

**Democratic education as a tool for reinforcing critical thinking and children's participation in the educational community.**

**Designing an Educational Action Plan for the school Edumar.**

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**ABSTRACT**

“The democracy of tomorrow is prepared with democracy at school” (Freinet, 1990, p.188). Children must experience a democratic education to learn how to be future citizens of society. This research seeks to understand the importance of democratic education for children's development and the relationship with the stimulation of critical thinking and children's participation in the educational community. This investigation takes the form of an educational action plan designed on the basis of the needs detected in the school Edumar. The methodological approach taken in this study is qualitative and the data has been gathered through an analysis of the educational project, observations carried out in literary discussions, an interview with the head of studies and a focus group with children. The results of the research suggest that, even if the school considers democratic education as relevant and present, when carrying out the literary discussions, children do not get to reflect deeply on universal themes through interaction with their peers, but simply explain past experiences. Furthermore, regarding children's participation, it has been concluded that there is a lack of participation in school governance and decision-making, although in other areas children are taken into account. Due to the above-mentioned reasons, an action plan has been developed with two main focuses: the restructuring of a literary discussion session and its materials; and the creation of a one-year programme to encourage children's participation in the school's governance. This action plan has attempted to meet the needs of the children in terms of developing a truly democratic school.

**Keywords:** democratic education, critical thinking, children's participation.

## RESUM

“La democràcia de demà es prepara amb la democràcia a l’escola” (Freinet, 1990, p.188). Els infants han d’experimentar una educació democràtica per aprendre a ser futurs ciutadans de la societat. Aquesta recerca pretén entendre la importància de l’educació democràtica pel desenvolupament dels infants i la relació amb l’estimulació del pensament crític i la participació dels infants a la comunitat educativa. La investigació es presenta en forma de pla d’acció educatiu, dissenyat a partir de les necessitats detectades a l’escola Edumar. L’aproximació metodològica utilitzada és qualitativa i les dades han estat recollides a partir d’una anàlisi del projecte educatiu de centre, d’observacions dutes a terme en tertúlies literàries, una entrevista al cap d’estudis i un *focus group* amb alguns infants participants. Els resultats de la investigació suggereixen que, encara que l’escola consideri que l’educació democràtica és rellevant i present, quan duen a terme les tertúlies literàries, els infants no fan reflexions profundes sobre temàtiques universals, sinó que simplement expliquen experiències viscudes. A més, quant a la participació dels infants, ha estat conclòs que hi ha una manca de participació en la governança i la presa de decisions, encara que en altres àrees els infants es tenen en compte. Per consegüent, un pla d’acció amb dos eixos principals ha estat desenvolupat: la reestructuració d’una sessió de tertúlies literàries i dels materials; i la creació d’un cronograma per fomentar la participació dels infants a la governança. Aquest pla d’acció pretén respondre a les necessitats dels infants per aconseguir una escola veritablement democràtica.

**Paraules clau:** educació democràtica, pensament crític, participació infantil

## INTRODUCTION

It is a widespread belief that the main education purpose is the holistic development of the individual so children become people able to think critically by themselves and to learn how to live together in society. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remarks in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and target 4.7., which is quality education, that education needs to ensure that all children can access the knowledge that allows them to be educated for sustainable development and global citizenship (United Nations, n.d.). Based on this reflection, I observed that the Catalan curriculum of primary education states that education aims to acquire the basic competencies to

grow into critical, competent, free, autonomous and responsible citizens of the society (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017). Consequently, the contents of the curriculum must be worked on in a cross-cutting and interdisciplinary way at school, abandoning the idea that learning theoretical contents is the priority objective of education.

On the other hand, I consider it essential to refer to my personal experience as a motivation and inspiration for choosing democratic education as the subject of my article. During my schooling, more importance was given to the transmission and learning of theoretical content than to the experience of learning how to live in a society. When I finished high school and started studying at university the ideals of education and what a quality education should be like, I compared it to my experience and realised that teachers taught me how to be an outstanding student, but not how to be a critical citizen of the society and how to participate in it.

