ADVICE TO THE PROGRAM CAIXAPROINFANCIA; CHANGE TOWARDS A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ACTION MODEL’S ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT: The CaixaProinfancia program starts in 2007 in response to child poverty, from a model of public-private collaboration, through a multi-dimensional socio-educational action. It takes place in the most populated metropolitan areas of 9 autonomous communities, with an annual average of 35,000 families and 55,000 children given the collaboration of 351 entities of the third sector. A complex advice process was launched in 2010 involving a network of 12 Spanish universities to redirect the programme, framed in a more welfare paradigm, towards a model based on the abilities and the empowerment of participants and with territory as unavoidable reference. The goal of this research is to assess the incidence of the advice on the management for the launched change. For this reason, two additional evaluative research have been developed: a) a descriptive statistical analysis of evolution on the impact of the program on children, families and territories, based on the gathered information by the management of the programme; b) a qualitative evaluation of the impact perception by interest groups, based on information gathered through focus groups and interviews. Results show a progressive turn of a first fragmented and timely attention to a more comprehensive and continuous care intensifying the social support. There are evidence of evolution in social institutions processes of work and collaboration. Although regarding the effectiveness of the program to remove the participants of poverty its positive impact can not be confirmed, improvements in the development of opportunities and resilience factors in the participants are recognized. They are mainly explained by the quality of the performed custom and systematic accompaniment. The difficulties hindering the process are: a) of regulatory or administrative type b) of scarce resources of the entities and administrations to develop a quality socio-educational work, and c) resistance to the professional and political culture change by the involved agents.
1. Introduction

The Strategy Europe 2020 proposes to reduce the incidence of poverty in at least 20 million citizens of the European Union (EU) by the year 2020 (European Commission, 2010). In order to measure this policy’s progresses, a new comparative indicator has been developed at European level: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). The indicator defines the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion as those suffering for any of the following situations (González-Bueno, Bello & Arias, 2012): to have a personal income lower than 60% of the average income distribution (relative or monetary poverty); to be in a severe lack of material situation (households that cannot afford the 4 - 9 essential items defined at European level); or to live in households with low occupation intensity (members in age of work performed 20% less activity with respect to their work potential during the reference year).

By 2011 the Spanish State reached an AROPE rate of 27.7%, over the EU’s 27 countries average (EU-27), which was 24.3% (Eurostat, 2013). The AROPE rate for under 16 reaches 32.3% in Spain, five points above the EU-27, which reached 26.9% (Eurostat, 2013). From that data, poverty problems and general social exclusion on children and adolescents in particular are relevant in Spain. A success of this indicator is its approach to a more complete and nuanced definition of poverty considering the phenomenon not only from the low income economic perspective but also considering some key issues related to the life quality or lack of opportunities.

It is noted that the poverty phenomenon in our country has a structural character, in process of extension from the first decade of the 21st century, aggravated by the situation of the economic crisis in which we live (González-Bueno et al., 2012). Participation in the work market in a precarious and discontinuous way, the long-term unemployment, the housing access’ difficulty, the family institution’s...
transformations, and the lack of family and social policies, among other factors, are the causes for family poverty and influence the increase of child poverty. The generational transmission of poverty seems inseparable from social structure, gender inequality and the ethnic group, participating in the so-called circle of poverty (Gamella, 2011; Flaquer, 2012; Girbés, Macías & Álvarez, 2015).

The specific module of the Life Conditions Survey 2012 of the National Institute of Statistics shows that adults have a higher rate of relative poverty when their parents have a lower education level and when they have experienced economic difficulties at home as teenagers (INE, 2012). Hence the concern about the high rates of school failure in our country, understood as non-compulsory studies graduation (Marchesi & Hernández, 2003; Calero, Choi & Waisgrais, 2010) or the early education’s dropout (Fernández, Mena & Riverie, 2010). Thus, Spain leads Europe in terms of early education’s dropout (Eurostat, 2014). Everything seems to indicate that the phenomenon of school failure that specially intensified in contexts of child poverty feeds the intergenerational transmission of poverty and anticipates the exclusion of future adults (Escudero, 2005; Fernández, 2010; García-Alegre, 2014; Bonal, 2014). Therefore, education is postulated as one of the mechanisms to open opportunities, enabling to break this vicious circle in which poverty condemns the children of poorer families to inherit those social exclusion mechanism (Renée & Mcalister, 2011; Riera, 2012; García Alegre, 2014; Girbés et al., 2015).

