

REALIZING THE PROMISE OF THE LC5 KINDERPITCH PROGRAM

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An Interactive Qualifying Project
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science

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Date:
12 December 2018
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ABSTRACT

The LC5 foundation in Tirana, Albania uses play to aid in the emotional, social, and physical development of children. The goal of this project was to identify how LC5 can build on its strengths and address the challenges of working with under-resourced school systems as it seeks to expand. Through participant observation and key informant interviews we compared LC5's goals to the implementation of the program in two schools. By analyzing children's drawings and through observation, we found that children enjoy and benefit from the program, but limited staffing, competing school priorities, and inadequate funding impeded regular use of the program. To realize its goals, LC5 would benefit from a dedicated animator and more systematic planning with school staff.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our team would like to thank all individuals, schools, organizations, and groups who contributed to the success of this project:

Special thanks to:

The Lorik Cana 5 Foundation and Ottonomy for sponsoring the project
Jerina Lalaj and Lorik Cana specifically for making this opportunity possible
Armando Çhullhaj for allowing us to partake in and observe the LC5 Kinderpitch Program
Lori Amy for her guidance and support
Igli Tola, Merita Saliaj, and Ina Lajthia for their guidance in and around Tirana and assisting in translating our interviews
Kopshti Heidi and Xixellonjat for welcoming us into their schools and assisting us in our research
Director Lindita Selami, and teachers Mata, and Xhepa for their assistance and insight
Gabriella Kuneshka for her guidance and professional insight on child psychology

Our advisors Professors Robert Hersh and Leslie Dodson

Finally, we would like to thank WPI for providing us the incredible opportunity to participate in this project.

AUTHORSHIP

All members of this team collaborated and contributed to our project and report equally. Sections of our report were divided among the members of our group to work on individually. Each section written by an individual team member was then edited by the remaining team members. After individual edits the entire team edited together, thus making each section a representation of our collective work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Play & the Kinderpitch Program

Play and exercise are valuable tools for the mental and physical development of young people. By playing, children make significant gains in their skill development, social development, and imagination and creativity (Caldwell, 2018). Play also helps children learn how to handle their emotions, including anger and fear (Entin, 2011). Play in schools gives children a break from their structured classwork which can aid their learning process. A 2005 study conducted by Pellegrini found that unstructured breaks from cognitive tasks for preschoolers aided in their learning and social competence (Pellegrini et al, 2005).

Interested in aiding in the emotional, social, and physical development of Albanian children, Lorik Cana founded the the Lorik Cana 5 Foundation in 2017 on the ideals of instilling hope, confidence and respect into children's lives through sport and play (Lorik Cana 5 Foundation, 2017). Cana envisions the children "[thinking] as a sportsman ... [living] healthy, [eating] healthy, [resting] healthy," to instill the values of physical and mental health in their early schooling (personal communication, Cana, October 23, 2018). Adopting Ka2al's existing Kinderpitch program from Hungary, LC5 introduced it to two Tirana kindergartens, Kopshti Heidi and Kopshti Xixellonjat (Lorik Cana 5 Foundation, 2017). Implementing this program involves constructing a soccer pitch, providing all equipment, and developing a training program.

The Kinderpitch program has been in operation for one year in Albania. LC5 was interested in having a better understanding of how its program has affected the children, how well it integrates within the schools' operations, and how it manages within the funding and staffing constraints of the schools.

Our Approach to Understanding the Program

The motivation of our project was to aid LC5 as they seek to expand. Our goal was to identify how they can build on their strengths and address the challenges of working with under-resourced school systems. We identified the following objectives to address this goal:

1. Understand how the program is conducted on a daily basis and who is involved.

To understand this, we used interviews, photographs, videos, participant observation, and direct observation. Our interviews were both informal and semi-structured key informant interviews with teachers and directors who work at Kopshti Heidi and Kopshti Xixellonjat. With this approach we learned how the program was carried out, why and when they use the program, how they select children to use the pitch, and how they attempt to ensure all students participate evenly.

2. Analyze how children respond to the program.

To analyze these interactions, we used Leuven well-being and involvement scales, key informant interviews with teachers and directors, drawing sessions in the schools, and participant observation. Key informant interviews were used to learn more about how the children interact with the program, changes the directors and teachers have noticed in the children since the pitch has been there, and the children's' general feelings towards the pitch. Leuven scales allow an observer to gauge how a child is interacting with and responding to the program activities. The drawing sessions were focused on gaining insight into how the children felt about taking part in the program.

3. Understand how the program interfaces with the school system and how limited resources affects the program.

To accomplish this objective, we used a combination of direct observations and key informant interviews. Our observations were largely focused on what resources the program needed, what they had, and what they lacked. The key informant interviews were with the teachers and directors at the school, as well a child psychoanalyst in Tirana with experience working in local kindergartens. Through our observations and interviews, we were able to identify specific limitations that affect the program as well as learn more about the current state of kindergartens in Tirana.

The Opportunities and Challenges

The importance of a dedicated animateur

When the Kinderpitch is constructed at the school, LC5 sends its trainer to train the teachers that will be running the program. These teachers are those who are in charge of classes of children ages four to six. The teachers are shown how to use the equipment for drills and conduct the activities with the children. After the training is complete, the teachers, in theory, are able to take on the role of the trainer and continue the program on their own. This role the teachers will take on is that of the animateur, a term we used to describe the person leading the program regardless of their formal occupation. Ideally, this program is self-sufficient without the trainer present. However, we noticed that the program does not run as smoothly without the trainer. The children were less focused and less willing to follow direction. We realized that it is difficult for the teachers to take over the role of the trainer and receive the same cooperation. When the trainer would say “stop” every child would often stop and listen. However, when the teacher would say “stop” the children would frequently continue to run around and ignore the teachers command. The lack of control may be the result of the teacher running the program on her own, rather than having both her and the trainer. With only one animateur, this teacher was responsible for setting up the equipment for each activity as well as keeping the students organized. Set up for drills can take approximately five to seven minutes, and during this time the children are expected to wait patiently. We observed, however, that the students would struggle to wait patiently without additional help. In our conversation with the director of Kopshti Heidi, Lindita Selami, she mentioned that the teachers are often overwhelmed with the task of taking the children outside and that “they need a physical education teacher like there is in every elementary school” (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018).

Use of the Kinderpitch is ad hoc, not scheduled

This program is intended to be used daily (personal communication, Cana, October 29, 2018). However it is not formally implemented into the daily school schedule as the director of the kindergarten decides when the children will go outside. It is currently only being used two to three times a week (personal communication, Çhullhaj, October 29, 2018). The absence of a designated time slot means that regular visits to the pitch becomes discretionary. The decision to use the pitch was influenced by other factors. In our interviews with teachers, they mentioned that going out to the pitch was often used as an incentive for the children to complete their school work. Teachers told children that if they finish their assignment promptly they can go outside and play. There are also times where they are told if they cannot finish, or if they misbehave, they will not be able to go outside (personal communication, Mata and Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Ideally, this program should not be influenced or incentivized by the children's performance in the classroom.

Bad weather, such as rain, can also prohibit the use of the pitch because it has no roof covering. When the turf is wet the children can slip and get their clothes wet and in the summer the sun is too hot (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). When the pitch is used, only eight to ten students are able to come out at a time due to size constraints. Accommodating more than eight to ten children creates a cramped and chaotic environment (personal communication, Çhullhaj, October 29, 2018). A smaller group of children leads to a more focused approach (personal communication, Çhullhaj, October 29, 2018). If there were more than eight to ten children in the pitch at one time it would lead to children being distracted. In classes of 35 students we were curious to know how the teachers selected these small groups. One teacher explained how she “tried to do like a lottery. So who will win will go out but I tried to put different kids in different days. So ten today and ten other day. So all the kids will have the opportunity to go once or twice a week outside and play” (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). We observed that in the absence of a formal selection process, many of the same children used the pitch multiple times a week. Contrary to this, during another visit, a group of children came out that had never used the pitch.

Children enjoyed participating in the program although there were differences related to gender and athletic ability

Ideally, all children enjoy going outside and participating in the program. Through our observations we found that the majority of the children enjoyed the program, however, there were children that did not express similar feelings. While some children were enthusiastic to complete the activities and fighting for the front of the line, some children seemed unamused and reluctant to join in. In most of our visits to the school, we observed many differences between the girls and the boys: the boys being more energetic, while the girls were less willing to take the lead and fight for their spots in line. Along with gender differences, we noted differences between children who were more coordinated compared to those who were less coordinated. While we did notice that some students were less involved at times, we did find that all children were widely exhibiting average to above average well-being and involvement. When applying the Leuven scales while observing and watching recordings of the program, we found that the children tended to score between three and five with an average of around four. When assigning values to the children we looked at the scale's established criteria, used our own intuition to determine at what level the child was performing, and averaged all of the values that we observed over a given time (rounded to the nearest whole number). After assigning these values we found that children who were less coordinated tended to score threes and fours and those who were more coordinated scored fives.

