6.4. Teaching and Learning

The Pillowcase Project espouses a child-centered learning philosophy. As the document that informed the original American Project puts it, there has been movement away from teacher-centered approaches towards 'student-centric learning' that is 'focused on real life situations outside the classroom in order to improve children's engagement'.[1] And, as the American Red Cross *Educational Standards Report* (p.3) explains, the Project incorporates 'child-led education that demonstrates how children are positive contributors to preparedness, response and recovery'.

Child-centered learning is informed by the insistence in the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1987 that the child has the right to survival and development (i.e. the realization of their full potential), to protection (i.e. the child should be kept free from harm) and to participation (i.e. the right to participate in all matters affecting them, to express themselves in ways of choice, to be listened to, and to engage with diverse sources of knowledge). It is based on the notion of educating the 'whole child' so fostering the psychosocial wellbeing and full panoply of cognitive, socio-affective and physical potentials of the child. As a principle child-centeredness has implications for the learning process, the child no longer being conceived of as a passive recipient of knowledge but as actively engaged through interaction, observation, exploration and enquiry as they go about constructing understanding and making sense of the world around them.[2]

Child-centered disaster risk reduction, an evolving concept that has enjoyed ever greater attention over the past few years, draws upon and coalesces the key tenets of child-centered learning, as drawn from a child rights' 'best interests of the child' philosophy, and disaster risk reduction education. It focuses upon learning approaches to disaster preparedness and risk reduction that place the child at the starting point and center of the learning process, that give space for the voice of children to be heard (and to be seen to be heard), and that enable children to participate in resilience building in their home, school, near-at-hand and wider community. 'While child-centered DRR acknowledges that adults have responsibility to protect children and addresses their needs, it also fosters the agency of children and recognizes the role of children as powerful "agents of change" in their communities and beyond.' [3] International case studies have found that 'child-centered disaster risk reduction programs have increased children's knowledge of risks and preparedness skills, have instigated child-led prevention, mitigation and adaptation projects, have made some school environments safer, and have improved children's capacity to contribute to disaster response'.[4] Examples of child-centered disaster action

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[1] Johnson, V.A. Undated. *Developing and Evaluating Effective Emergency Preparedness Programs for Children and Youth*. Internal American Red Cross document. 23.

[2] Kagawa, F. & Selby, D. (2014) *Child-Friendly Schooling and Peacebuilding.* New York: UNICEF. 2-3.

[3] UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)/SAARC Disaster Management Center. (2015). *Child-centered Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia: Basic Concepts.* Kathmandu: ROSA/SAARC. 21.

[4] Johnson, V.A. Undated. *Developing and Evaluating Effective Emergency Preparedness Programs for Children and Youth*. Internal American Red Cross document. 24.

learning include: student involvement in school and community vulnerability assessment projects with results subsequently presented to the community; students working with adults on resilience building projects (such as reforesting); students mounting disaster prevention awareness raising projects through posters, displays of work, street theatre and social media.[5]

A useful typology has been developed[6] for child participation in disaster risk and preparedness change agency and advocacy (see *Figure 3*). This sees the disaster risk and prevention learning process (within which the child also has voice and agency) as important in its own right but also a springboard for children speaking out about local community resilience building needs and, beyond that, by means of enquiry and action projects, contributing to community engagement in disaster preparedness. It takes child advocacy beyond simple, unquestioning participation in adult-led projects to projects in which children manifest horizontal, co-initiating leadership.