However, in our country and beyond health care or palliative actions are not identify by long term public policies in order to improve the children conditions in a systemic and comprehensive manner (IFIIE, 2011), with the exception of some local initiatives to improve scholar success (Collet & Tort, 2011; Girbés, Macías & Álvarez, 2015; Civis & Longás, 2015). It should be noted that the policies of public expenditure adjustment developed to respond to financial and economic crisis have not provided a favourable scenario. At national level, the most important strategy is the CaixaProInfancia program (from now on CPI), launched in 2007 by Obra Social de “la Caixa” Foundation, as identified by the project ImPRovE (http://improve-research.eu) selecting it as a case study for social innovation (Kazepov, Colombo & Saruis, 2016).

At an international level, there are some networking initiatives adding different social and educational agents to increase children opportunities and to improve their educational inclusion (Miller, Díaz-Gibson, Miller-Balslev & Scanlan, 2012; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Ishimaru, 2013). Those are emerging strategies to improve the governance for local socio-educational action (Díaz-Gibson, Civis, Daly, Longás & Riera, 2016) also increasing the social capital (Dhillon, 2009; Lee, 2010) and focussing on ensuring the comprehensive and empowering nature of the social support and the provision services, two conditions linked to the welfare policies’ effectiveness and sustainability.

The CPI program aims to give socio-educational support for children between 0 and 16 years and their families at a vulnerable situation due to poverty, aligned with the guidelines of the EU framework to face citizens’ social exclusion through the promotion of policies for equity improvement, social cohesion and equal opportunities. During 2007-10, the program attended 154,328 children and 88,722 families in Spain through a social network made up by more than 350 third sector entities grouped into 32 networks of social entities. The program focused on the goods provision (school team, feeding and child hygiene, purchase of glasses and hearing aids) and services (educational reinforcement, free time and psychotherapeutic care) in the 11 most populated territories in Spain: Barcelona, Bilbao, Gran Canaria, Madrid, Málaga, Murcia, Palma de Mallorca, Sevilla, Tenerife, Valencia and Zaragoza and its suburban areas, reaching its influence to 312 municipalities areas. The program has a budget of 50 million euros per year, of which 93% corresponds to the direct provision of goods and services, attending an approximate average of 35,000 families and 55,000 children each year.

The CPI program has been characterized by its dynamism and flexibility, since its creation it was open to a continuous learning process. A process of reflection from the practice was held in 2010 with the participation of managing institutions and led by the Group PSITIC, which identified its strengths and weaknesses after the first phase of implementation (2007-2010). It mainly concluded on the need to move towards less welfare and more efficient models, given the complex living situation by the participating families. It was estimated that 70% of them, in addition to poverty, had other “social risk” factors associated (housing problems, difficulties in access to basic goods, low levels of education, domestic violence, addictions to alcohol, game and other drugs, and low educational competence of parents) with serious impact on children (psychological insecurity, malnutrition, school failure, violence and addictions). Given the recognition of the need for activating processes of continuous support to families, the CPI promoters decided to initiate a strategic change’s process of an average and long duration, adding actions to meet the some needs (education, health, parenting skills, employability,...) along with social services and other local agents. In order to support and guide it at a large scale a R&D process was activated formalising collaboration between the Obra Social “la Caixa” and a team of 28 researchers from 12 Spanish universities, coordinated by the PSITIC.
group of the Ramon Llull University. The general objectives of the advisers network were: to design a model of innovative socio-educational action and its implementation in those places which need and feasibility justify it.

Although the assessment is an essential and critical dimension in any project, it often becomes a sort of missing link, which does not properly close the projected implementation and improvement cycles. The CPI initial design did not explicitly provide its evaluation, so it was a challenge to organize some strategies to assess the change effects while organizing a systematic plan for evaluation and a new indicators’ collection system that will be effective during the 2016-17. As families’ longitudinal information was not available it has been chosen to carry out complementary evaluation strategies: a) exploit data program incidence to understand its evolution, and b) conduct qualitative research to study the impact perceptions by interest groups. Thus descriptive data are added and CPI program trends are analysed, its main advances and obstacles are identified, and it provides a meta evaluative look of advice reporting the effect that may be generating the change in discourse or theory underpinning the action.

