiments conducted specifically for poor children where they were involved in a learning activity in their own setting and without adult supervision. The experiment demonstrated the children’s ability to learn in an environment that is just as specific, though completely contrary to what has been specified for formal education and a structured class-room environment. Mitra’s model is suited ideally for non-formal education where children access the computer and the internet in their natural surroundings, working in groups of 4-5 children, without adult supervision. Mitra defined this as “minimally invasive education” (MIE) where “incidental learning can be achieved provided the learners are given access to a suitable computing facility, with entertaining and motivating content, and some minimal (human) guidance” (Mitra et al., 2017, p.276).

Mitra and his co-researcher’s work is undoubtedly valuable for developing countries where majority of the population lives below the poverty line, unable to afford education for their children and where, if the younger generation is not equipped with the tools of this fast moving technological era, the vicious circle of poverty and deprivation would continue unabated. What has been very exciting however has been the extrapolation of the findings of the years of research and Mitra’s assertion that “the implications of the results of the experiments are not just restricted to computer literacy but education in general” (Mitra, 2000).

The outcomes of the experiments can therefore be extended to the deployment of other informal settings and learning tools while maintaining the basic tenets of his model which require children to work together and learn together and build upon each other's ideas, without intrusive adult supervision. It is based on this assumption and relying on the innate curiosity of the street children, that has been highlighted and remarked upon by most of those who have studied them (Lusk, 1989; Panter-Brick, 2002; Rizzini & Lusk, 1995), that I developed the concept of the learning environment and suggested tools for the street children in Pakistan, specifically Karachi which have been detailed in Section Four of this report.

The learnings from researchers and theorists outlined throughout this paper were tempered with reality as I was able to get an in-depth view of the interactions, success and challenges of “educating” street children by two experienced non – profit organizations, Children’s Education Development Foundation (CEDF) and Zindagi Trust, both of which have been interacting with poor / street children and their guardians in an effort to give them rudimentary education. CEDF has been working for the past twenty years with children of low socio-economic strata to provide them a head start in formal education. It’s a philanthropic effort which is surviving only because of benevolence of a few dedicated private donors – however, the service has been shrinking over the years and may finish altogether, unless there a source of sustained funding. Of the two organizations Zindagi Trust initiated a project specifically for street children but unfortunately, they are closing it up due to low attendance by the street children. The model relied on incentivizing children by providing them a free meal and a small stipend to attend “classes” at a specified location. From the details made available the meals were very basic, perhaps even more basic than what the street children manage to earn or scavenge for themselves on a daily basis and the stipend was halved after some time. The

dropout rate increased, and the purpose of the project was not achieved. However, the learnings from the Zindagi Trust project are very valuable and helped in two of the design features for MLS. One was to take the learning to the street children rather than expect to come to a designated venue. Second, there are no extrinsic incentives only intrinsic rewards focused on getting attention, having fun, building strong relationships with their comrades as well as the people in the MLS and a progressively safe and healthy life which would allow the children to dream of a better future. Unfortunately, the third organization, Initiator Human Development Foundation (IHDF) was not available for a meeting or any sort of interaction so inputs from them could not be obtained. In the course of the research work, I found another organization, Hasan and Shireen Foundation, founded by a brother and sister who themselves are studying but who started a “school” for the street children by teaching one street kid and then built on it by using a vacant plot next to their house (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4LrpWz4qWU>). Currently they are running the “school” on two empty plots and teaching nearly hundred children. They supplied the writing material and conducted classes whenever their schedule permitted. The funding comes from their family and donations from the public. While the effort still seems a bit informal, their work over the past two years has been commended by the civil society and they have been able to help many street children not only in providing education but also supporting them in their health needs. I was able to contact the Foundation and they have agreed to a detailed interaction once their exams are over in the end of May.

Working on the master’s project was also a journey in self-awareness. The period between end of January till the end of April, which formed the term period for Spring 2019 was one of the most hectic for me in recent memory both because of personal and professional reasons. I was in fact being pulled three ways – my organization is undergoing major change, an

unplanned change that is fairly turbulent and as one of the senior most leaders in the organization, it is my responsibility to manage the resultant fallout. On a personal level, my sister was going through a medical trauma and which was not only emotionally disturbing but took a lot of my time in making hospital visits and generally giving support. The third pull of course was of the project itself and the zeal to do it well. My personal triumph is the fact that I have been able to give the attention and time and energy to all these conflicting priorities and this was possible only because I was completely vested to do my best in all the three areas. There was not one that I could consider to be less important than the other – my work ethics are too strong to have not given the time and the effort that my team required; we are a close family and I would not have forgiven myself had I not given the care and the attention my sister needed during her illness and my passion for the Master's project is real which made me read voraciously for three months and work on ideas that were largely based on evidence. To be writing the final paragraphs of the master's project report is giving me a sense of achievement that is difficult to describe in words.