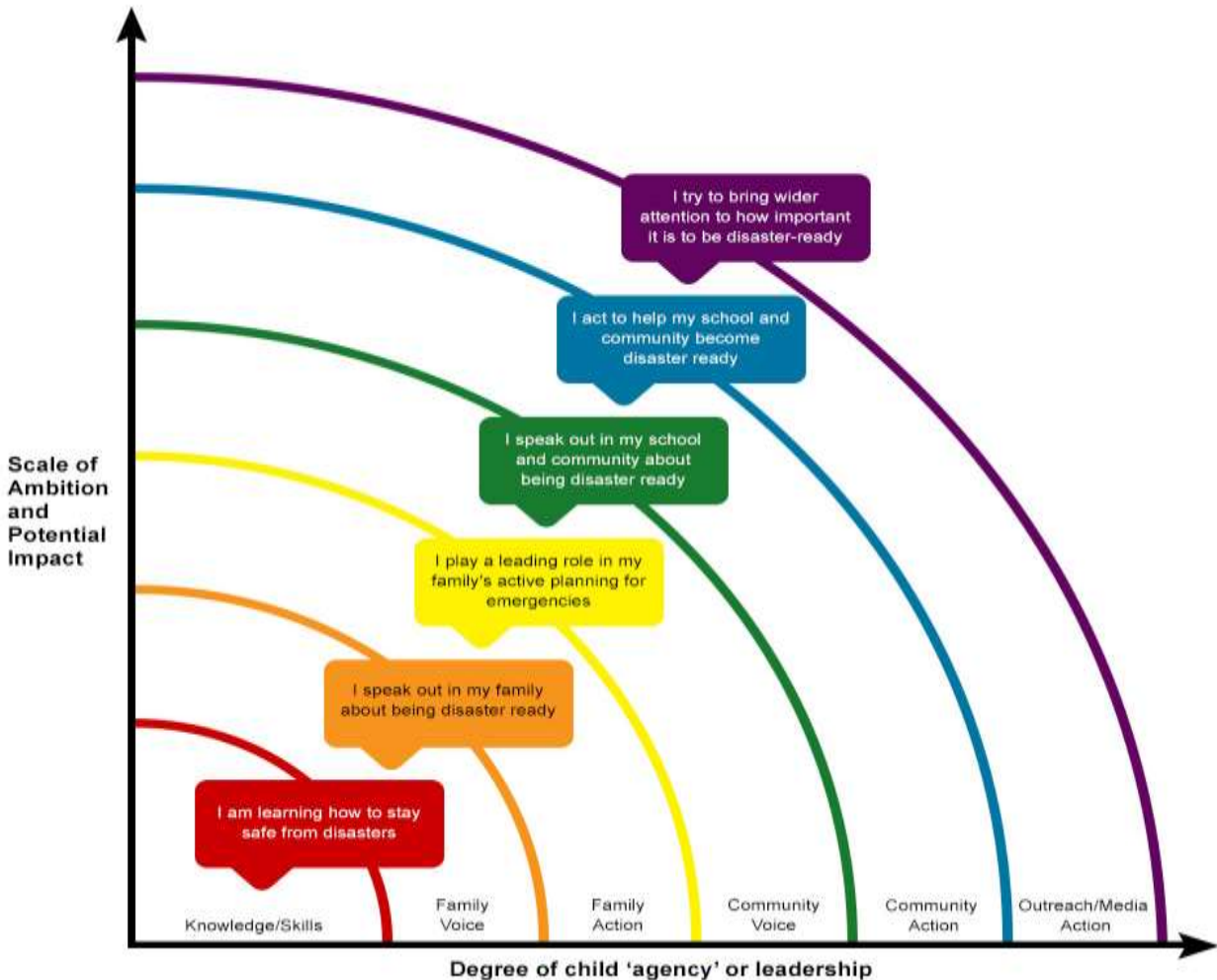**Figure 3. Levels of Child Agency and Potential Impacts**

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[5] See, for instance, Selby, D. & Kagawa, F. 2013. 'World as "Lasting Storm": Educating for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Green Teacher*, 100, Summer, 21-32.