Moreover, initial observations carried out before the actual research in the placement school where I shall be developing my study seem to suggest that, even though democratic education is present at the school, it seems there is not a conscious work. The school has a clear intention to work on the basis of democratic principles, as shown in the School's Educational Project (hereafter, PEC) and some of its daily activities, but after these have been carried out, there is no reflection with children on what these practices have meant. For that reason, I am interested in exploring the benefits of democratic education as an instrument to strengthen critical thinking and to encourage children to participate in the educational community.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This theoretical framework contextualizes my study by exploring how democratic education may become a tool for critical thinking and children's participation in the educational community. It has been divided into four parts. To start with, I will explore the insights of the authors who frame my conception of democratic education. Then, I will expose the models that Manuel Barbosa, PhD in education and currently dedicated to the study of citizenship in the school context, proposes for educating in democracy at school. Furthermore, I will analyse the benefits of democratic education regarding critical thinking and the importance of dialogue, with the intention of justifying why it is relevant to implement this perspective of education in schools. To finish, I will be

referring to the significance of children's participation in the educational community and to the way of implementing it in schools' reality.

### Democratic education

First of all, John Dewey, writer of the book "Democracy and education" (1916), studied the gap between education and children's real life. He defended the methodology of learning by doing, where the teacher recreates the practical experience for children to learn through problem-solving. For Dewey, democracy should be an experience lived inside the school, which means that children should participate and understand what living in society means. As referred to in Mondejar (2017), Dewey claims that democracy is not only a political organisation but a way of living the personal and social life and conceiving the world. Moreover, Dewey highlights that democracy should be learned from its practice. School becomes a significant place where to learn democracy and build a more equal, participatory and democratic society. In his words: "A government that relies on universal suffrage cannot succeed if those who elect and obey its rulers are not educated." <sup>1</sup> (Dewey, 1998, p.81).

Furthermore, Célestin Freinet, a French pedagogue involved in the *École Nouvelle* movement, defended the idea that education aims to change society and make the world a better and fairer place. He understood the school as a social and democratic place. Freinet himself writes, "The democracy of tomorrow is prepared with democracy at school. An authoritarian regime in schools cannot educate democratic citizens." (1990, p.188). From his point of view, cooperation among equals and the teacher is essential to establish dialogues and share experiences to make a democratic education and society (Carreño, 2020). Freinet invented the "Techniques for living", which are strategies to experience a more lively and democratic school. Some of the techniques proposed by Freinet, which are strongly related to democratic education, are school printing, freewriting, children conferences, setting up a school cooperative and self-correcting files (Freinet, 1990). Referring to my study, these techniques invented by Freinet are suitable practices to stimulate children's critical thinking and participation.

In similar lines, the Polish pedagogue Janusz Korczak, writer of the book "How to love a child?" (1919), was a strong advocate for children's rights and defended children's

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<sup>1</sup> For linguistic coherence, I have decided to translate all the quotations into English.

voices. His experience as director of an orphanage is an example of democratic governance. The rules of the orphanage were defined by children themselves and there were children's tribunals to make their decisions about the punishments. Children were empowered and self-governance was established. He conceived the orphanage as a place where children learn how to live in society. In his words, "How will the child learn to be autonomous tomorrow if we don't allow him to live a responsible life today?" (Korczak, 1999, p.407). Korczak highlighted the importance of dialogue and tolerance as a tool for peaceful coexistence.

Finally, the teacher, philosopher and activist Paulo Freire, defender of critical pedagogy, considers education as a task of change and its aim should be to ameliorate society through the development of social conscience. For him, being an educator cannot be reduced to transmitting content, but educating means accompanying children to develop their own construction and knowledge of the world. Likewise, he analysed the relationship between the teacher and the student. Freire stressed the relevance of not considering the child as the object that needs to be formed nor the teacher as the all-knowing subject. The teacher also needs to be the object and must learn from the child. In Freire's words, "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning." (1998, p.31). Further to this, education needs to be democratic, and can never be neutral towards inequalities and social conflicts. Children need to be open to the world and to others. A way to bring this idea into educational practice is through dialogue and through the stimulation of children's curiosity (Freire, 1998). So, the teacher needs to help the student to question the knowledge and to strengthen their critical capacity for thinking (Muñoz, 2006).

When it comes to democratic education from today's perspective, Carbonell writes in his book "L'educació és política" (2018) about the relationship between politics and education, and the importance of including political and democratic education in the daily life of children. The pedagogue insists on the ethical and social commitment that education has towards educating children so they become able to think and reflect by themselves. For him, it is essential to educate for freedom and for living in society, which is done by offering the necessary information and teaching children how to question and analyse it. Moreover, Carbonell highlights the role of education in transmitting universal values and the strategies to act better in society. For him, "education is the main factor in the consolidation of democracy" (p.96), and the way of

working towards democracy is cooperation and exchange peer-to-peer and building dialogic relationships within the education community (Carbonell, 2018).