The other self-realization was my preference for thinking. My FourSight thinking profile is that of a Driver – making me a high Ideator and a high Implementer. However, despite the categorization, I have always felt that my preference was more towards implementing than ideating. However, going through this intensively demanding three month period, I am more at ease with my Driver thinking preference and am convinced that I prefer ideation and implementing in equal measure over time, though different situations may tilt to one of the two thinking preferences. This became clear to me in analyzing my decisions in response to my sister's condition where I immediately went into the implementation mode, while for the situation in my workplace I gave time to ideation but made sure that there was quick action to

deal with the situation nearly on a daily basis. In the case of putting together the Master's project, which is conceptual at this stage, I enjoyed the ideation even though it was based on evidence and built on other ideas that had been tried elsewhere. I also enjoyed discussing and sharing ideas about developing a learning environment for the street children that has generated a strong interest in my immediate circle of friends as well as those who work with children which gives me hope that there will be opportunity to fund at least a prototype of the project in the near future.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

Ideally, this entire project would have had the inputs of the street children themselves, and the immediate next step is to do exactly that. This could mean that while the basic design of the proposed learning format remains largely as it has been presented, as it is based on the results and learning gained from many experiments and research studies, certain elements of the format will be tweaked for a better fit for the street children in Karachi. Suggestions on branding of the MLS, the color etc. also have not been made at this stage, because it is essential that the views and ideas of the street children themselves are incorporated when actually rolling out the MLS. A feedback loop from the street children that would continuously inform the program and the MLS model is also critical so that it continues to serve the children's interest and provides them the impetus towards learning and an improved quality of life.

The scale of the proposed model is modest as the resources to implement the learning format have not been identified. Conceptually, the two MLS rickshaws, the trained operators and mentor as well as the tools are expected to cover one "town" in Karachi city, considering the distances to be covered, the population density and the number of clusters of street children. The model will need to be replicated at least eighteen more times to cover the entire city. The resources that would be required will need capital expenditure in terms of the rickshaws and the call booths as well as the computer tablets. Operational expenses will cover the procurement of the learning tools, the salary of the driver / trainer and stipend to the mentor and their training, the fuel and maintenance cost of the rickshaws and the booth and the incentives and rewards to the street children, the relevant community people and the MLS operators. The scale up and sustainability, therefore of the MLS will depend on source of the funding. While initially a prototype can be operated by private funds to not only to test the effectiveness of the learning

format but also to set up protocols and standards, the mandate for expansion and regular operations of the MLS will need to be taken up by either the Ministry of Education of the provincial government or Ministry of Social Affairs.

While the model is based on informal learning and the formal educational curriculum prescribed by the Board of Education in the province is not being used, nor is there any certification involved, it is likely that permissions from different civic agencies to carry out the intervention may be required, especially if the initiative is scaled up. The regulatory considerations will have to be considered when designing the action plan as these are prone to take time especially for a venture that is new and not documented.

Incentives for the street children that would motivate them to continue with the learning modules beyond their initial interest have deliberately not been discussed as they will need to be determined based on the preference of the children and their influencers. The experience of Zindagi Trust has already shown that provision of a free meal and a stipend initially helped in bringing the street children to the school, they soon started dropping out of classes and most could not finish the curriculum. The design of the MLS is such that a child does not need to “qualify”, it does not take them away from their surrounding and their work and it is focused on teaching through entertainment and fun so in this case the preference would be not to have monetary incentives at all. However, taking the children for a movie or to the seaside for a few hours could be some options which will need to be finalized once the MLS pilot is ready to take off.

As already discussed in section four of the report, the MLS operators and the mentors will be trained on Creative thinking skills and the Thinking Skills model. The detail of the training of these two facilitators is not given as part of the master’s project report – however, it

will be part of the set-up of the project and one of the conditions of recruiting the MLS operator as well as the volunteer mentor will be to assess their interest and willingness for this training that will be conducted over two weeks locally in Karachi.