2. Advice and strategies for change in the CPI programme

The conceptual axes guiding the CPI change are: a) socio-educational responsibility, including the development of public-private partnerships (Riera & Roca, 2007); b) the integral and systemic socio-educative action (Civís & Riera, 2007); c) collaboration at micro territory levels of networking (Longás, Civís, Riera, Fontanet, Longás & Andrés 2008; Díaz-Gibson Civís & Longás, 2013).

The advice was focused on building a socio-educational action program model along with the coordinating entities of local networks, external consultants and CPI technical team. The design incorporates the carried out experience and the consensus-based theoretical and practical improvements culminated in 2011 with the edition of the CaixaProinfancia program: Model of promotion and comprehensive development of children in situation of poverty and vulnerability, revised and reissued in 2013 (PSITIC, 2013a). Entities implemented from the year 2011 the first changes that required the revision of the model and worked actively to edit the Social Action Model (PSITIC, 2013b), that is a cornerstone for the social and educational action of the target population, and services’ guides, re-conceptualized as applets, Educational Reinforcement (PSITIC, 2013c) and Psychotherapeutic Care (PSITIC 2013d). There is also a model of Parent Skills Training and it will be soon launched the Free time and family environment 0-3 models.

Currently, the model is based on a systematic process of action/social support from which are developed complementary processes of support according to multidimensional social action plans customized in each child and family (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Socio-educational action model from the CaixaProinfancia program

Source: Personal compilation base don PSITIC model (2013).
Current intervention with families is made by combining the following strategies-actions; reinforced by the free provision of goods when needed:

- **Family support**: professional, social, psychological and pedagogical accompaniment of empowerment and personal and familiar development, through the systematic accompaniment, positive parenting workshops, family environments 0-3 years and the provision of goods in the form of food, hygiene and health or school supplies.
- **Support for inclusive education**: support for minors schooling, psychotherapeutic care and education in leisure time and educational reinforcement subprograms.
- **Strengthening the “social network”**: promotion of the environment and peer relationship, network coordination with educational agents (social services, schools, institutions...) to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated action focused on the child (in “micro network”), which extend the social capital of these children and families.

Undoubtedly the raised areas are interdependent. As it is also clear within each area the range of possible actions can be significantly enhanced in the future. The programme continuous aim is to improve the performed actions quality, in its own and in its complementarity relationship and to diversify the actions and strategies to improve the health, the education of parents and the educational success of attended children. Moreover, from the program and in an optimal collaboration with other public, social or business initiatives, the intervention systemic approach should grow with proposals in new fields as necessary as the promotion of the occupation or the citizen participation.

From the year 2011-12 other initiatives were undertaken to support the knowledge transfer and the development of the innovation program in addition to the conceptual model, we highlight:

a. **Territorial mapping or detailed assessment of needs and resources by city/territory**, contrasting the reality with the program impact, to guide its redirection.

b. **Implementation of community rounds tables**, involving the different territory agents, to improve children care and socio-educational governance.

c. **Promotion of innovation projects through open competition to institutions in order to enrich the CPI socio-educational action proposal**.

d. **To establish agreements with municipal authorities to formalize collaboration and stimulate the mutual commitment in the promotion of local networks (neighbourhood or district)**.

e. **Design an evaluation plan, systematizing the evaluation, conceived in a dynamic way to learn about the impact of the program, pay accounts to stakeholders and improve the effectiveness of the developed action**.

Regarding the future, there will be continuous work in the theoretical models that underlie the socio-educational action, to present a CPI Observatory that will ensure the program evaluation systematization and dissemination, signing collaboration agreements with the respective Education Departments of the Autonomous Administrations, consolidate territorial networks, and a deep training for educational agents.

### 3. Objectives

Those are the objectives of this research:

- **Analyse the evolution of the program incidence and their consistency with the theoretical orientation changes proposed form by the advice**.

- **Evaluate the perception of the program impact on the interest groups and assess their consistency with theoretical orientation changes proposed from the advice**.