[6] Beck, E., Cameron, C., & Tanner, T. (2009). *Children and Disaster Risk Reduction: Taking Stock and Moving Forward*. Brighton (UK): Institute of Development Studies. 22.
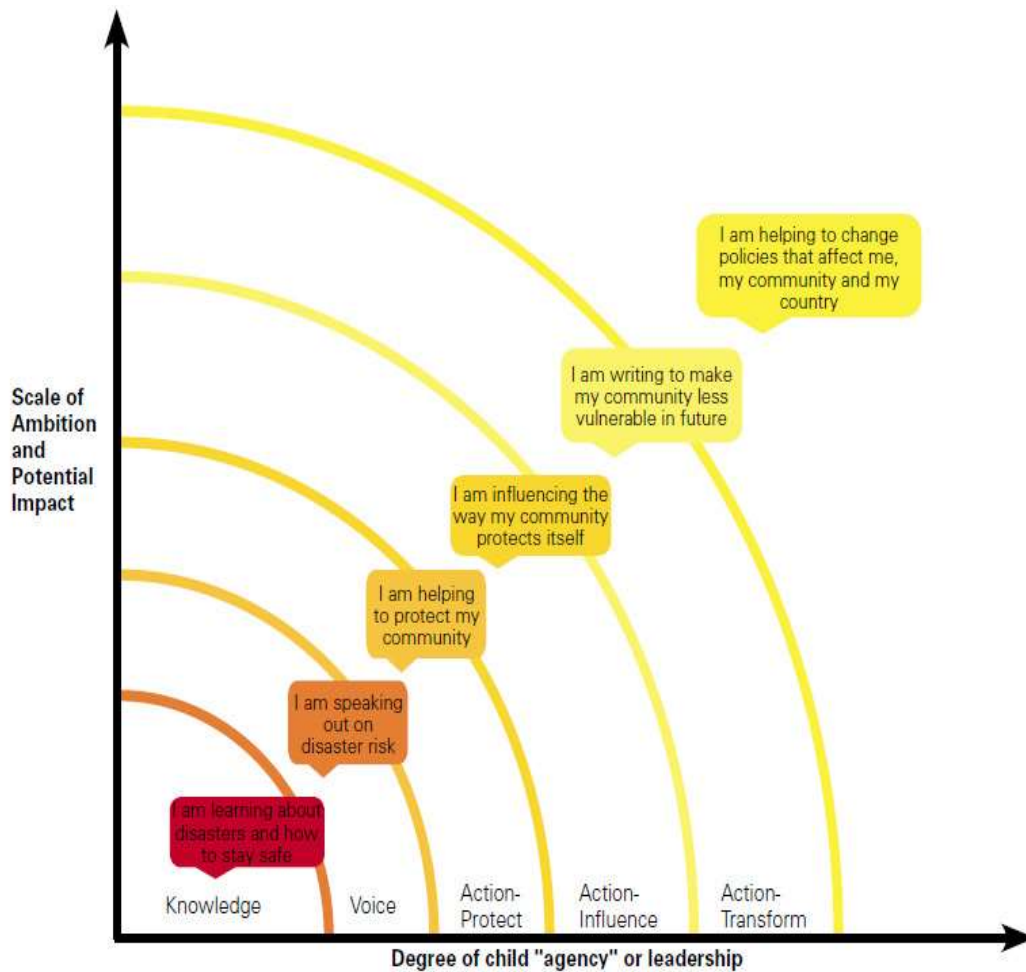
The Pillowcase Project is itself an approach to child-centered disaster risk reduction. Its framework of Learn/Practice/Share involves students in various forms of active learning, as will be discussed below; it calls upon students to practice safety actions to which they have been introduced; it then asks students to share and utilize what they have learned at home and more widely. American Pillowcase Project learning objectives include having students 'use their knowledge to act as advocates for emergency preparedness in their homes and communities'. The British Pillowcase Project aims to have children 'share the information they have learnt to help build a more resilient community' while the Hong Kong Project seeks to have students 'share their knowledge and promote disaster preparedness in their families and communities'. Student engagement with adults in the community is deeply engrained in both Mexican and Peruvian Pillowcase Project conceptions and proposals.

Figure 4: The Pillowcase Project Disaster Preparedness Advocacy/Action Rainbow

Scale of Ambition and Potential Impact (vertical axis)

Speech bubbles from top to bottom:
- I try to bring wider attention to how important it is to be disaster-ready
- I act to help my school and community become disaster ready
- I speak out in my school and community about being disaster ready
- I play a leading role in my family's active planning for emergencies
- I speak out in my family about being disaster ready
- I am learning how to stay safe from disasters

Horizontal axis labels: Knowledge/Skills | Family Voice | Family Action | Community Voice | Community Action | Outreach/Media Action

Degree of child 'agency' or leadership (horizontal axis)

Inspired by the typology laid out and discussed immediately above, we offer *Figure 4*, the *Advocacy and Action Rainbow*, as a typology appropriate to The Pillowcase Project student action and advocacy ambitions. The typology follows the original by adhering to its Knowledge to Voice to Action continuum but adds continua for Voice and Action for each of the three spatial levels of home/family engagement, near-at-hand community engagement and wider community engagement. School is added as itself a community existing within and linked to the wider community.