Immediately after completing and submitting the Master's project, I plan to contact the brother and sister duo (Hasan and Shireen) who have worked with street children and understand from them the challenges and their learning. The siblings seem very focused and passionate about helping street children and they already have a network of small donors who support this interest. I will probe and see if they would like to work with me on the prototype of MLS to further the cause of the street children. The main advantage is not only that they have seriously relevant experience of working with street children, but they probably have a better understanding of young people that I hope to engage in this project, being closer to their age.

I will also tap other sources of funding including presenting a proposal to UNICEF in Pakistan which supports innovation through small grants, especially those that are focused on infants and children. I will develop a detailed budget and a proposal in line with their requirements by June 2019. For this, I will also reach out to some street children themselves to test my ideas – if needed through Hasan and Shireen as they are already connected to these children. This would help me to further refine the elements of the MLS.

My endeavor in the coming year therefore would be to come up with a more comprehensive design of the Creative Learning Environment for street children so that we are not only be able to prototype it in Karachi but find enough interest to scale it up. In future as well, I would like to continue to work for the interests of the underserved children, be it in education or nutrition or health.

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Appendix A: Overview of Street Children – UNICEF

<p>CAUSES OF CHILDREN TURNING TO THE STREETS (USUALLY A COMBINATION OF FACTORS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poverty ● Physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse in the home made worse in some cases by alcoholism and/or drug abuse by carers) ● Neglect / lack of protection ● Loss of home or property ● Family breakdown ● Orphaned or separated due to disease (inc. AIDS), natural disasters, conflict etc. ● Lack or deprivation of economic and cultural opportunities/ facilities e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Out of school ➢ Limited access to health facilities ➢ Limited access to recreational activities ● Limited connection to religious or community groups ● Migration ● Illegitimate child who has been rejected ● Pressure to work to support family or self ● Exploitation by adults ● Trafficking ● Social discrimination & traditional cultural beliefs (e.g. blaming a child for bad luck / sorcery) 	<p>PROBLEMS FACED BY CHILDREN IN THE STREET ENVIRONMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of care, support and love ● Basic needs of clothing, food and shelter are not fulfilled ● Lack of education ● Unhygienic environment ● Poor health and nutrition / vulnerable to disease and infection, including sexually transmitted infections ● Substance abuse ● Life full of uncertainties / insecurity ● Physical, psychological and/or sexual violence and exploitation (from adults, each other, security guards and the police) ● Exposure to sexual activity – ‘comfort’ / ‘survival’ / coercive / forced sex ● Trauma ● Exposure to illegal activities / coerced into committing crime ● Poor working conditions / economic exploitation ● Neglect, discrimination, fear and hatred ● Lack of bonding / trust ● Lack of positive role models
<p>GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STREET CHILDREN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contradiction between outward behavior (possibly ‘street smart,’ aggressive and manipulative) and inner self (sensitive, sad, rejected, hurt, fearful, untrusting) ● Freedom loving ● Independent in nature ● Resourceful and creative ● Resilient ● Adventurous ● Short attention span ● Low self esteem ● Impulsive ● Sharp mood swings ● Non-trusting towards adults and their environment ● Sense of non-acceptance by majority of society ● Sexually active at an early age ● Attracted to gang culture for friendship and protection: strong desire to be accepted by peers ● Organized in their thinking ● Many feel alone and long for family togetherness ● They always remember injustice done to them 	<p>BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rebellious in nature ● Antisocial behaviour / distorted value system developed in order to survive – bullying, being aggressive and deceptive, lying and possibly stealing (but underneath the aggression often lies insecurity and fear) ● Often confrontational with each other ● Relationship difficulties – fear of forming new relationships due to fear of separation and loss based on past experiences ● Crave love, care and affection ● Depression and self-harm ● Very energetic ● Unpredictable behavior ● High levels of sexual activity, both heterosexual and homosexual ● Judgment may be impaired through substance abuse ● Possible involvement in petty or serious crime depending on choices available and personality of individual children

Appendix B: Auto Rickshaw

(i) Six seater with storage under the seat <https://dealmarkaz.pk/vehicles/other-vehicles/super-power-double-shock-6-seater-200-cc-i25730>



(ii) Six-seater with storage and canvas doors <https://www.clasf.pk/rikshaw-auto-in-karachi-1531112/>



Appendix C: Aman Telehealth Booth