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, democratic education is necessary for schools if we want to prepare children for their present and future as citizens of society. Concerning my study of the benefits of democratic education for critical thinking and children's participation in the community, these authors mentioned above are part of the theory that sustains the importance of implementing this perspective of education in our current educational system.

Regarding the implementation of democratic education in the reality of the school, Barbosa (2000) suggests different models to intervene in the democratic socialisation of children. For him, democratic education aims to educate children so they become critical and responsible citizens able to confront the increasing lack of respect for human rights or social injustices. The three models mentioned are:

- **The model for the transmission of knowledge and values.** It refers to learning theoretically what democracy is. By way of explanation, transmit the knowledge related to democracy, such as the laws or the values. The way to implement this approach can be through a specialised discipline on educating for citizenship or transmitting the contents in an interdisciplinary way.
- **The model for the formation of democratic habits.** It consists of learning the practical rules and habits for a democratic practice, for example learning how to coexist with others. This model needs to be implemented in all the school contexts: at the micro-level, inside the classroom during the processes of learning and teaching, and at the governmental and decision-making level.
- **The model of direct confrontation with socio-political reality.** It has the aim of developing children's civic responsibility and exposing them to the reality they are living in, such as inequalities or discrimination. In this sense, the school needs to expose children to social current affairs so they learn how to intervene and make their own critical decisions.

In conclusion, introducing democratic education in school affects either the school's organisation, the school's approach to the curriculum and to the way of teaching and learning of content and competencies. The models suggested by Barbosa are useful for my research, as I will be using them afterwards as the items to explore the school's situation referring to democratic education through the PEC analysis.

### Critical thinking

Concerning the benefits of democratic education when it comes to critical thinking, Carbonell (2018) explains the importance of implementing democratic education in schools to encourage children to think critically about the world they live in. For the purpose of my study, I would define critical thinking as the ability to distance oneself from reality and transmitted knowledge, to be able to analyse and question it, and finally be capable of proposing ways to act and transform it (Rosàs & Torralba, 2019). Through democratic education, children learn to question the world and seek proposals to intervene and improve it. Rosàs and Torralba (2019) suggest that if an educational institution aims to foster critical thinking, it should make its students reflect on different axes: prejudices and stereotypes, dogmatism and sectarianism, science and technology, mass media, spiritual and religious traditions, social and political theories, gender and economism. Furthermore, they refer to dialogue as the most appropriate way to stimulate critical thinking. However, dialogue cannot be understood as merely an exchange of information, but as a way of learning from each other and allowing us to live in a community (Pagès, 2020).

In addition, Ruiz and Puente (2018), researchers at the UAB innovation group, analyse the transversal competencies of ethical commitment and critical thinking, as well as propose different suitable activities to work on these competencies, such as reading texts, debate or role-playing. Furthermore, these authors suggest that any activity aimed at fostering critical thinking should take into account the following methodological considerations:

- To ask questions or raise doubts, dilemmas, and contradictions.
- To analyse information, data and ideas, and contrast them with their own judgements, experiences or the judgements of others.
- To analyse causes, consequences, implications, reasons, motives, concurrences (in an interdisciplinary way) of what is read, debated or analysed, as well as the resolution of problems and the conclusions reached.
- To explain their responsibilities and actions in accordance with their judgements and in coherence with their decisions.
- To analyse the effects of their decisions in relation to others, identifying contributions to a specific common good.

Overall, the evidence presented in this section suggests that including critical thinking in educational activities and proposals requires an active attitude from both the teacher

and the student. Understanding the link between critical thinking and democratic education, the studies done by Rosàs and Torralba (2019) and Ruiz and Puente (2018) will be the theoretical basis that frames my analysis of how the school stimulates children's critical thinking.

### Children's participation

As is stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, n.d.) number 12, children have the right to express their opinion on issues that involve and affect them, as they have the right to be listened to and taken seriously. Also, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 16.7 suggests that society should "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" (United Nations, n.d.). These official documents support the idea that children should participate in schools and have a central role within the educational system.

The group Àmbit de Participació Infantil i Juvenil (hereafter, PIJU) together with the researcher Ana Novella (2019) define the concept of children's participation as polysemic, multidimensional and inclusive. They consider that it should not be defined only as an educational experience, but as a methodology and a social or individual motor of change and development. Participation promotes the development of values education and democratic practices. According to the researchers, the aim of children's participation is to achieve objectives shared by the community and to build strong cross-generational bonds, which shows that participation cannot be a sporadic practice, but needs to be a political, social and educational process that transforms the educational community. "The practice of participation must involve concrete, useful forms of participation that generate perceptible advances for the group" (p19).