Concluding Thoughts

Through our work, we were able to gain an understanding of how LC5's initiative, which focuses on child development through play and close and supportive attention between trainer and child, functions in two kindergartens. As the Kinderpitch program is set to expand, we would like to offer some ideas about helping the program realize its goals:

1. Ensure that a dedicated animateur is available for all sessions.
2. Develop internship program with local sports university or faculty of social work to open opportunity for more animateurs.
3. Help schools plan more equitable student access by introducing a schedule of Kinderpitch use and a consistent student selection process.
This would include introducing a schedule in order to keep track of what children use the pitch and when. The format could be a physical schedule present in the school, or a shared calendar, such as a Google or Outlook Calendar, between LC5 and the school. We suggest that children are assigned to specific days at the pitch each week and are grouped to ensure a ratio of boys to girls that reflects the gender ratio in the school. This would allow LC5 to monitor the use of the pitches, assess how often each child participated, and ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls.
4. Develop outreach strategies to foster more systematic communication between LC5 and the schools in order to gain necessary feedback on program implementation at each site.
We suggest that LC5 establish an email alias or closed website. This system would allow schools to send LC5 questions and as well as feedback about the program from teachers and directors. LC5 would then be able to respond to school staff associated with the program with relevant information or solutions, and help identify best practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Play and exercise are valuable tools for the mental and physical development of children. Through play, children make significant gains in their skill development, social development, and imagination and creativity (Caldwell, 2018). Play also helps children learn how to handle their emotions, including anger and fear (Entin, 2011). When play is incorporated in school it gives children a break from structured school work, aiding in their learning process. A 2005 study, conducted by University of Minnesota Professor Pellegrini, found that unstructured breaks from cognitive tasks aided preschoolers in learning and social competence (Pellegrini et al, 2005). A lack of play can affect a child's emotional development, leading to anxiety, depression, and problems of attention and self-control (Entin, 2011).

Interested in aiding in the emotional, social, and physical development of Albanian children, Lorik Cana founded the the Lorik Cana 5 Foundation in 2017. LC5 was founded on the ideals of instilling hope, confidence and respect into children's lives through sport and play. Cana envisions the children "[thinking] as a sportsman ... [living] healthy, [eating] healthy, [resting] healthy," as the values of physical and mental health would be ingrained into them during their early schooling (personal communication, Cana, October 23, 2018). Adopting Ka2al's existing Kinderpitch program in Hungary, LC5 introduced it to two Albanian kindergartens, Kopshti Heidi and Kopshti Xixellonjat (Lorik Cana 5 Foundation, 2017). Implementing this program involves building a small soccer pitch, providing equipment, and developing a training program.

Since the addition of the Kinderpitches in 2017, the program's influence on children and on the teachers and directors in schools involved in the program has not been studied (Lorik Cana 5 Foundation, 2017). LC5 is interested in having a better understanding of how its program affects the children, the extent to which it has been integrated as part of daily school activities, as well as how it functions within the resource constraints of the schools.

The goal of our project was to identify the opportunities and challenges LC5 will face as it expands the kinderpitch program in Tirana and in other cities in Albania.

Through observation and participation in the kinderpitch activities, we saw firsthand how the children responded to the program and to the trainer. Through in-depth interviews we became aware of the perspectives of teachers and directors about the interface of the program and the school. Through an analysis of children's drawing we developed an understanding of the social and psychological benefits of the program to the children at the schools.

PLAY AND THE KINDERPITCH PROGRAM

THE SCIENCE OF PLAY

Article 31 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1959 by the United Nations, states that all children should have the 'right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child' (Admin, 2012). "Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development" (Ginsburg, 2007, 183). Anthony Pellegrini, a professor of education at the University of Minnesota has conducted a plethora of studies in regards to the importance of play in early childhood development. In their 2005 study, Pellegrini and Bohn, both professors of educational psychology, studied preschoolers and concluded that unstructured breaks from cognitive tasks aided in learning and social competence (Pellegrini, Bohn, 2005). Similarly in his year-long 2002 study, he observed five and six years olds in their first years of school and found that social interaction during student breaks was positively correlated to academic success (Pellegrini et al, 2002). In his 1995 study, Pellegrini and his colleagues noted that children ages 5-9 were found to have increased levels of attentiveness following a break or recess (Pellegrini et al, 1995). In a 2 year long longitudinal study he observed 24 students, aged 5-7, and found that object play was able to predict first year academic performance (Pellegrini, 1992).

For example in his 2014 study of 51 preschool children, of 51 preschool children, Derek R. Becker, an assistant professor at Western Carolina University and his colleagues and his colleagues found that active play was associated with higher scores on early reading and math assessments (Becker et al, 2014). Likewise a 2000 study conducted by Vicky Lewis and her colleagues her colleagues observed children children aged one to six years of age in England and was found that higher levels of play had a positive association with better language skills both receptive and expressive language (Lewis et al, 2000). In a 2007 analysis by a noted professor in pediatrics, Kenneth R. Ginsburg, it was noted that time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children and they had free play reduced in their schedules to make room for more academics (Ginsburg, 2007).

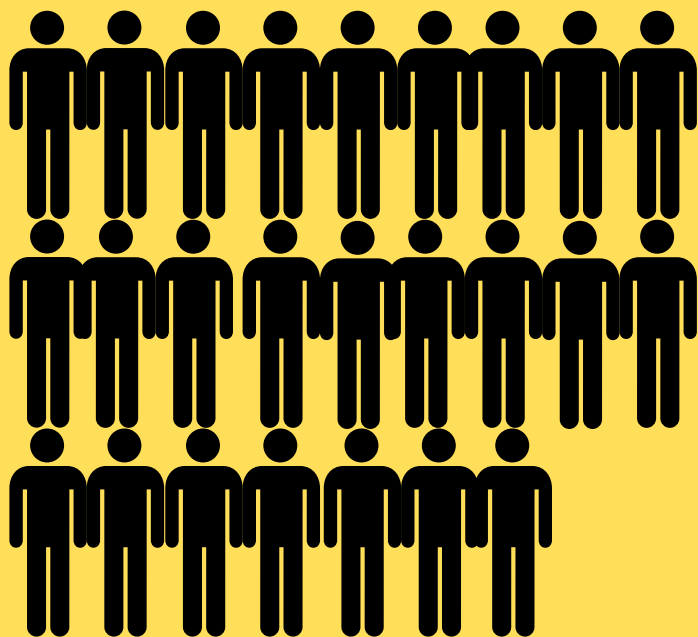




PLAY AND STRESS IN THE HOME

It is important for play to extend outside of schools and into the homelives of children. However, the home lives of young children can often lead to stress that is linked to instability surrounding income, parental employment, and in-school child care (Sandstrom, 2013.) Children in poorer urban areas often spend less free time with their parents because parents may be working long hours or multiple jobs (personal communication, Gabriele Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). This lack of attention from working parents, especially fathers, can cause stress in the lives of children (personal communication, Gabriele Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). Children between the ages of three and six are accustomed to routine and even a small change related to a parents work schedule can cause stress (personal communication, Lindita Selami, November, 12, 2018).

In a study conducted by the Institute of Statistics looking at the average working hours of Albanians, a survey revealed that an average work week is 44 hours (Iia, 2016). “Parents try to do their best, try to manage their time to spare more time with their kids, but it's a bit difficult because they are at work. There are other obligations” (personal communication, Mata, November, 26, 2018). Selami described how a change in the school menu was monumental for the children because it was something they were not used to. Small inconsistencies in a child’s life can prove to be extremely stressful and that “children thrive in stable and nurturing environments where they have a routine and know what to expect” (Sandstrom, 2013).



