

Children are not invisible: contextualizing the Informed Health Choices critical skills curriculum in Italian schools

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Objectives

The Informed health choices (Ihc) Group¹ developed learning resources for 10 to 12 years-old students with the aim of laying the foundations of a critical health literacy curriculum. To assess the effectiveness of these resources, the Ihc team conducted a cluster randomized trial of 120 schools in Uganda. The trial showed that students who had been taught with these resources developed a better ability to think critically about health messages and to make informed health choices than students not taught with these resources².

After translating the Ihc resources to Italian in 2019 (figure 1)³, we have been carrying out contextualization activities of these resources with the objective to assess the feasibility of introducing the Ihc curriculum in Italian schools.



Figure 1. Cover of the Italian version of "The Health Choices Book" (2019).

Methods

In the 2019-2020 schoolyear we carried out a first pilot study through nine one-hour lessons in two fifth grade classes (46 students) of a public primary school

in Florence⁴. To improve the generalizability of the first study, during the 2021-2022 schoolyear we conducted a second contextualization study in 5 public schools from the north, the centre, and the south of Italy (132 students). To explore our objective, we used both qualitative and quantitative methods.

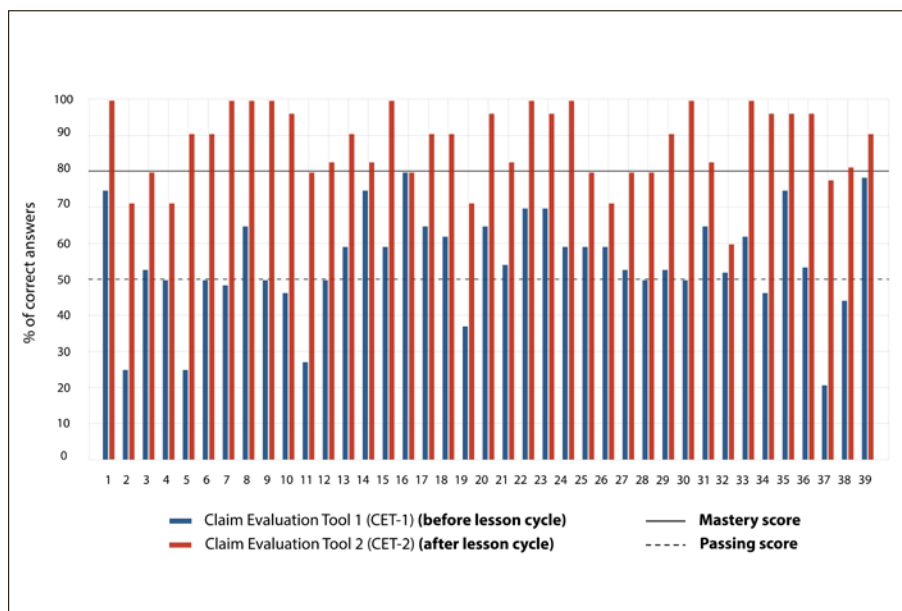


Figure 2. Main results of quantitative analysis from the first study: Claim Evaluation Tool Results (before/after nine-lesson cycle).

Results

Results of qualitative analysis from the first study showed that the schoolteachers and the students considered the Ihc resources comprehensible, appealing, and stimulating and no one reported major or minor issues with the resources. Main findings from quantitative analysis are reported in the figure 2.

In sum, findings from our first study indicated that the Ihc critical health literacy curriculum is well-suited for students and teachers in a primary school context and consistent with the Italian school curriculum. Data analysis from the second study is ongoing.

Conclusions

Throughout the pandemic, children's lives have been subjected to many restrictions, but the impact of these interventions on their lives has not been adequately assessed in health studies. In one word,

they remained *invisible*. The Ihc project embodies a different attitude, which is focused on early educational interventions to foster critical health literacy in children, empowering tomorrow's adults to make informed health choices.

References

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