Furthermore, there are specific educational practices that favour the participation of children and adolescents in the educational community. The researchers Boqué et al. (2019) highlight the following ones:

- School management. Children need to bring their perspective to the decision-making areas that affect the school environment and life.
- Distribution of leadership and democracy in school systems and structures. Children need to participate in structures that let them experience democratic processes, such as voting or school project evaluations.
- Revision and development of norms, rules, policies and procedures.



- Involvement in the evaluation of people working in the school.
- Peer support and mediation. For example, conflict mediation or godfathers and godmothers.
- Involvement in decisions about their own education. For example, participation in the planning of timetables, methodologies, evaluation systems, selection of contents...
- Volunteering and community action. Children participation or promotion of campaigns, get involved in projects, forums...

The studies presented so far show that children need to be at the centre of their education, but adults should also take responsibility and accompany children throughout the process, share the decision-making process and avoid controlling, manipulating or leading children (Boqué et al., 2019). Referring to my analysis of the school when it comes to children's participation, the educational practices suggested by the above-mentioned authors will be used as the items for my observation and for the development of the educational action plan.

Thus far, this theoretical framework has aimed to define the concept of democratic education and explore its relationship with critical thinking and participation of children. The perspective of democratic education is intended to provide the necessary curricular contents and competencies to be able to analyse, question and reflect on how to intervene in any given situation. For all these reasons, democratic education develops children's critical thinking, especially with didactic strategies such as dialogue. In the whole process of democratic learning, children need to be involved and participate in decision-making within the educational community.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Having discussed the importance of democratic education for children's development, this dissertation aims to explore how can democratic education be a tool for reinforcing critical thinking and children's participation in the community. Intending to answer this research question, my project has four objectives:

1. To understand the importance of democratic education and describe how it is connected to critical thinking and children's participation in the community.
2. To explore the educational methodology that the school Edumar uses to develop and deepen children's critical thinking.

3. To analyse the relevance that the school Edumar gives to children's participation within the educational community.
4. To design an educational action plan for the school Edumar to implement democratic education as an instrument to develop critical thinking and children's participation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to explore how the school implements democratic education, critical thinking and children's participation, a qualitative approach was employed. The research method used in this project is cross-sectional, as it studies the subjects and the context at a specific moment, and it is fieldwork, as natural contexts are studied and the conditions of the activities are not modified. This article pretends to design an educational action plan, based on the detection of needs concerning democratic education in the framework of a specific educational reality, with the aim of suggesting improvement.

### Context of the educational action

The school Edumar is a state school in the municipality of Castelldefels, in the province of Barcelona. In the school, there are children from Preschool to Primary Education (from 3 to 12 years old). This school is of interest to research on this topic because it emphasizes in its specific objectives the importance of including the community and the family in the students' learning process and in the school's governing bodies. They also stress the importance of educating children for democracy and its values, such as respect and tolerance, so that they can be responsible, caring and, above all, critical citizens in the future (Escola Edumar, 2019).

### Instruments

#### **Instrument 1: PEC analysis**

For the purpose of understanding the school's positioning towards democratic education, I have designed an instrument to analyse the school's PEC. The items of analysis are based on the models to intervene in the democratic socialisation of children proposed by Barbosa (2000) and mentioned in the theoretical framework.

### **Instrument 2: Systematic observation**

With the aim of giving a response to objective 2, which is related to critical thinking, a systematic observation has been carried out. Using this instrument allows to analyse a context in a structured way and with scientific rigour since the indicators are previously defined. The systematic observation grid has been designed according to the methodological considerations stated by Ruiz and Puente (2018). Moreover, the school Edumar explains in its PEC that, intending to promote critical thinking and children's autonomy, they use methodological and organisational strategies, such as the "Tertúlies Literàries Dialògiques" (hereafter, TLD). This context has been chosen for my observation because, from the reading of universal classics, children and the teacher discuss the work, its interpretation and the relationship with their experiences. The aim of these sessions is to construct meanings about the world and dialogue with their peers, participating and reflecting critically on the chapters (Escola Edumar, 2019). Taking this into consideration, I am aware that this context may not be representative of the school's strategy as a whole to promote children's critical thinking, but I consider it a suitable context to observe how teachers approach a dialogue.