25:1

**STUDENT:TEACHER
RATIO**

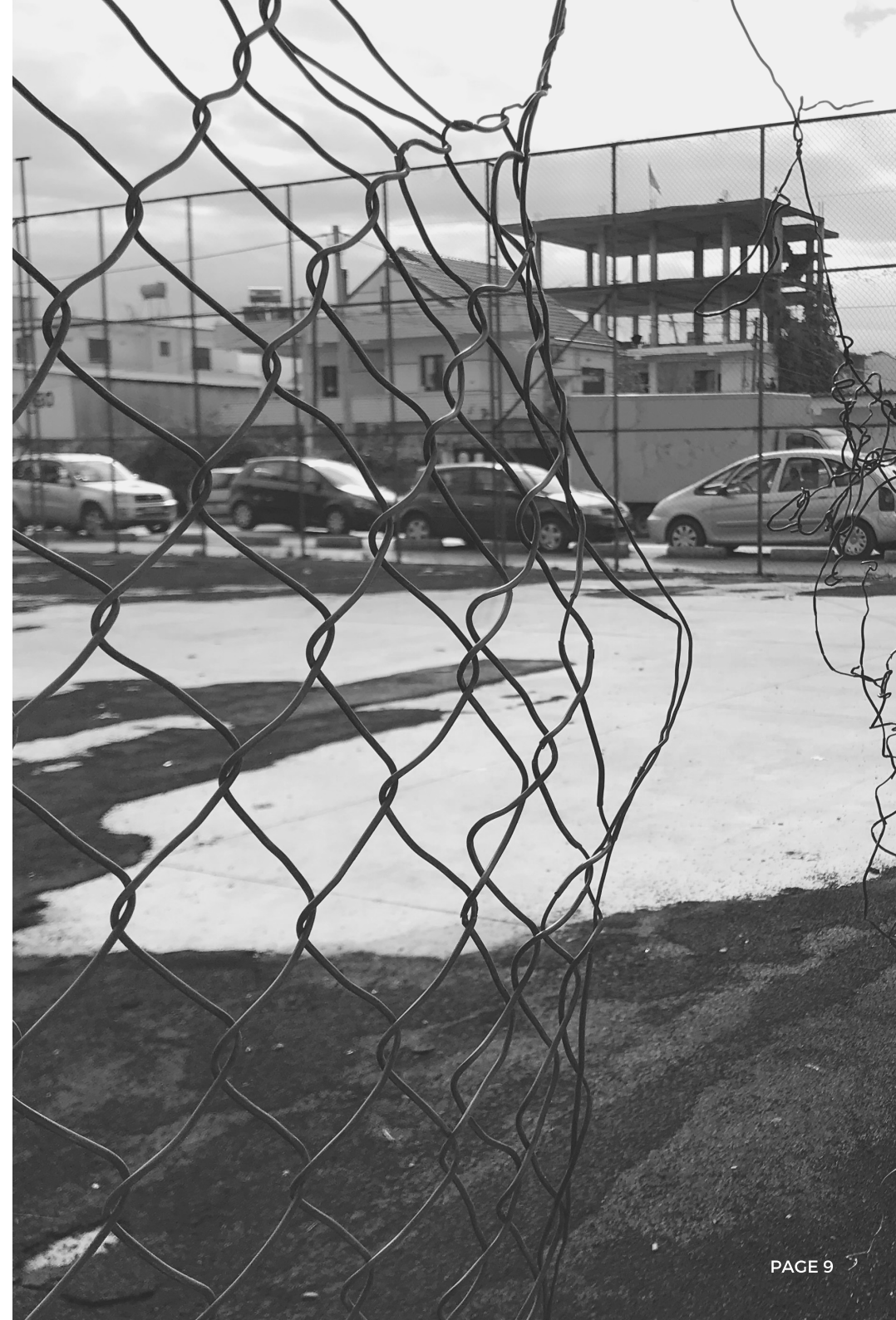
LACK OF RESOURCES IN SCHOOL FOR PLAY

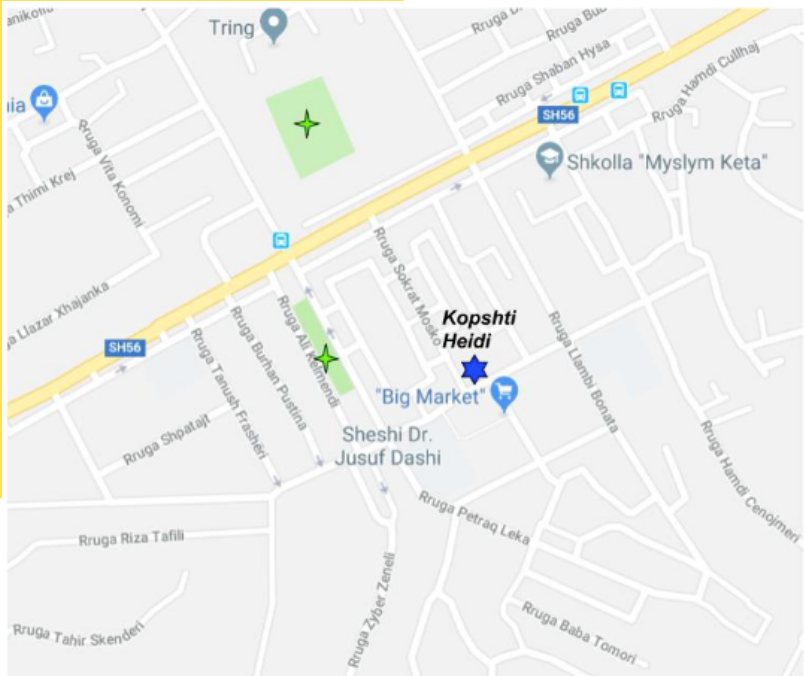
Public kindergartens in Albania often struggle with a lack of human and financial resources to encourage play. According to a report contracted by UNICEF, urban kindergartens in the country are 142.3 percent overcrowded (Byrne, 2014) and kindergartens in Tirana often have a 25:1 or even 35:1 student-teacher ratios instead of the recommended ratio of 7:1 (personal communication, Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). These large classroom sizes make it difficult for teachers to tend to the children in a classroom, posing an even bigger task for play (personal communication, Mata, November, 26, 2018). The classrooms can easily become chaotic, and the inability for one or two teachers to care for 35 young children can lead to injury (personal communication, Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). The lack of teachers stems from budget constraints, as schools do not have the funds to hire additional staff to deal with overcrowded classrooms (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018).

As of 2013, the Albanian government spends an average of 51,625 ALL (510 USD) per student a year for all expenditures in basic education (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2015). While this is increased from 490 USD per person from 2012, it is significantly lower than the average expenditures by countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, such as the United States, Germany and Canada, which is 7,974 USD (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2015). While the required costs per student varies depending on the cost of living in a country, this figure still shows that many Albanian public schools lack funds (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2015). A lack of resources in Albanian schools hinder teachers' abilities to extend play opportunities outside of their already hard to manage classrooms (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018).

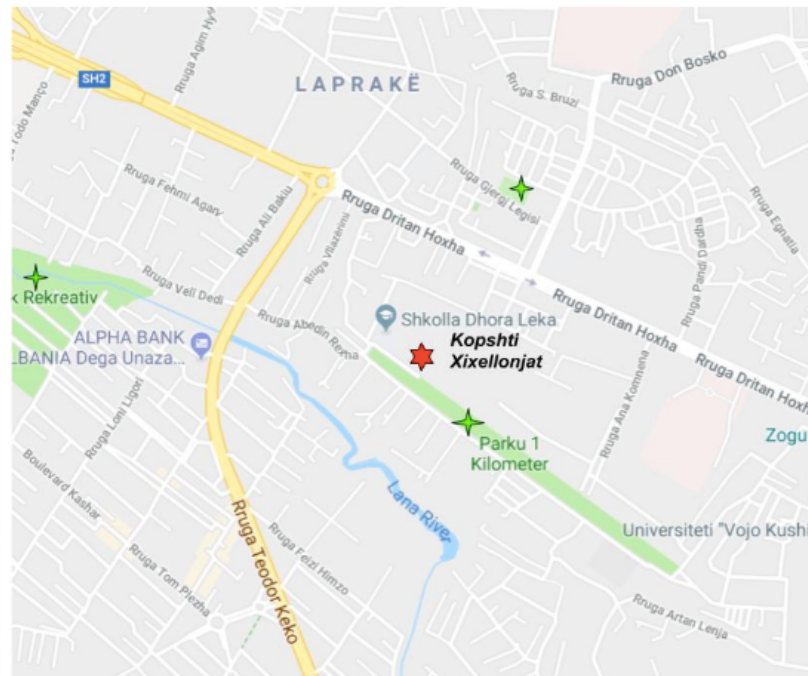
LACK OF GREEN SPACE

Population growth in cities challenges the development of urban green spaces (Kabisch, 2015). In the city of Tirana there are approximately 0.8 square meters of green space per capita, compared to the average of 3 square meters per capita (Likmeta, 2012). This lack of public green space translates to the lack of opportunity for children to engage in physical activity outside of school (personal communication, Lindita Selami, November, 12, 2018). Along with the lack of public space, privatization of fields and private training academies are becoming more prevalent creating yet another obstacle and furthering inaccessibility (Tacconi, 2016). Unless children are willing, or capable, of paying for this access, there is little to no opportunity for them to play outdoors (personal communication, Lindita Selami, November, 12, 2018).





The two kindergartens observed were Kopshti Heidi, located in Kombinat, and Kopshti Xixellonjat, located in 21 Dhjetori. Kopshti Heidi, is shown by the blue marker and two public green spaces are marked with green four pointed stars. Both of these green spaces are public, one having a playground; however, both spaces are fairly worn down and are the only public places for children to play within approximately 200 meters of the school.



The school, Kopshti Xixellonjat, is shown by the red marker and three public spaces are marked with green four pointed stars. The closest space for the children to use is Parku 1 Kilometer. This park is one of the only green spaces in the area for children to play. However, the basketball court we observed has holes in its fence and parts of the tar laid down for the court are ripped up and pose a hazard to children playing on the court. Additionally, the playgrounds throughout the park are unkempt, missing steps to climb the slide and having a swing set frame but no swings. These conditions makes these playgrounds virtually useless as they pose more of a hazard than fun.

POOR QUALITY OF GREEN SPACE



Ka2al Kinderpitch is a Hungarian organization that was established in 2010. They work towards youth development by establishing Kinderpitches in schools and training school officials to run an exercise program for the students. A Kinderpitch is a small turf field enclosed with netting. At either end there is a soccer goal as well as a basketball hoop. The pitch comes with all necessary equipment, such as balls, hurdles, and cones, needed to perform the activities outlined in the Ka2al handbook. The Ka2al handbook includes diagrams of all activities, as well as instructions on how to complete them.

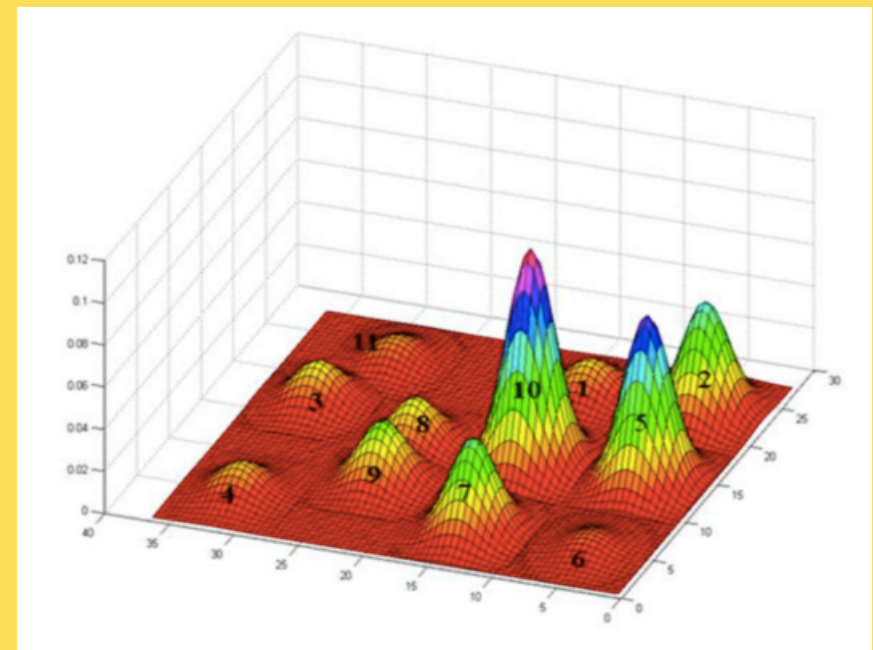
In 2017, Ka2al expanded their operations outside of Hungary to Albania where they partnered with and provided the Lorik Cana 5 (LC5) Foundation with two Kinderpitches. The foundation was developed by Lorik Cana, the former captain of the National Albanian Soccer Team, and a few close friends after Lorik's retirement from the game of soccer after "nearly 14 years" (personal communication, Cana, October 23, 2018). Near the late stages of his career, Lorik had been planning to start LC5 with the ideal vision of instilling the next generation of children with "the values of sport", an understanding of teamwork, and development of their mental and physical states (personal communication, Cana, October 23, 2018).