### 4. Methodological design

The evaluation of the program impact is limited by the data collection system carried out by its managers, exclusively oriented to meet the program’s administrative needs. This has impeded to analyse the family and children traceability and a possible correlation between results by participants and type of support provided over time. In order to approach the program evaluation, and assess its effectiveness, two complimentary researches were developed (I and II) evaluating the arising changes from the advice team according to its consistency with the theoretical model implemented from 2011.

**Research I**

It is a quantitative study that examines the program impact on different courses and hypothetical changes in the type and extent of its action with families (goods and services). Given the theoretical premises of the advice, its effectiveness will be considered to the extent that it increases the prevalence of children and families (persistence or continuity in the accompaniment), increase the services (developer orientation or empowerment) lowering the goods (assistance), and increase the services diversity (comprehensive action).
The sample is composed by 199,765 cases (children and families) gathered between the academic year 2007-08 and 2013-14. The gathering data tool is the database generated from management software, in which entities add participants and record the provided goods and services for its subsequent billing. Specifically the information is organized around the following factors and variables: a) features the children participants (age, gender, nationality, prevalence and course of permanence), b) profile for participating families (parenting, number of children, employment status, nationality), and c) services and supports that deploys the CPI programme for each participant (type of aid, number of different aid, number of goods, number and type of services). The performed analysis consists on a descriptive statistical exploitation of the evolution of the selected variables, comparing its behaviour in different implementation courses. The information was treated by the SPSS program v.22.

5. Results

Research I

Multiple results are presented only to those directly related to the first objective. In them it is revealed the existence of significant changes in the proposed for the advice line, mainly notes the evolution of the program incidence towards a more integral service.

Firstly, it is observed that in the program development the proportion of new participants have decreased, with 31% in the last year, while the percentage of prevalent increases up to 69%, with 50% of participants remaining 3 or more courses. We believe that a greater presence allows better monitoring and accompaniment throughout the process of children and their families.

Secondly, the increase in the number of children receiving more than one type of aid confirms the trend towards providing more comprehensive and complete care (Figure 3). Incidence data also indicate a sharp decline in the number of participants who only have access to one type of assistance from the second course (from 63.6% in the course to 40.8% in the last one). At the same time it progressively increases the proportion of participants accessing to: a) 2 types of different aid (from 23.9% to 32.6%); b) 3 types of aid (from 9.4% to 19.6%); and c) 4 types of aid which, although regarding to the overall means a minority choice, its three times the initial percentage (from 2.8% to 6.3%).

Finally, the number of participants in services grows, increasing the more comprehensive care at the expense of those who only receive goods (Fig-
The comparison between the results from the beginning of the Program and the Course 7, indicates a marked reduction of the associated families with exclusively goods assistance (64.7% to 36.9%), while there is a strong increase of the relative proportions that receive goods and at the same time are involved in services (from 33.1% to 52.1%) or exclusively involved in services (from 2.2% to 11.3%).

Regarding the services (Figure 5), we note that the sub-programme on Educational Reinforcement is the one that most boys and girls received throughout all courses, from 36% to 48%. On the other hand, a clear growth of Non-Formal Education and Free time, and Psychotherapeutic care sub-programmes are detected.

A child entering the program is more frequent in two age ranges: between 0-3 years, and between 7-12 years. However, data indicate that 0-3 group of age basically receives subsidies of goods related to health promotion (hygiene and feeding) and, on the other hand, there is a low educational attention to this group of children.

Finally, the program’s incidence research on the three selected variables (participants prevalence, number of assistance received and its typology) seems to confirm, from the beginning of the advice (2009-2010), the trend to abandon the more car-
ing model, focused on the delivery of goods, to advance towards a model more focused on services, more comprehensive and of continuous support. Its only exception is the age range 0-3 years.