### **Instrument 3: Semi-structured interview**

Concerning objective 3, which relates to children's participation, I have designed a semi-structured interview composed of 7 questions that contextualise the perspective of democratic education used in this research and that aim to inquire into the school's board conception of children's participation in the educational community. The questions have been previously elaborated in accordance with the objectives of the research and with the theory of the previously mentioned authors, such as John Dewey (1998) and the research group PIJU and Ana Novella (2019).

### **Instrument 4: Focus group**

As a result of the answers obtained in the interview with the head of studies, the need has arisen to know the children's opinion regarding the spaces where they believe they should participate more. Therefore, a focus group of 3 questions was created and 3 children from each class that took part in the systematic observation were asked to participate. The subjects were selected randomly in order to be as objective as possible.

## Participants

**Children:** Considering the theory of democratic education, I believe it is important to involve children in my research. About the age of these children, Piaget states in his developmental stages that it is between the ages of 7 and 11 that the child is in the *concrete operational stage* and begins to be able to solve complicated problems and think abstractly. However, it is not until the age of 11 that the child enters the *formal operational stage* and his cognitive capacity develops and can think logically and critically (Babakr et al., 2019). In addition, the school Edumar is divided into three communities and children from 9 to 12 years old are in the “community of the elders”. I consider it a suitable option for my research participants to be children in this community, which corresponds to upper primary school (approximately 10-12 years old). The way in which students will participate is as observed members during a TLD session and as constituents of a focus group concerning children’s participation in the school. Considering the school’s calendar, the groups belonging to the age range mentioned above that are currently carrying out the TDL sessions are the 4th and 5th grades of Primary education. For this reason, the 96 children of the 4th and 5th primary classes of the school Edumar are the participants in my research.

**Teachers:** As previously mentioned, I will be observing children from upper primary school at the school Edumar. For this reason, the four teachers of these students will be observed during the session of TLD. Since the study is limited to the observation of concrete teachers, I am aware that it may not be representative of the whole school’s staff, as each teacher is free to carry out the activity as they find most appropriate.

**A member of the school’s board:** The school Edumar highlights in its PEC (Escola Edumar, 2019) the importance of the school’s board within the management bodies. In their official document, they define the school’s board as the promoter of the good functioning of the school and as the team that ensures the application of the pedagogical principles and projects. They also point out that they should “ensure the participation of the school council in its own responsibilities” (p.59). So, to find out how children participate in the educational community, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a school's board member, in this case, the head of studies.

## Procedure

The first step of this investigation has been to define and contextualise the concepts of democratic education, critical thinking and children's participation. Taking into account that the aim is to understand the educational practice of a specific school, the methodology focuses on collecting qualitative data. Once the objectives of the work have been defined, the instruments for collecting data have been designed and defined, and the necessary fieldwork has been carried out to gather this information and analyse it. Prior to data collection, the participants received an explanation of the project and signed the informed consent. The instruments of this work have been approved by Caterina Sugranyes, the tutor of investigation, and by the head of studies of the school. It is relevant to highlight that, after the interview, the need arose to design a new instrument to find out the children's opinions about participation in school. For this reason, a focus group with children has been developed. Finally, after analysing the data and comparing it with the reference authors mentioned in the theoretical framework, the needs of the school have been defined and an educational action plan has been designed to meet these specific needs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### Needs detection

This section aims to explain the results found in the research and discuss them with the previously mentioned theory. The organisation of the section will be by objectives of the study, although the first part is an analysis of the presence of democratic education in the school.

The PEC analysis aimed to understand to what extent they consider democratic education to be relevant to their pedagogical foundations. The results show that the school aims to educate children democratically, as one of its priority objectives is to "transmit the values of a democratic society: personal freedom, responsibility, solidarity, respect and equality". (Escola Edumar, 2019, p.13). Furthermore, the official school document insists on educating children to respect the rules for proper coexistence. Another aspect to highlight is that they consider themselves a school "capable of guaranteeing an educational project [...] that works with a methodology that promotes individualised attention" (p.9), for example through workshops or projects. In other words, they claim that their school "promotes co-education, equal opportunities for all,

and believes in inclusion as a way of welcoming diversity" (p.8). In reference to the models for the democratic education that Barbosa (2000) suggests, it is shown that the school takes into account Barbosa's first two models, as it aims to transmit to children the values of a democratic society, as to train children in the practice of these values. Even so, it should be noted that, although they want to "promote responsibility over obedience" (p.32) and let children participate in the decisions that affect their school life, the school council "is made up of teachers, parents, administration and services staff, SIEI representatives and municipal representatives" (p.51), excluding children from it. Finally, about Barbosa's third model, the school does not mention in its PEC how children are confronted with the current socio-political reality, although it does talk about the need of becoming aware of injustices, discrimination and inequalities that exist in the world, and the benefit of using the immediate environment as a learning opportunity, through school trips or visits by experts.