Working together with Ka2al Kinderpitch, the Lorik Cana 5 Foundation originally brought two kinderpitches to Tirana, Albania. The first Kinderpitch that we looked at is located at the Xixellonjat Kindergarten and the second is located at the Heidi Kindergarten. The Ka2al Kinderpitch Program that accompanies the pitches is now used in both kindergartens regularly.



INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S PLAY AND WELL BEING





District borders of Tirana, Kopshti Heidi is marked by blue and Kopshti Xixellonjat is marked by red (left). Graph of socio-economic development in Tirana districts showing uneven resources (right) (Dumani,2018)

PILOT SCHOOLS ARE LOCATED IN POORER NEIGHBORHOODS

The two schools that are currently involved with LC5 in the Kinderpitch program are located in different districts of Tirana. A recent study by professors at the University of Tirana's Department of Statistics classified districts in Tirana to corresponding numbers 1 through 11 as shown above on the left. Kopshti Heidi falls under district 6, and Kopshti Xixellonjat falls under district 7. In district 6 "unemployment is above the average level of unemployment in Tirana with about one-third of the district unemployed" (Dumani, 2018). They were also able to determine that in district 6 there was "more poverty, less education, and more inequality in education than other districts" (Dumani, 2018).

District 7 however, ranks in the top 4 districts for development and is one of the districts with the highest levels of education (Dumani, 2018). The graphic on the right was produced to evaluate the economic and social developments in Tirana's administrative units with data from the 2011 census. This graph was produced with differences from the 2001 census data and incorporated many factors that are condensed down to one graph using a calculated value from numerous variables. The higher the 'peak' or extrusion the greater the development. The X and Y axes show distance from a relative point.

APPROACH

Our goal was to identify how LC5 can build on its strengths and address the challenges of working with under-resourced school systems as it seeks to expand its program in Tirana and in other cities in Albania.

Understand how the program is conducted on a daily basis and who is involved

To understand this, we used interviews, photographs, videos, participant observation, and direct observation. Our interviews were both informal and semi-structured key informant interviews with teachers and directors who work at Kopshti Heidi and Kopshti Xixellonjat. With these methods we hoped to find how the program is carried out, why and when they use the program, how they select children to use the pitch, and how they attempt to ensure all students participate evenly.



Informal Interviews

While at the schools, we spoke and interacted with the teachers and directors of the schools. Upon doing so we will be able to learn more about their personal motivations as teachers and directors for choosing their profession. This will allow us to gain additional insight into what they enjoy about the program, why and when they use the program, how they believe the children benefit from the program, and how they see their participation. We started with baseline questions in order to get to know the teacher or director and followed the natural flow of the conversation. If important questions were missed, we would make sure to bring them up before concluding the interview. A full list of questions we asked is provided in Appendix D. Because of the casual, conversation-like nature, we did not have setup recording equipment, therefore, we took handwritten notes. We then compiled our notes into an online document where we looked to comment on and make 'flags' or mark important quotes and ideas. These 'flagged' pieces of information were later referenced and used in our text as supporting detail.

Key informant interviews

We conducted semi-structured interviews with those who are involved in the Kinderpitch Program such as teachers Mata and Xhepa and trainer Armando. Semi-structured interviews are guided interviews that are conducted more like a conversation than an interview (Beebe, 2013). We had a set list of questions and objectives that looked to learn more about how the program is run, how the children are selected to go outside, and the homelives of the children, but we allowed the interviewee to elaborate on their views. We then probed based off of their responses to learn more about topics that come naturally, even if they are not initially answers to our questions (Beebe, 2013). While the interviewee talked we actively listened and took notes. We used a translator during interviews with those who did not speak English. Afterwards, we transcribed the interviews to help us analyze our data. We analyzed these interviews by making 'flags' or marking important quotes and ideas. These 'flagged' pieces of information were later referenced and used in our text as supporting detail. We also compiled themes and key points said during the interviews, allowing our group to reveal the common viewpoints and structures of the program.

Use photographs and videos to document the existing program

To complement the information and anecdotes about the program we used photographs and videos to document the program. Visual media was a powerful tool for documenting the program in the schools as it provided tangible evidence as to how it is impacting the students and what activities they are involved in on a day to day basis. Our team sought to capture the relationships, interactions, and emotional expression of the people involved in the program.

We took photographs and videos of the programs in action during our school visits. Our group later analyzed the photography and videography with the assistance of the Leuven Well-Being and Involvement Scales. By analyzing images and videos we were able to determine the appropriate level that reflected the children's wellbeing and involvement by comparing observations of their body language and facial expression to the descriptions provided on the scale. Photographs and videos complemented the information that we gained through interviews with teachers and trainers, as they gave evidence of the group dynamics that interviews shed light on. Video has been especially useful for showing how the children interact with those around them and how the trainers and teachers interact in these exercises.

Shooting Script for documenting the schools program from making images as research data (Rose, 2007)

What are the children general feeling towards this program?
Who is involved when these programs are taking place?
How are the students interacting with one another?
Are the girls interacting with the boys or are the genders divided?
How are the children being guided in the program?
How are the programs organized? Is there one big group of students that are participating or are there many smaller groups that teachers are leading?
How does each program change based on which school we are in?
How does the trainer interact with the children? How do the teachers?
How does the coordination/obedience/physical ability differ amongst different age groups?

All of the data that we will collect from this section will be analyzed in accordance to the table in Appendix I.

Participate in the program

During our school visits we also participated in the activities and exercises. Before coming to the schools we were worried about how we would communicate with the children, thinking that the language barrier would hinder our work; however, we now understand that the language of play is universal. Our body language and emotional response is what allows us to communicate with the children. The trainer stressed that we should speak the directions in English because the children will watch and understand the physicality (personal communication, Çhullhaj, November, 2018). By participating we were able to experience the different roles of the participants and gained an understanding of what it's like to lead activities as a trainer, or play the activities like a child. By putting ourselves in someone else's shoes we hoped to understand the motivation of each participant to being a part of this program. This information is then combined with our photographs, videos, and interviews to gain a complete picture of how the program is structured and the interactions between all participants.

It is understood that by participating in this program there could be a bias centered around the social interaction between ourselves and the school's faculty to ensure that we see only the best of the school program. This is why we kept a reflective journal, where the interviewer logs the details of how he or she may have had influenced the results of each interview or interaction that we had while in the schools (Interviewer Bias & Reflexivity in Qualitative Research, 2018). This helped to clarify the credibility of the data in which we collect.

Direct Observation of the Activities and Field Notes

Our team has developed certain criteria for when we are observing the students participating in the activities. The criteria required observing, in each specific activity, the students emotional response, how the students interacted with one another, their participation, and ability to follow direction. This allowed us to see the driving forces of interaction between the children, trainers, and teachers, along with gaining information on the activities in general. (See Appendix H for our Direct Observation field note sheet)

Analyze how children respond to the program

To analyze these interactions, we used Leuven well-being and involvement scales, key informant interviews with teachers and directors, drawing sessions in the schools, and participant observation. Key informant interviews were used to learn more about how the children interact with the program, changes they have noticed in the children since the pitch has been there, and the children's general feelings towards the pitch. Leuven scales are 5-point scales used to evaluate how children perform and respond to activities. The 1-5 system allows for the observer to clearly understand the different levels of well being and involvement of children when involved in the program, 1 being extremely low and 5 being extremely high. We used the scales so that we could gauge how a child is interacting with and responding to the program. The drawing sessions were focused around gaining insight into the opportunities offered by the program, and how the child feels when taking part in it.



Key Informant Interviews

To address the interview questions in Appendix A, B and C, we conducted semi-structured interviews with those who are involved in the Kinderpitch Program such as teachers Mata and Xhepa, Director Selami, and trainer Armando. We also interviewed Gabriella Kuneshka, an Albanian child psychoanalyst. Semi-structured interviews are guided interviews that are conducted more like a conversation than an interview (Beebe, 2013). We had a set list of questions and objectives to learn more about how the children interact with the program, changes they have noticed in the children since the pitch has been there, and the children's' general feelings towards the pitch, but we allowed the interviewee to elaborate on their views. We then probed based off of their responses to learn more about topics that come naturally, even if they were not initially answers to our questions (Beebe, 2013). Additionally, while the interviewee was talking we actively listened and took notes. We used a translator during interviews with those who did not speak English. Afterwards, we transcribed the interviews to help us analyze our data. We analyzed these interviews by making 'flags' or marking important quotes and ideas. These 'flagged' pieces of information were later referenced and used in our text as supporting detail. We also compiled themes and key points said during the interviews, allowing our group to reveal the common viewpoints and structures of the program.