Research II

The impact of perception results’ evaluation provides relevant information about the positive effects on families, children, and CPI program collaborating entities and in the territory, according to the developed model’s proposed guide. The category program awareness identifies that knowledge gets stronger as we get closer to the population, which is the program goal (families in situation of vulnerability or social exclusion). Direct participants (families and technicians of the collaborating entities) constitute a first circle of knowledge, as they have detailed information of the CPI and its operation. A second circle, of a more general and diffuse knowledge, composed by families living in neighbourhoods where the program are more in-
tensively being implemented, as well as other professionals and agents working in the district or even in institutions that somehow benefit from the CPI action (schools, public institutions and other entities). It is frequent that workers from social entities collaborating with the program have a detailed knowledge of some of the different sub-programmes (in which they are involved) but not of the requirements to access the CPI program as well as the global nature of its action. Finally, the socio-educational agents that do not collaborate in the programme and the general population have a very vague knowledge of it. It also stands out that there is some confusion between the programmes offered by institutions and services of the CPI program, as well as the finance sources of each project even among its participators.

Figure 6 presents a conceptual map summarizing the impact results perceived by families, professionals and key actors of the territory, the second category of our analysis.

We emphasize that the CPI program is highly valued due to six great reasons for impact on families:

- It represents an economic relief for families,
- It contributes to the autonomy by improving parental competencies,
- It develops the active commitment of all those involved in the children education,
- It helps to improve social relations and the parental integration (informal support groups are created around entities and sub-programmes so the families will feel accompanied by other families in a similar situation, as by professionals in the program),
- It improves the family cohabitation (relational health),
- It allows to some free time to look for a job.

At the same time, the benefits in the minor participants in the program are focused on:

- A tangible improvement in motivation, attitude studies and school performance,
- A greater school integration,
- A general improvement of well-being and self-esteem,
- A progress in social relations and behaviour.

It is mainly recognized that the social action strengthen by entities generates a greater commitment in families, what is essential to promote processes and move from a welfare approach of “beneficiaries” to “participants”. Both professionals and families recognize the more comprehensive and systemic approach in order to express that the direct impacts of improvement on minors and families influence each other. For example, it indicates that parental capacities’ for improvement allows to strengthen the academic personal performance for children’s development, while children progress show positive results for families, contributing to an ambiance of confidence and trust.

Regarding entities there have been identified action changes, given that many are moving towards a more work comprehensive approach, partly supported by agreements between entities to follow common action criteria and to systematize socio-educational action. There is a broad recognition of the positive effects provided by action models in relation to the entities technical and methodological quality of services. Some of this improvement is also related to the administration collaboration with public services and the recent push of some territorial networks as pilot experiences. The social capital of practitioners and participants grows insofar its quality and quantity of links and relations of collaboration.

Figure 6. Map of CPI program’s perceived impact results.
and trust increases. A broader social capital represents more and better resources to deal with goals or challenges. At territorial level, the program incises over some neighbourhoods, not all, but beyond the particular social action that generated when acting as its multiplier. As a CPI program result, it unequivocally emerges the creation of a community network of socio-educational action, which integrates different professional, entities and institutions, empowering the social capital and enabling global interventions designed to improve the care of the family needs.

Finally, in the program categories of weaknesses, strengths and opportunities there is an overlapping, when some issues that some informers are weaknesses are opportunities for others.

We identified as weaknesses the concerns about the economic dependence of families, institutions and public administration that CPI program can generate in the current context of recession in social benefits. Despite of this, subsidies on goods are still very needed and help to retain the accompaniment, so that it is agreed that it should be maintained with some consistency.

Two key strengths are highlighted for it implementation: the human quality and professional’s devotion, and the continuity of the program, which allows establishing a strong bond between professionals and families. However, in sub-programmes of educational strengthening and psychological the experiences on professional care quality depend on institutions, with high satisfaction when professional teams are stable and low when they change frequently.

Professionals and experts value networking as a strength for it implementation: the human quality and professional’s devotion, and the continuity of the program, which allows establishing a strong bond between professionals and families. However, in sub-programmes of educational strengthening and psychological the experiences on professional care quality depend on institutions, with high satisfaction when professional teams are stable and low when they change frequently.

As noted, in the program evolution its sustainability arises through the promotion of a public-private partnership model in the social and educational fields. It presents an important innovation in the experimentation of new society models (Riera & Roca, 2007). There are shown positive effects on families, children and adolescents, on the CPI program’s collaborators and in the territory, in the developed model’s expected direction.