**Objective 2: To explore the educational methodology that the school Edumar uses to develop and deepen children's critical thinking.**

In order to address the second aim, four systematic observations have been carried out in different classes during a TDL session. We will analyse the results of these observations and discuss them focusing on different aspects: a) children's role, b) teachers' role, c) distribution of the space, d) work prior to the session, and e) reflection during the activity.

a) The analysis of the children's role shows that, in three classes, most of the children were distracted and only a small group was actively participating. In contrast, children of the other class were mostly attentive, silent and participating. About the figure of the dialogue moderator, only one of the four classes had a child with this function assigned. Moreover, in all four classes, the role of the children during the session was to explain what they have written in their dossier about the chapter and the reason why they wanted to highlight it. Once a child finished the intervention, there was no response from the peers and the teacher gave the turn to another child. As mentioned in the literature review, dialogue cannot be understood as an exchange of information. In these four cases, each child gives his explanation and they don't comment on the interventions of their peers. This observation is contrary to what Pagès (2020) suggested a dialogue should be. For the author, "for there to be a conversation, it is not enough with strategies and processes, nor just with an attitude of dialogue and open

listening, but it is absolutely necessary that the other interpellates us and becomes our interlocutor. Without the reciprocity that implies considering another with whom to speak, it makes no sense to refer to the "conversational strategy" (p.70). For this reason, during a TLD session, students must listen to what their peers want to say and provide feedback, generating a debate on the proposed topics.

b) In the three classes where children are more distracted and most of them don't participate actively, it has been observed that the teacher's role is authoritarian and her position is one of superiority. These teachers are in a different position from the students, either standing and moving around the class or sitting on a chair while children are on the floor. On the other hand, the remaining teacher is placed on an equal level with children, situated in the round as if she is one of them and allowing the moderator to take the lead. In this case, children are participative and attentive. Her role is to accompany the interventions, listening attentively and paraphrasing at the end of the interventions. Finally, in all cases teachers try to control the topics dealt with in the session and get children to comment on what their classmates have said. For instance, one teacher insists: "Does anyone feel the same way? Let's not just say what we want to say. Let's think a bit".

In this sense, there are similarities between the attitude expressed by the last-mentioned teacher and those described by Freire (1998). The author insists that the role of the teacher has to be balanced between authority, as shown by the first three teachers in this study, and total freedom. For him "both the authoritarian teacher who suffocates the natural curiosity and freedom of the student as well as the teacher who imposes no standards at all are equally disrespectful of an essential characteristic of our humanness" (p.59). Freire insists on the need for teachers to put into practice a pedagogy "centered on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility" (p.98). This suggestion of how the role of teachers should be seems to be consistent with the perspective mentioned in the theoretical framework of Boqué et al. (2019). The experts insist that in these types of activities, where we want to encourage children's participation and critical thinking, adults should "take a real interest in what children think and avoid taking control, leading or manipulating" (p.37).

c) The next section of the observation was concerned with the organisation of the space during the session. In all the cases, the dialogue between the students took

place inside the classroom, without using outside spaces. In addition, two teachers conducted the session leaving the tables as they usually are, in groups of 5 or 6 children. In this case, there are children with their backs to each other and not all of them can easily see each other. On the other hand, there is a teacher who uses a corner of the classroom to place all the students on the floor. The tables do not move from their usual position, which makes the children more crowded and they cannot make a full circle, leaving some of them not to see each other. Finally, the last teacher positions the students in a circle using the whole space in the classroom, moving the chairs so that all can see each other. This latter outcome is in line to that of the author Sanz Pinyol (2005) who states in her book, *Effective communication in the classroom*, that the distribution and organisation of space has a direct relationship with the communication that the teacher wants to have and with children behavior in the classroom. For this type of activity, such as debates, Sanz explains that seating should be arranged in a circle or semicircle, as this allows all members to make eye contact with each other and facilitates verbal exchange.