Participant Observation

During weekly visits to the kindergartens that are involved in the Kinderpitch program, participant observation was the primary mode of data collection. This mode of qualitative research allowed for the exposure and understanding of people, processes, and cultures (Kawulich, 2005). Accompanied with field notes, our observations provided us with a "written photograph" of the dynamics and operations of the program (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Through observation we were able to see the participants body language and emotional expression, as well as understand how they interacted with each other. This also provided us with a more detailed explanation of the roles of the teachers and trainers, understanding who communicated with whom and how (Schmuck, 1997). Aside from the emotional and physical behaviors, we also observed the logistics of the program, such as specific activities that are played, how long the activities last, and the group size/age differences of the children. Through participant observation we hoped to form relationships with all that are involved in the program in order to understand the motivation and importance that drove the program and its participants. By immersing ourselves and getting involved in the program we were able to facilitate a better understanding of the behaviors and activities, revealing the importance of the program, which we can now pass on to a prospective audience (Kawulich, 2005).

The Leuven Well-being and Involvement Scales

In order to address how the program can improve the children's 'well being' and 'involvement', we used the Leuven Well-being and Involvement Scales. Well being is described as feelings of ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions and involvement refers to being intensely engaged in activities. These 5-point scales are used to evaluate how children perform and respond to activities. The 1-5 system allows for the observer to clearly understand the different levels of well being and involvement of children when involved in the program, 1 being extremely low and 5 being extremely high. This evaluation is simple and can be administered by anyone who is observing the children (Leuven Scales, 2018).

There were a couple of factors to take into consideration when completing these scales, such that children are not always going to be experiencing high levels at all times, therefore, it is better to administer this evaluation over a long period of time. It is also not necessarily bad for children to be experiencing low levels, as it can be used as a learning experience for all (Leuven Scales, 2018). These scales are provided in Appendix J.

Drawing Sessions within the Schools

During our school visits we provided groups of students with prompts from appendix E and asked them to draw their responses. With this exercise we hoped to gain some insight on how the children felt about the program through a fun and simple medium. According to an Azal University journal article published in 2011, "Children do not choose their tools by chance. Small details can reveal a lot about a child, such as color choice and pressure used when coloring" (Farokhi, 2011, 2221). "When they have a choice they will lean towards a certain type of paper or pencils. This choice reveals mood and personality" and it is this personality and mood that we intend to analyze (Farokhi, 2011, 2221). After we collected all of the drawings we disassembled the drawings into bullets that state important observations of the drawings. These bullets included what colors the children used, the items they drew, and how they drew themselves. These bullets were then analyzed using source information and the data was combined to make reasonable conclusions about the data collected.



Understand how the program interfaces with the school system and how limited resources affects the program

To accomplish this objective, we used a combination of direct observations and key informant interviews. Our observations were largely focused on what resources the programs needed, what they had, and what they lacked. The key informant interviews were with the teachers and directors at the school, as well as Gabriella Kuneshka, a child psychoanalyst in Tirana with experience working in local kindergartens. Through our observations and interviews, we were able to identify specific limitations that affect the program as well as the current state of kindergartens in Tirana.

Direct Observations

During our visits to the kindergartens we gathered information on resources of the schools and the program. This helped us to identify possible resources that could have been depleted with the expansion of this program. We looked to gain information on some of the research questions below:

What are the resources that LC5 uses to maintain this program?

What resources do the schools have to maintain this program?

How do the schools adapt the program to fit their resources? (i.e. number of students, number of teachers, etc.)

What current limitations does the program face?

What is the effect expansion will have on these such resources?

How could LC5 make sure that these resources do not become an issue in expansion?

Key informant interviews

To address the interview questions in Appendix A and C, we conducted semi-structured interviews with those who are involved in the Kinderpitch Program such as teachers Mata and Xhepa and Director Selami. Semi-structured interviews are guided interviews that are conducted more like a conversation than an interview (Beebe, 2013). We had a set list of questions and objectives to learn more about student/teacher ratios, resources the schools are lacking, and how overcrowded classrooms affect the teachers and students, but we allowed the interviewee to elaborate on their views. We then probed based off of their responses to learn more about topics that come naturally, even if they were not initially answers to our questions (Beebe, 2013). Additionally, while the interviewee is talking we actively listened and took notes. We used a translator during interviews with those who did not speak english. Afterwards, we transcribed the interviews to help us analyze our data. We analyzed these interviews by making 'flags' or marking important quotes and ideas. These 'flagged' pieces of information were later referenced and used in our text as supporting detail. We also compiled themes and key points said during the interviews, allowing our group to reveal the common viewpoints and structures of the program.

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



A photograph of an outdoor sports field with artificial green turf. In the foreground, there is a line of blue cones and a set of orange and blue arches. In the middle ground, a group of children wearing bright green vests are standing in a line, looking towards a large target on a white wall. The target has concentric red, black, and white circles. To the right, there is a basketball hoop on a white backboard. The background is enclosed by a green safety net. The text "THE PROGRAM" is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image. There are two solid yellow rectangular shapes, one at the top center and one at the bottom center.

THE PROGRAM

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEDICATED ANIMATEUR

A young boy in a green vest is holding a yellow ball on a sports field. In the background, other children in green vests are visible, along with blue cones and a fence.

Ideally, this program is self-sufficient without a trainer present, as the trained teachers will take on the role of the animateur. Animateur is a term we used to describe the person leading the program regardless of their formal occupation. Even though it ideally should, we noticed that the program does not run as smoothly without the trainer. The children were less focused and less willing to follow direction. We realized that it is difficult for the teachers to take over the role of the trainer and receive the same cooperation. This may be due to the difference in relationship that was formed between a dedicated animateur and a teacher filling that role. We observed that the trainer showed significantly more affection towards the children compared to the teachers, and the children displayed similar affection in return. This was likely because the trainer's relationship was solely driven by the program. The program represents hope to these children, as it is a fun break from their regular classwork to play outside (personal communication, Gabriella Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). The students look forward to these sessions, and associate the trainer with this feeling. As a result of standard classroom dynamics, the students have a more formal relationship with their teachers.

In addition to the different relationship, a dedicated animateur also provides an aid in running the program. We observed that when the trainer would say "stop" every child would often stop and listen. Without the trainer present, however, the teacher would say "stop" and the children would frequently continue to run, ignoring the teachers command. With only one animateur, this teacher was responsible for setting up the equipment for each activity as well as keeping the students organized and running the activities. Set up for drills took approximately five to seven minutes, and during this time the children were expected to wait patiently. We observed, however, that the students would struggle to wait patiently without additional help. In our conversation with the director of Kopshti Heidi, Lindita Selami, she mentioned that the teachers were often overwhelmed with the task of taking the children outside and that "they need a physical education teacher like there is in every elementary school" (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018).

VISITS TO THE KINDERPITCH ARE AD HOC, NOT SCHEDULED

The program is intended to be used daily (personal communication, Cana, October 29, 2018). However, as it is not formally implemented into the daily schedule, the director of the kindergarten decides when the children will go outside and it was currently only being used two to three times a week (personal communication, Çullhaj, October 29, 2018). The absence of a designated time slot means that regular visits to the pitch becomes discretionary. The kindergartens followed a 7:30 am to 5:00 pm schedule that includes time for breakfast, classroom lessons, lunch, and nap time (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). The 9:30-11:30 time slot designated for lessons is the most convenient time to use the pitch.

PLAYING IN THE KINDERPITCH IS USED AS A REWARD FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

The decision to use the pitch was influenced by many factors. In our interviews with teachers, they mentioned that going out to the pitch was often used as an incentive for the children to complete their school work. Teachers told children that if they finish their assignment promptly they can go outside and play. There are also times where they were told if they cannot finish, or if they misbehave, they would not be able to go outside (personal communication, Mata and Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Ideally, this program should not be influenced or incentivized by the children's performance in the classroom. As mentioned above, the ad hoc pitch visits lead to the use of the program being reliant on classroom behavior, emphasizing the need for a dedicated animateur.





THE VAGARIES OF WEATHER INFLUENCE HOW OFTEN CHILDREN PLAY ON THE PITCH

During rainstorms and inclement weather, teachers do not take children to the pitch. "When [it's] raining the court isn't covered, so they can't go. ... In summer it's really hot" (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). When the turf was wet the children could slip and get their clothes wet, which sometimes made parents angry and the children uncomfortable (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). Due to the unpredictability of weather, this limitation on the pitch's use was difficult to control.



CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO THE PITCH IS LESS FREQUENT THAN PROGRAM GUIDELINES

When the pitch was used, only eight to ten students were able to come out at a time due to size constraints. Accommodating more than eight to ten children would create a cramped and chaotic environment (personal communication, Çullhaj, October 29, 2018). A smaller group of children lead to a more focused approach (personal communication, Çullhaj, October 29, 2018). With classes of 35 students, we were curious to know how the teachers selected these small groups. One teacher explained how she “tried to do [it] like a lottery. So [whoever would] win will go out, but [she] tried to put different kids in different days.[This is] so all the kids will have the opportunity to go [outside] once or twice a week ... and play” (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Even with the adjustments made to the lottery system, we observed that in the absence of a formal selection process many of the same children used the pitch multiple times a week. The shortcomings of the lottery system was also apparent during another visit when a group of children came out that had never used the pitch.

PROGRAM IDEALS IN PRACTICE

As mentioned in the background chapter, LC5's goals for the program are respect, self-control, self confidence, gender equality, and support for the children (personal communication, Cana, October 29, 2018). We observed the following on each of the ideals in action:

Respect

During the activities, the animateur made it clear that children were expected to show respect for them and one another. One way that this was done was by ensuring that each student goes through drills one at a time. This develops respect between the children, as they learn to give the others the opportunity to complete the activity on their own. It also cultures respect for the animateurs and teachers, as students are guided to follow the rules of the program. An additional way that respect between the children was developed involved teamwork exercises that broke the large group into pairs or small groups. This teamwork encouraged the children to realize the importance of group work and that they should have respect for one another when working towards a common goal.