From the typology we can ask fundamental questions about Project goal realization under the Share dimension of the Project framework. First, there are strategic, programmatic questions. Is sufficient put in place to support and facilitate students sharing and advocacy of their disaster preparedness learning? Are students given guidance and practice in how to disseminate and advocate for their learning at home and in the community? Are there follow-up lessons in which students share and reflect upon their experiences of sharing and advocating, so perhaps honing their skills? Second, there are recording, monitoring and evaluation questions. Were we to shade in the sections in the graphic where we know child sharing, advocacy and engagement is happening, which

areas would be left untouched? What are the implications for the realization of the learning objectives set out immediately above? Are appropriate and sufficient mechanisms in place to know whether, how and with what effect children have shared and advocated with their families and out in the community? [We note, ahead of the upcoming evaluation discussion, that, in most cases, data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes ends with the close of or soon after the lesson(s) allowing no space to ascertain whether Project advocacy ambitions for children have been realized over the following weeks and months.] If such mechanisms are not in place, what would those mechanisms look like and how could they, cost effectively, be put in place? We return to this issue shortly.

> **Recommendation 11:** *The Pillowcase Project training/guidance manuals and presenter handbooks should lay out clearly processes whereby students are to be prepared and equipped for a sharing and advocacy role and how they should go about arranging teacher-led follow-up sessions in which students share and reflect upon their advocacy experiences.*

Returning to the learning preceding sharing outside of school, there are some questions regarding whether Project in-class learning processes are conspicuously child-centered enough. In some of the case studies there is reference to pressure of time for Project session(s) leading to the curtailing of child-centered learning. Hong Kong is a case in point with team members and volunteers reporting struggles to find sufficient interactive space and difficulties in finding time to fully engage with concerns and ideas put forward by individual children. Allegiance to child-centered learning stands in tensile relationship with the constraints that The Pillowcase Project faces. There is strong commitment to child-centered learning philosophy and approaches but, in the case of the staff and volunteer delivery model and sometimes the teacher delivery model, there are severe time and organizational parameters to be worked within. This can lead to a trimming of what child-centered learning calls for. This probably explains the rather didactic tenor of some of the Project delivery materials. Looking through presenter guides from the seven jurisdictions involved we find a a light but recurring didacticism in the class management guidance given with repeated use of phrases such as 'Tell students that', 'Explain that' and 'Show students'; also confinement of interaction more or less to teacher-directed question and answer exchanges with individual students. Spaces for horizontal interactions between students are less in evidence as are windows for student-initiated interventions and curricular redirection.

In the presenter guidance of several participating jurisdictions, advice is given on how to keep on track by deflecting student questions but advice is not necessarily given on how to return to the concerns that have been deflected. We take the caution of American colleagues that 'the written materials do not do a good job of delineating the interactive pieces' and that, in reality Project lessons are very active and participatory occasions (we have not observed lessons) but there is a good case for reworking the guidance given to presenters so as to optimize the child-centeredness of the learning process. This issue very much brushes shoulders with that of the length of time available for lessons. Child-centered learning takes longer. It is worth noting that, in a question and response document on The Pillowcase Project, the Australian team agrees that their REDiPlan

activities 'seem more child-centered and less teacher directed than those in the original Pillowcase hour'. 'We are trying to facilitate more student centered learning and activity. Giving children ownership of their own preparedness.' This chimes with the opinion of one UK team member who states that 'what we have is quite didactic in places' and that 'we need to move it along a bit'.

> *Recommendation 12: Segments of The Pillowcase Project program as it is described in the documentation should be reworked to ensure that presenters provide opportunities for children to share what they know, what they are thinking and what they are feeling. Open questions designed to trawl multiple perspectives and elicit varied responses and rejoinders should be part of a child-centered diet! Care should be taken to ensure a child-centered tenor in presenter guidance.*

To recapitulate, disaster risk reduction education (DRRE) seeks to help the learner build knowledge and understanding of the causes, nature and effects of hazards and disasters, to know how to prepare and protect themselves, their family and community before, during and after times of emergency, and to develop skills for coping and resilience building. Such learning outcomes are difficult to realize unless the learning process blends together a wide range of learning approaches. It has been suggested[7] that a balanced, fit-for-purpose DRRE learning mix should include the following learning modalities:

- **Interactive Learning:** learning that encourages exchanges of ideas between learners through such means as ideas brainstorms and pair, small group and whole class discussion
- **Inquiry learning:** learning that provides for student research and enquiry into hazards and disasters through projects, interviewing, examining data and Internet searching
- **Affective learning:** learning that provides space for learners to articulate emotional responses to stimuli, their emotions, hopes and fears around hazards and disasters
- **Surrogate experiential learning:** hazard and disaster learning prompted by film, role plays, puppetry, dramas, simulations
- **Field experiential learning:** learning through active participation in home, school and community risk assessments, hazard mapping, practicing community emergency procedures
- **Action learning:** learning through active involvement in school and community projects, poster campaigns, special events to build disaster awareness
- **Imaginative learning:** learning that draws on the imagination to envision safer and better ways things might be done at home, in school and community
- **Somatic and expressive learning:** learning approaches using the body for expression of ideas and feelings and to symbolic effect, such as body sculpturing; learning, too, that employs various forms of artistic expression.

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[7] Selby, D. & Kagawa, F. 2014. *Towards a Learning Culture of Safety and Resilience: Technical Guidance for Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction in the School Curriculum.* New York: UNESCO/UNICEF. 80.

Recognizing that The Pillowcase Project is a time and resource-constrained initiative aimed at fostering disaster preparedness amongst young children and their families, how does the Project as manifest across the seven participating jurisdictions match up to this recommended schemata of learning approaches? *Table 2*, while by no means pretending to exhaustively trawl the various learning approaches used or proposed across the seven countries, gives some indication.

Table 2: Learning Modalities of The Pillowcase Project

Interactive Learning	• Fire dice game (Peru) • Flood question bag (Peru) • Let's be ready! brainstorm and chart production, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 1-3 (Australia)
Inquiry Learning	• Follow-up *Science of Safety* kit (USA) • Researching what emergency workers do, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 4-6 (Australia)
Affective Learning	• Coping skills activities (all jurisdictions) • 'Special item' sharing of feelings (UK)
Surrogate Experiential Learning	• Hazard preparedness role play activities (UK) • Fire video clips (Hong Kong) • Puppetry video clips (Hong Kong) • Tsunami puppet show (Peru) • Using dolls to illustrate mudslide risk (Peru) • Actors and Watchers role play, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 1-3 (Australia) • Whispers game, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 4-6 (Australia)
Field Experiential Learning	• Student participation in home and community disaster prevention (all jurisdictions) • Excursion to emergency services, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 4-6 (Australia)
Action Learning	• Practising preparedness activities such as fire drills (Hong Kong), Drop, Cover, Hold On (USA and elsewhere), Get Low and Go (USA) • Students sharing learning and advocating at home and in the community (all jurisdictions) • Student involvement in improving school evacuation signage and routes (Peru)
Imaginative Learning	• On the Edge activity, follow-up *Science of Safety* kit (USA) • There's an Emergency! puppet sequence, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 1-3 (Australia) • Mr. Ba Bi (Vietnam)

Somatic and Expressive Learning	• Pillowcase/receptacle decoration (all jurisdictions) • Weather game (United Kingdom) • Designed for Safety activity, follow-up *Science of Safety* kit (USA) • Model volcano activity, follow-up *REDiPlan preparedness program*, grades 4-6 (Australia)

Some comment. First, peer-to-peer interactions that may well arise during Project lesson(s) are not included. They may very well be happening, and happening quite often, but intentional frameworks for horizontal interaction between students are limited in presenter guidance taken as a whole. Second, items listed under one heading could, arguably, have been placed under one or more other headings. We have tried to judge where they best fit. Third, while there is interesting and sometimes very innovative coverage of all learning modalities across the seven participating jurisdictions there is a shortfall if we look at coverage country-by-country.

Students Participate in the British Red Cross Weather Game (see Table 2)

Recommendation 13: *Participating jurisdictions should endeavor to build a varied mix of learning modalities into their programs, ensuring that, across The Pillowcase Project lesson(s) and the follow-up lessons taken as a whole all modalities are represented.*