d) In reference to the students' work prior to the TDL session, the same result was found in all the classrooms. Before a session, students have one week to read the designated chapter of the classical literature book they are working on. Also, they have to complete a dossier prepared with the teacher in which they have to answer the question: "What do I want to talk about?". From there, students must choose an extract to talk about. With this in mind, it has been observed that during the discussions, most of the students have limited themselves to reading what they had written. Carbonell (2018) explains how an educational conversation must be conducted if it is to be democratic and morally exemplary. For him, the key lies in the questions asked by the teacher, both before and during the session. When the aim of the session is neither to convince another person nor to arrive at a universal truth, but to form critical mindsets, the questions prior to the conversation are essential. According to the author, these questions can be posed in different ways: based on sources, ideological positioning, points of view, personal experiences or one's individual commitment to the situation. With all this, we realise that the question that the teachers propose to the children before a TDL session is poor if the aim is for them to make a deep reflection. For this reason, the conversation and creation of spaces for reflection cannot be done in a hurry or by underestimating its importance, but it must take time and pause the daily rhythm to do it properly, since "through the dialogic and discursive process we get to



know the Other and their points of view, their stories. We learn an enormous amount, not only about the world but about ourselves, through discourse with Others" (Bruner, 1987, as cited in Carbonell, 2018).

e) When analysing the children's reflections during the session, it is observed that the majority of children in all four classes relate the contents of the book to personal past experiences. In addition, the teachers encourage children to make this kind of connection by asking questions such as: "Did it remind you of something that happened to you in your personal experience? A situation with your family or friends?" or "The ghost's hobby is to do the scares. And what is your hobby? Come on, think about it". Likewise, teachers accompany children to look for explanations in the story about the actions of the characters. For example, "And the ghost wants to take revenge, doesn't he? Why? Have the children done things to the ghost?". Thus, taking into account the theoretical reference by Ruiz and Puentes (2018) mentioned previously, we can affirm that, in general, all groups analyse information and contrast it with their own ideas or experiences, as well as analyse the causes and consequences of what has been read in the text. With reference to drawing universal themes from literature, children found it difficult to reflect on and draw conclusions from this.

**Objective 3: To analyse the relevance that the school Edumar gives to children's participation within the educational community.**

Regarding the third aim, the head of studies of the school has been interviewed (full interview transcript is presented in [Appendix B](#)). Bearing in mind John Dewey's conception of democratic education, the interviewee affirms that he shares this vision, but he would add "participatory democracy [...]. To allow the freedom to be able to create our own path, and then, obviously, to vote on it." In this way, he states that the school puts the ideals of the democratic school into practice through democratic bodies such as the student council, in which the representatives of the primary education classes participate and "express those ideas that may have come up in assemblies, where they debate, talk and reach agreements". When asked about children's participation in aspects traditionally decided by the school's board, the interviewee specifies that "in primary and early childhood education they still have to be helped a lot." Even if the school considers children's participation to be significant, the head of studies explains that there are objectives set by the education department that cannot be modified, although they apply them in the most playful and participatory way

possible. With all this, the participant admits that: "We respect individuality very much. It is true that we let them choose certain things, but perhaps less than they should choose. We are in a process of change." In reference to the collaboration between students, he points out that the school has always promoted teamwork between generations through activities that favour "sociability, affection, respect and interest" between them. Finally, he affirms that children have freedom and flexibility with projects, having the opportunity to "study, understand and investigate those things that interest them. They shape the project themselves."

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Boqué et al. (2019) highlight where or when children should be involved. The results of the interview show that the school takes into account the participation of children in the school management, listening to their voice through bodies such as the school council, which allow them to experience democratic structures and processes. The school also values intergenerational work and attaches importance to activities that allow children to come together and learn from their peers. Finally, the authors also stress the importance of children taking the initiative to carry out community actions and deciding the type of project they want to carry out. In this way, the school takes this point into account and more and more children are free to carry out projects based on their interests and motivations.

From the interview, it can be concluded that children have no presence or participation in the decision-making areas. Boqué et al. (2019) insist that "true participation requires access to governance and power" (p.18), even though we are used to this type of institution being hierarchically organized and that it is adults who make decisions instead of children. These authors suggest that for children to be able to participate democratically in school, especially in governance bodies, they need motivation (to be informed about their rights and knowledge of the concept of participation), training (to develop the basic skills to be able to access governance, such as learning to present demands) and organization (to have access to mechanisms to express their opinion, make decisions and manage agreements).