Self Control

At the start of a new activity, an animateur walked through a session to show the children what they were supposed to do. When they performed an exercise incorrectly, an animateur would take them by the hand and walked them through the correct steps. This demonstrated to the child how to do the drill correctly, and we observed that they often carried this through to their next attempt. The children also learned how to control themselves socially. When there was both the trainer and the teacher, the teacher helped the students stay in line and behave while the animateur set up and ran the activity. Teaching in this way showed the students how to wait patiently and in an organized manner. When the teacher took the role of the sole animateur, however, this control was not prioritized. In this case the teacher would have to shift focus to setting up equipment, and the children would be left to organize themselves.

Self Confidence

Throughout the pitch sessions, the trainer and the teachers clapped and rewarded the children with positive reinforcement, making sure that they know they are doing a good job regardless of how well they completed the activity. This constant reward shows the child that their participation is valued no matter their athletic ability. The rewards built the confidence of the children, and we observed that afterwards students were often more eager to participate the next time they lined up.

Gender equality

Both boys and girls are spoken to in the same way by the teachers and trainers. In our observations, gender had little impact on the amount of encouragement and attention a child received. That being said, there were times where groups of girls would find themselves at the end of the line when starting activities. A problem that this presented is that there were times when the animateur would be more attentive to children who ran through the activity first. This often occurred in sessions where the trainer was not present, and the teacher was the only animateur. In this scenario, the unequal attention is a result of the animateur's shifted focus to organize the children who had completed the activity.

Emotional support for the children.

A child psychoanalyst who works in Tirana schools told us that ideally you teach children "by loving them, [and] by accepting them" (personal communication, Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). We observed the trainer trying to make the children laugh and have a good time when they were on the pitch. The teachers also worked to support the children, but due to the differences between the teacher-student and the trainer-student relationship they did so in less personal ways. They still congratulated, high fived, and maintained enthusiasm for the students as they completed the activities; however, it was not at the level at which the trainer exhibits.



PERSPECTIVE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF TOWARDS THE PROGRAM

In our key informant interviews we were able to ask the staff of Kopshti Heidi their opinions of the program. The Director of Kopshti Heidi described the pitch as “a great thing” and “a great opportunity for this community” (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). She admired the program and hoped that it would continue to grow and expand into other kindergartens in Albania (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). The teachers agreed that this program is an excellent idea; one teacher emphasized that the program is “a great idea”, but that there were some issues such as “the number of kids in a group” because the classes are “so big” (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Similarly, the importance of how difficult it can be for the children to use the pitch due to the lack of teachers to watch over the children was also stressed (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Through our interviews we saw that the directors and teachers have generally positive attitudes towards the program, even though some concerns were expressed.

NECESSARY SKILLS FOR A TRAINER

Given that the Kinderpitch program is expanding, we also sought the opinions of the program from the trainer. Armando Çhullhaj of LC5 was the sole trainer to visit schools and train teachers to run the program. He was motivated to take this role because he “loved seeing the children enjoy the game,” and believed that the program is a good thing for Albania (personal communication, Çhullhaj, October 29, 2018).

Through our direct observations of Çhullhaj, we noticed some of his key skills and attributes which we believe are critical for the success of the program. He was compassionate with the children and made sure to show the children affection and positively reinforce the activities that they completed correctly. He made the activities fun and engaging. When the children participated in activities and games he constantly acted in an animated way that was encouraging and comic, allowing the children to focus on the activity, but also laugh and have fun at the same time. He was attentive and made sure the children did the exercises correctly, guided them if need be, and made made sure the activity was running smoothly. He was very good at developing strong relationships with the children as well. Çhullhaj made sure to call out each child by their name, showing that he knew who they were, including giving them personalized recognition when running the activities. Çhullhaj occasionally finished the session on the pitch by sitting in a circle and talking to the children. When all of the children gathered around Çhullhaj they are able to take a moment to catch their breath, to reflect upon the activities that they completed, and give some encouraging words before sending the children back into the school.





CHILDREN AND THE PROGRAM

CHILDREN ENJOYED PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM ALTHOUGH THERE WERE DIFFERENCES RELATED TO GENDER AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Ideally, all children enjoy going outside and participating in the program. Through our observations we found that the majority of the children were enthusiastic for the program, however, there were children that did not express similar feelings. While some children were excited to complete the activities and fighting for the front of the line, some children seemed unamused and reluctant to join in. In most of our visits to the school, we observed many differences between the girls and the boys: the boys being more energetic, while the girls were less willing to take the lead and fight for their spots in line. Along with gender differences, we noted differences between children who were more coordinated compared to those who were less coordinated. While we did notice that some students were less involved than others at times, we did find that all children were widely exhibiting average to above average well-being and involvement. When applying the Leuven scales while observing and watching recordings of the program, we found that the children tended to score between three and five with an average of around four. When assigning values to the children we looked at the scale's established criteria, used our own intuition to determine at what level the child was performing, and averaged all of the values that we observed over a given time (rounded to the nearest whole number). After assigning these values we found that children who were less coordinated tended to score threes and fours and those who were more coordinated scored fives.



DIRECTOR AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES TOWARD THE PROGRAM

From our interviews with teachers and directors, we were able to obtain personal accounts of the teachers and directors attitudes on the program. “The pitch, it is a great thing, also the community that the parents or the teachers think that it's a good thing, but also those community other people think that it's a great opportunity for this community” (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). The directors that have been able to experience it, admire the program and hope that it will be able to continue to grow and expand into other kindergartens in Albania (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). The teachers agree that this program is an excellent idea; however, it was made clear that there needs to be a teacher specifically for physical education (personal communication, Mata, November, 26, 2018). During these interviews, the teachers explained how it is difficult to transition from teacher to trainer and receive the same attention and enthusiasm from the children (personal communication, Selami, November, 12, 2018). In an interview with teacher Brixhilde Xhepa, she stressed that the program is a “good idea is a great idea”, but that there were some issues “for example, the number of kids in a group, it's so big” (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Similarly, Xhepa also stressed the importance of how difficult it can be for the children to get outside due to the lack of teachers to watch over the children (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). Through our interviews we can see that the directors and teachers have positive attitudes towards the program, but the lack of resources in the kindergartens make it difficult for them to be enthusiastic.



A photograph of a classroom filled with young children sitting at wooden tables. They are engaged in an activity, possibly drawing or coloring, as evidenced by the papers and markers on the tables. A teacher in a white lab coat stands on the right side of the room, gesturing towards the children. The walls are decorated with colorful posters, including one with a bear and another with a birthday cake. A window in the background shows a bright outdoor scene. The text 'LIMITED RESOURCES CONSTRAIN THE PROGRAM' is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters on a semi-transparent dark background in the center of the image. There are also two solid yellow rectangular shapes, one at the top and one at the bottom center of the page.

LIMITED RESOURCES CONSTRAIN THE PROGRAM



Resource constraints limit the effectiveness of the program. Like many kindergartens in Tirana, classes at the two schools we visited have 30 to 35 students and only one to two teachers per class (personal communication, Mata, November, 26, 2018). Bringing the children outside to participate in the program causes the classrooms to be split, leaving 25 students with one teacher while the other watched over ten in the pitch. The limited number of teachers per class results in suboptimal teacher to student ratios. Brixhilde Xhepa, a teacher at Kopshti Heidi, said that attempts at concrete structure and schedule are an issue due to potential teacher absences (personal communication, Xhepa, November, 26, 2018). When a teacher does not attend school for a day, the other teacher in that class is required to manage a class of 35 by herself. Pulling teachers from other classrooms to bring the children outside would leave another classroom undersourced. The small number of teachers present in the schools made the program infeasible to be used unless all teachers, or dedicated amateurs, are present.

As it stands, however, factors outlined earlier including weather, teacher absences, and resource constraints, inhibit the schools' abilities to keep a regular schedule for the program. A lack of scheduling can be detrimental to the students, and cause the program to be less effective than it might otherwise be (personal communication, Kuneshka, November, 21, 2018). As mentioned when describing the relationship between the trainer and the children, an interview with Gabriella Kuneshka shed light on the fact that the program represents hope for the children. When a child is not able to go out, he or she may see it as a punishment, even though they did nothing wrong (Epley et al, 2004). The child will not understand that they are not being reprimanded, but instead are staying inside due to factors they cannot control. If instead the child were able to understand when they get to take their turn on the pitch, they would be excited and experience this feeling of hope.

LIMITATIONS OF OUR WORK

Language barriers impeded our ability to communicate with administrators, teachers and children

We would have liked to speak directly to all the participants of the Kinderpitch program, but had to rely on translators. Even though the translators did an incredible job, translation is difficult. At times, due to our inexperience as researchers in a cross cultural context, we were unable to probe or ask for clarifications during our interviews. If we had spoken Albanian, we would have talked directly to children to learn more about their drawings, but such conversation requires the building of trust and the time to do so. Even with a translator, we had limited access to children during class for such discussions due to communication difficulties. Some of our visits to the schools were cancelled or delayed because we did not have access to a translator.

Small sample sizes may have skewed our results

The Kinderpitch program was run in two kindergartens, and so our research had a limited scope. While the school staff that we spoke to were largely appreciative of the program and spoke highly of it, there may have been teachers that were more critical and did not want to participate in our research.

Our time in the schools was also limited due to a variety of factors. Our visits to the kindergartens were often impeded by weather or school scheduling conflicts, and this limited our ability to see the program in action as regularly as we would have liked. Increased school visits would have allowed us to use the Leuven scales more frequently and increase the amount of drawings we collected.