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6. Discussion and conclusions

Given the stated objectives on the incidence program’s evolution its impact and their consistency regarding raised theoretical orientation, it is confirmed the existence of significant changes on the advice’s proposed guide. Altogether, it is perceived the evolution of the program incidence towards a more complete service by mobilizing the intervention paradigm and towards a model with greater socio-educational emphasis (Civís & Riera, 2007). There are shown positive effects on families, children and adolescents, on the CPI program’s collaborators and in the territory, in the developed model’s expected direction.

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The results pointed the validity of the following socio-educational action proposal approaches from the CPI program:

- Coordination and collaboration between public administration, social services, school and institutions to promote a comprehensive quality action.
• The application of action educational oriented models from a systemic and comprehensive perspective focusing on the development of potential and opportunities through sub-programs - rather than palliative actions of deficits-goods supplies-.
• Improvement of the technical and methodological quality of services along with greater work systematization and the adoption of common criteria between entities.
• Understanding of the social support and education as a fundamental principle of the intervention, committed to the actions customization and the individuals empowerment.
• Organization of local networks of entities, schools and social services for joint collaboration in the territory in a contextual way.

There are proposals for expansion design improving of the participants age up to 18, the development of educational programs in the age range of 0-3 years, and the collaboration increase between programs and resources of the territory, both regarding the promoter ownership (public, social or private). The results indicate the need to supplement the program with other services and policies to achieve greater impact and sustainability, as appointed by other researches (Miller et al., 2012; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Ishimaru, 2013).

Given the procedural nature of the changes and improvements in participants, and that the impact program requires medium or long term follow up (which is not possible to do at the moment), it is premature to validate the program and its redirection effectiveness. In this regard, we emphasize the need to supplement the assessment of perceived impact with an impact assessment through methods that allows an interavalor measurement, the quantification of the observed changes in the participants and the finding of at what extent the CPI action improve the children and families in poverty situation opportunities and status. It will also be interesting to extend the above presented results for the future using new methodological trends aimed at measuring the social return of the investment of the type SROI (Social Return On Investment).

Its assessment can help to disseminate the program and its benefits for the population in general. The return of the assessment results for entities, the collaborative institutions and the population, make it relevant to involve technicians from the program and the families in the CPI evaluation, is important for this purpose. Our study makes clear the great diversity of characteristics between territories and the heterogeneity in identifying weaknesses and, mainly, improvement areas. We believe that the different stakeholders participation in the programme evaluation contributes to take into account the needs and specific potentialities of each territory, for a more contextual evaluation. On the other hand, we note that difficulties hindering the process do not invalidate theoretically the model that guides the advice, they rather question the validity of the departure model, more welfare-oriented and quite entrenched in our country (IFIIE, 2011). In the absence of resources and some inability to improve the results meeting the inclusion criteria for children and equity, it is of interest to monitor new proposals for socio-educational action based on joint responsibility.

We finally highlight the interest and the effectiveness of the synergies between the programme and the university experts’ network advising the CPI program redirection. The value of the proposed change modifies models and professional cultures since it promotes cross-cultural experiences (inter-agency, interdepartmental and interdisciplinary) aimed to improve coordination and organize collaboration among socio-educational agent of the same territory. It’s a collaborative innovation (Díaz - Gibson et al., 2013), focused on specific, close, territories of (local) governable measure where it is possible to put people at the centre of the joint action. We could think that CPI is experimenting with a new model of governance, heir to part of the theoretical approaches of the development community, generator of social capital and adapted to the reality of modern States (Lee, 2010; Díaz-Gibson et al., 2016).

Reference


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Notes

1 Items: top ay the rent, keep the house warm; face unforeseen expenses; a meal with meat, chicken or fish (or its vegan equivalents) at least 3 times a week; to pay for holidays at least one week a year; a car; a washing machine; a colour TV; a telephone or mobile.

2 Universidad Ramón Llull, Universidad de Comillas, Universidad de Deusto, Universidad de Murcia, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Universidad de las Islas Baleares, Universidad de Las Palmas, Universidad de la Laguna, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Universidad Rovira i Virgili, Universidad de Málaga y Universidad de Zaragoza

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[ADVICE TO THE PROGRAM CAIXAPROINFANCIA; CHANGE TOWARDS A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ACTION MODEL’S ASSESSMENT]


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