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Working with Children

When working with children, researchers have concluded that risk and harm should be minimized and that adequate protection of children and young people is ensured (ESRC, 2018). When we worked with children we made sure to abide by this guideline and to try to keep all of the children's identities anonymous. It was also made clear that we "should also consider the ethics implications of silencing and excluding children from research about their views, experiences and participation" (ESRC, 2018). We made sure to give children the option to express their opinions on the program openly with extremely unspecific and open ended drawing prompts. Ethically, it is unjust to treat children solely as a means for collecting data. We had to make sure that we did not only consider our project, but also how our actions will affect the children. We made sure to build a relationship with the children, to ensure they did not feel as if they were being evaluated. When working with children it can often be difficult to receive consent or to ensure confidentiality of the children. We often had to question who we believed would be able to give consent for the children and needed to be able to gauge how accepting the children were of the activities they were completing. This is why we made sure that we got consent from not just the director, but from the teachers that we interviewed as well.

There is also the ethical consideration that we left a lasting impression on the children's lives. This is why we made sure that we followed our instincts when working with the children to always do what felt right. This meant that if a children seemed reluctant to participate, we did not try to force their participation or make them feel uncomfortable. We were outsiders entering their world and did not want to pose a treat. We wanted the impact that we made to be that of a positive one.

Director may be encouraging teachers to help our project

In our studies, it could be possible that the director of Kopshti Heidi could have been encouraging the teachers to help our project when we asked of it and not by their own will.

This poses a threat to the ethics of our work, which we took it into account when we asked the director for anything. We fully understand that it is unethical to force teachers into doing work that they did not want to do and made sure to ask their personal opinions on what we wanted them to do.

Enforcing a possibly flawed method of picking children may not be good for children

Upon studying the program, we noticed that the means of selecting children to use the pitch can be exclusive to some children. By requesting to see the program, this could indirectly allow for this to occur and reaffirming this justification. This could in turn have a detrimental effect on the children we worked with, as they may be excluded from the program. Ethically this is not okay, but we made sure in our recommendations that they create a more structured selection method for the children so this is resolved in the future.

Interviewing people can be difficult, as the small sample size makes it difficult to remain anonymous.

While we received informed consent from all of the people that we interviewed to use their names in our report, given the small group of teachers and directors, it would be difficult for them to remain anonymous if they wished to. We fully understood that when asking questions about the program to the teachers and director, that we could possibly be putting their jobs at risk. If the teacher was to speak harshfully about the program, and the municipalities did not deem their opinion acceptable, they could possibly have the teacher fired. This is why we asked the teachers if they would like to provide their name for the record or to be kept anonymous. We also understood that certain questions about this program could in turn make them uncomfortable in their responses. We made sure that the questions that we asked were asked in manner where they could provide only as much information as they wanted to provide.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



To realize the benefits of the program requires a schedule and a dedicated animateur

We would suggest that the program adds a reliable student selection method and dedicated animateur. Rather than picking the students at random, we suggest that the children are given a predictable routine for program sessions. A reliable selection method would be beneficial to the students (personal communication, Kuneshka, 21 November, 2018), and a schedule would allow the classes to ensure that all students get to participate equally. This would ensure that all students get to experience the many benefits of the program. We also recommend that the program is not incentivized and reliant on the children's productivity in class, but rather a defined and predictable event.

Additionally, we recommend the use of a dedicated animateur. They can focus on developing a fun and playful relationships with the students without compromising the formal teacher-student relationship. We would also recommend that LC5 open opportunities for outside parties to take on the role of an animateur. This could encourage parents to become more involved in the program. Additionally, graduate psychology or teaching students at local universities may be looking for possible internships or career development opportunities. If LC5 were to employ these students or parents as volunteers to run the program, they would gain the benefits of a dedicated animateur without paying for additional staff. They could take the role of the animateur, but they could also help the animateur set up the activities and organize the children in lines. Parent involvement can also build relationships between themselves and the teachers, creating more transparency between the schools and the children's home lives.

We recommend a possible long term study on the effects of the program on the children

It has become evident to our group that there are many questions that this research has posed. These include, but are not limited to, what are the long term benefits on the children involved in the program, does the program lead to increased outdoor play outside of school, and does the program impact a child's in class performance. This study could prove useful to LC5 as it could reaffirm the positive effects it has on the children, in turn highlighting the importance of the program. It could also be used to improve the program if the findings reveal possible flaws to how the program is run.

We recommend that LC5 consider some of the following questions that deal with their expansion

What qualities, experience, and education make an exceptional trainer?

How can an internship program with university students be developed and sustained?

How might LC5 look to acquire feedback about its program?

How might LC5 develop ways to increase communication and monitoring the program in the schools without being present?

What data is necessary to evaluate the state of the program?

How might LC5 provide the resources to make the program part of the schedule or help schools plan for the program?

OUR CURIOSITIES



Throughout the course of our project, we have been driven by our curiosities to look deeper into the kindergarten program and the factors that influence it. While it would have been possible to simply look at the surface of the program, our curiosities took us beyond the schools to explore all of the factors that influence the program. One thing that we were curious about was the homelives of the students. This drove us to first look at the availability of public space for children to play in Tirana. Through our investigation we began to look into the availability of space for outdoor play, such as basketball courts or soccer pitches, but soon observed that many of these spaces were privatized or run down. This prompted us to think about the opportunities that the children had for play or sports at home. While our project did not directly involve public space, it did lead us to prompting children to draw their favorite activity to do at home in an attempt to understand what they have access to and what they do outside of what we can directly observe. In addition to the activities that the children do at home, we were also curious about the activities performed in the program. While we found how the program is conducted, this initial curiosity motivated us to participate directly and help lead the programs. This led to our observations of the program becoming very interactive with the students, teachers, and trainer. By participating in the program we were able to gain a deeper, more personal understanding of the interactions of the program that often go unmentioned in higher level perspectives of the program.

Throughout classes and work in technology fields, similar evaluations must be done. Projects often have wider impacts than one might initially expect, and it is necessary to uncover and evaluate the impact that they have on all of the stakeholders. This is needed to ensure that as a project continues to evolve it can do so in a way to maximize benefits while finding limitations early in development, as we did in our work with LC5. Throughout our time in Albania we also had to overcome communication and language barriers that we were not accustomed to. This forced us to develop our ability to communicate our ideas succinctly and in ways that minimize confusion.

This is applicable to both our studies and in our future careers. When working in group settings it is important to be able to communicate efficiently and in a manner that everyone can understand. Clear communication, especially without the use of words, is also an important skill when conveying information to the user of a given product. This is especially relevant when developing software or reports that need to convey information to, or persuade an audience. In these situations, communication without relying on words is critical and done through presenting data in a meaningful way. This form of communication was also important in our project work in Albania, as we used photographs extensively in our report to show our work, and had children communicate their favorite home activities and feelings about the program through drawings. Beyond strict project work, we have also developed our ability to work in a group environment. This is key to our coursework and future careers, as we will almost always be in a situation where the ability to work in a group is key.

In addition to the value of our work at home, our work in Albania created value for the children, communities, schools, and LC5. For the children, we worked to create personal value by hopefully aiding LC5 in improving the program as it expands. Improvements to the program would allow the children who participate in it to get the ideal mental, physical and social benefits that Lorik Cana envisioned when he started his foundation. Similarly, improvements and expansions to the program would create community value for the schools that have the Kinderpitches installed in them. An ideally run program would be greatly beneficial for all of the students in the school, as it provides them with an engaging program that builds self-confidence, respect, and support. LC5 also stands to gain value from our project. While they are already growing at an incredible rate, addressing potential limitations in their program may aid them not only in gaining new funding, but also in ensuring that their new programs are implemented to the best of their ability.

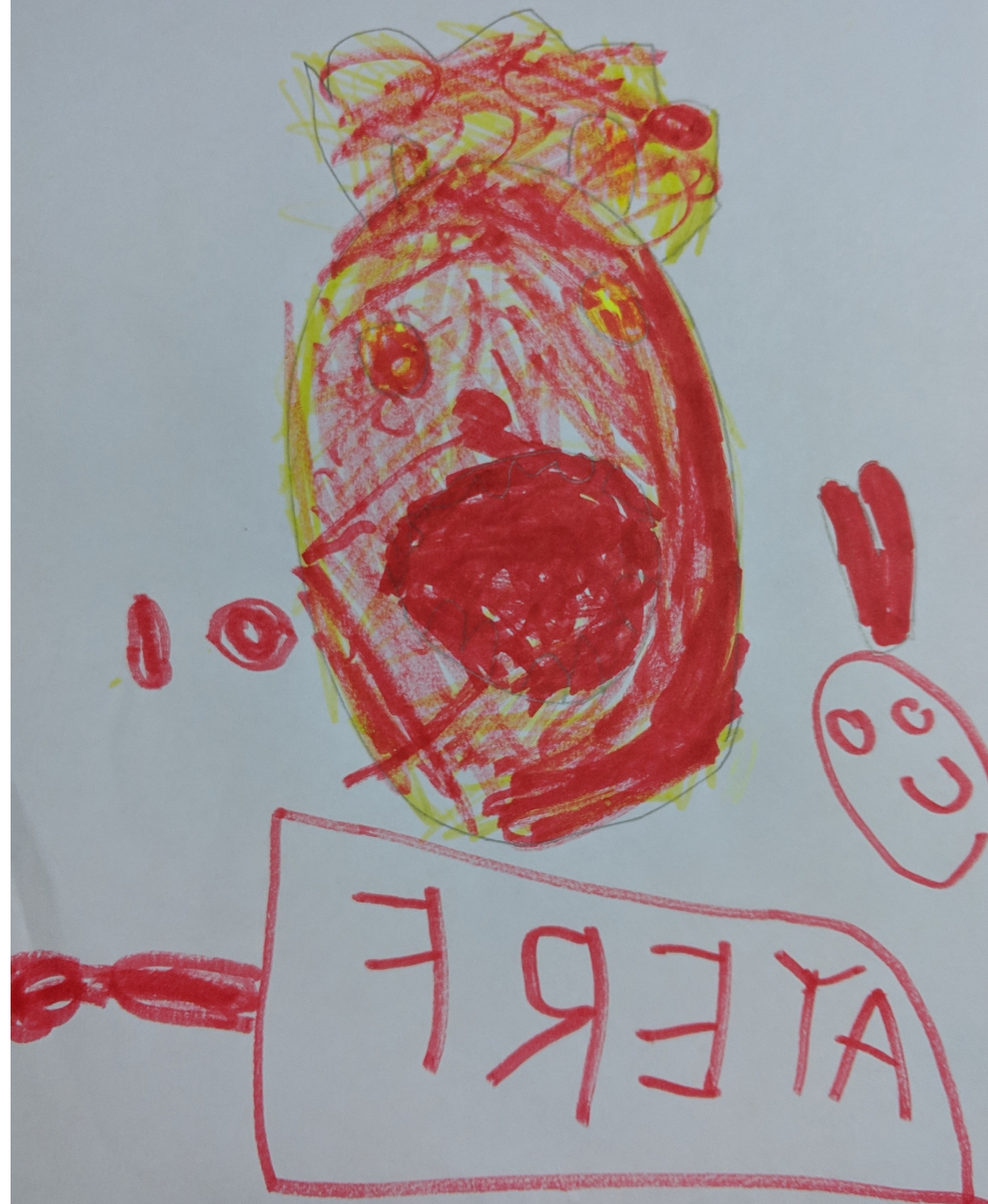


Gallery of Children's Drawings

We asked the children of Kopshti Heidi how they feel when they go outside to play in the kinderpitch. This is a collection of their drawings.

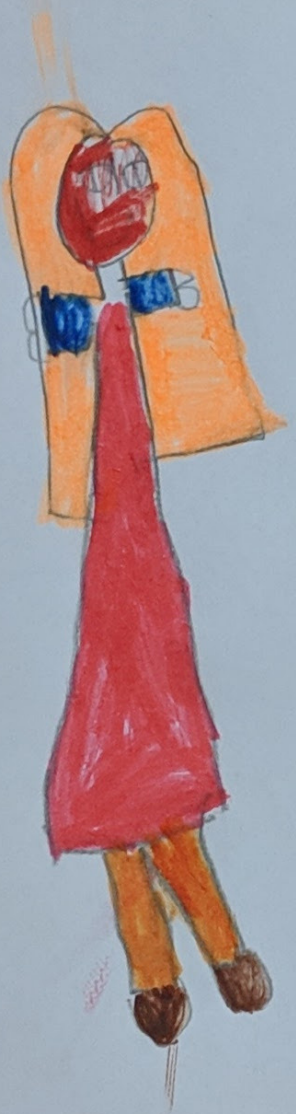


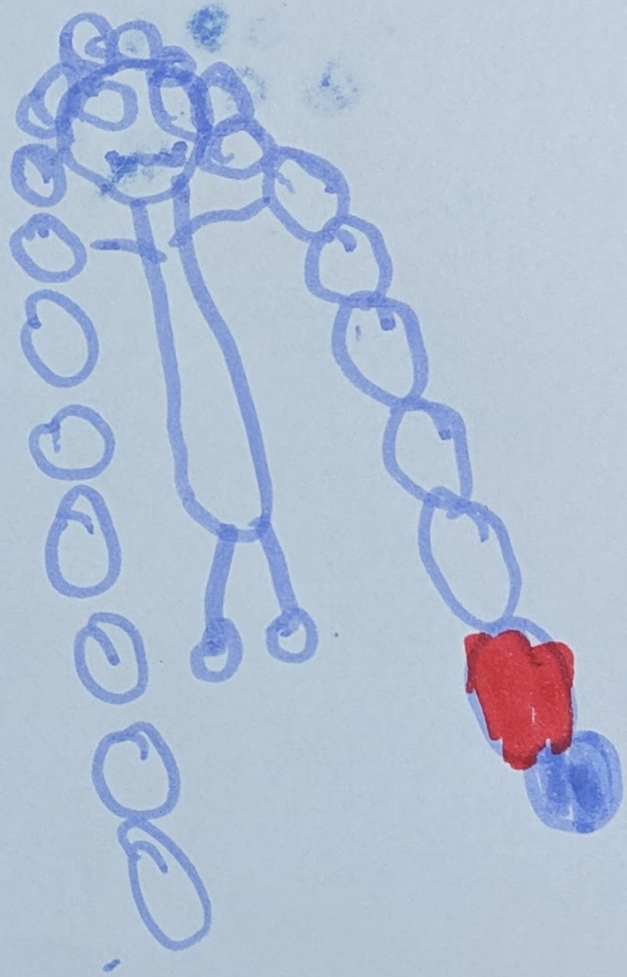
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APPENDIX A: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- How long have you been teaching?
- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- How often do you use the program with this group of students?
- What do you think the students get out of this program?
- Do the students want to come outside and use this pitch often?
- What age groups are a part of the program?
- How many students are in each age group?
- Is participation mandatory?
- How do the activities change depending on the age group?
- How have the students been enjoying the program?
- Do you incentivize the program as a way for students to complete their work and if so how?
- What do you enjoy about the program?
- What did you originally think about the implementation of the program? Did you like the idea of the program at first?
- Has the program impacted the way you feel about sports/play and its educational uses?
- Have you found that children enjoy certain activities more than others?
- Have you seen differences in the children since the implementation of the program whether it be academically, socially, etc.? Have children's behaviors changed?
- Is there a lack of resources in the schools? How does this affect how you do your job? How does it affect the students?
- Are there a lack of resources for the program? Is there anything that could help the program run smoother?

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TRAINERS

- What made you want to become a trainer?
- How do the activities change depending on the age group?
- How have the students been enjoying the program?
- What do you enjoy about the program?
- Have you found that children enjoy certain activities more than others?
- Have you seen differences in the children since the implementation of the program whether it be academically, socially, etc.? Have children's behaviors changed?
- What teachers have you trained?
- How do you plan to find more trainers?

APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR OF THE SCHOOLS

- How long have you been teaching?
- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- What do you want to provide as a director to these children?
- How often do you use the program with this group of students?
- What do you think the students get out of this program?
- Do the students want to come outside and use this pitch often?
- What are your thoughts on the program?
- What are the differences you have seen in the children since the implementation of the program whether it be academically, socially, etc.? Have children's behaviors changed?
- How easy/difficult was it to implement the program into the school curriculum?
- What is special about this program, what is important about it?
- How do the children continue physical activity after school?
- How do the parents feel about their child's involvement in the program?
- What are the struggles that a young child may encounter?
- What are the home lives of these children?
- What are the struggles of being a director?
- Is there a lack of resources in the schools? How does this affect how you do your job? How does it affect the students?
- Are there a lack of resources for the program? Is there anything that could help the program run smoother?
- How can you make sure that all children get outside in a week?

APPENDIX D: INFORMAL INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

- How long have you been teaching?
- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- How often do you use the program with this group of students?
- What do you think the students get out of this program?
- Do the students want to come outside and use this pitch often?

APPENDIX E: PROMPTS FOR CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

- What do you feel when you go outside?
- Draw your favorite activity to do at home.

APPENDIX F: FIELD NOTES FORM FOR OBSERVING THE LC5 SCHOOLS

Soccer in The Schools Direct Observation Field Notes. School Name:	
Category	Observations
Gauge the students reactions and facial expressions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for specifics in body language • Look for positive or negative facial expressions 	
How well are the students working with one another? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all students being included? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If not, who is not included? • Are the students actively cooperating and playing with each other? 	
Gauge the students overall effort and participation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge body language, see if they are willingly participating • Look to see if the students are paying attention 	
Gender participation and distribution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the kids participating in groups that are predominately one gender? • Is there any point when the different genders mix well? 	

APPENDIX G: QUEENSLAND KINDERGARTEN TABLE

The Following appendix is adopted from the Queensland Kindergarten (Queensland Kindergarten, 2018)

<i>Observation:</i>	<i>Interpretation and Analysis</i>	<i>Learning Possibilities and Intentional Teaching</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>In this box would be any observations that you make for the day/session.</i>	<i>In this box would be how you interpret all of your observations and any analysis you can draw from it.</i>	<i>In this box would be any potential learning possibilities that we could have from the observation.</i>	<i>In this box would be any comments that we would have for this observation and any questions that we may have after this observation.</i>

APPENDIX H: LEUVEN SCALES FOR INVOLVEMENT AND WELL-BEING

THE LEUVEN SCALE FOR INVOLVEMENT

Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely Low	Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. The child seems absent and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.
2	Low	Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be moments of non-activity when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around them.
3	Moderate	Mainly continuous activity. The child is busy with the activity but at a fairly routine level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and can be easily distracted.
4	High	Continuous activity with intense moments. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are not easily distracted.
5	Extremely High	The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.

THE LEUVEN SCALE FOR WELL-BEING

Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	The child clearly shows signs of discomfort such as crying or screaming. They may look dejected, sad, frightened or angry. The child does not respond to the environment avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/herself or others.
2	Low	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	Moderate	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	High	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	Extremely High	The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may talk to him/herself, play with sounds, hum or sing. The child appears relaxed and does not show any signs of stress or tension. He/she is open and accessible to the environment. The child expresses self-confidence and self-assurance.