In reference to this same objective, a focus group was conducted with children to find out in which aspects of the school they would like to have more say. From these conversations with children, it has been concluded that most of them agree that they would like to participate in: choosing the playgrounds and the games they can play

during their breaks, having more free time to play, choosing the canteen menu, being able to use computers and tablets more, choosing the projects they would like to do, choosing the school outings and deciding the location of the end-of-year trip, and organizing school parties and celebrations.

### Educational action plan

Considering the results obtained from the observation, the interview and the focus group, as well as the discussion of the theory, this article intends to suggest an educational improvement plan for this specific school. From the results obtained, two central actions emerge. In this way, I have divided the plan into two sections: on the one hand a restructuring of a TDL session and its materials, and on the other hand the creation of a one-year programme for children's participation in the school's governance.

With regard to the planning of a TDL session, the discussion shows the need to reorganise the space and clearly identify the roles of the teacher and children. For this reason, I have designed the planning of a session ([see Appendix D](#)). Previous research justifies the importance of encouraging interaction between children so that there is a real conversation and not just an exchange of information. For this, it has been shown that it is necessary to adapt the role of the teacher and the children to the situation. In this case, I suggest that the teacher becomes a guide to the children, a member of the conversation, without trying to change the topic of conversation or direct the session. As for the children, they should be the centre of the sessions, taking control of the conversation themselves. One suggestion to encourage this to happen is to assign a mediator to the conversation. In addition, the classroom space needs to be rearranged and placed in a circle so that all children can maintain eye contact. Moreover, this action plan also considered the re-elaboration of the dossier given to the children to analyse the reading ([see Appendix E](#)). As I mentioned in the needs detection, children limited themselves to relating the content of the chapter to personal experiences, without mentioning the theme referred to or justify it. Therefore, the new dossier to be delivered aims to make children reflect more deeply before the session in order to facilitate the conversation, based on questions such as "What topic does the chapter talk about? Why is it important?", "What do you want to share with your classmates?" and "Why did you choose it? What does it make you think about?".

On the other hand, another educational action stems from the results obtained about children's participation. It is observed that the school takes into account the participation of children in various areas, but avoids the participation of children in decision-making. In this sense, it is mainly the school's board that makes decisions about the functioning of the school. For this reason, the educational action plan I suggest below is a one-year programme to encourage students' participation in decision-making ([view Appendix F](#)). In drawing up the programme, the three aspects necessary for children's participation in governance proposed by Boqué et al. (2019) have been taken into account: training, organisation and motivation. In addition, the participation programme suggested by these previously-mentioned authors and the actions proposed by the group PIJU and Novella (2019) have also been used as examples for this educational action plan.

Concerning the training of the educational community, especially teachers and children, about participation in school, I propose that the first months of school be devoted to training and reflection on children's rights (insisting on participation and free expression of ideas). From the assemblies held each week in the classrooms, they should reflect on the meaning of participation and the need to implement it at school. Moreover, the previous review of theory shows the necessity to be organised in order to have effective participation. For this reason, in November and December, the class assemblies will be devoted to children looking for ways to organise themselves to participate in the governance of the school and constitute the Children's Council body. In addition, teachers should also collect children's opinions on what they would like to be involved in.

Furthermore, considering the results obtained in this study on the areas in which they would like to participate, the following months would be devoted to discussing and collecting ideas from children, with the aim of drawing up the school's participation guidelines for the following school years. In this way, from January to May, the following topics will be discussed, both in the weekly class assemblies and in the monthly Children's council: revision and updating of school rules, reorganisation of the school playground, reflection on school outings and trips, organisation of school parties and celebrations, and reflection on the school canteen and its menu. Considering that these are the issues that children are currently most concerned about, involving them in the

reflection process and letting them participate through democratic structures will help to motivate them and encourage their participation.

### Ethical conditions

This study ensures that respect for the participants has been taken into account at all times. Prior to the data collection at the school, the head of studies has been informed about the objectives of this study and has consented to the participation of people under his responsibility ([see Appendix G](#)). In addition, families have also been informed about the participation of their children in an educational observation which aims to elaborate an improvement plan in their specific context. Taking into account that the students are from primary education, each child has its own characteristics that I will not share with the rest of the world. In the same way, the ethical conditions of confidentiality, fairness and non-benefit have been respected throughout the work and will be respected in the case of a future publication.

## **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The main goal of the current article was to determine the benefits of democratic education concerning critical thinking and children's participation in the educational community. Further to this, the research aimed to analyse the current state of affairs in the Edumar school in regard to the previous-mentioned subject in order to design an action plan that responds to the needs of this specific context.

From the analysis of the school about democratic education, this study has shown that the school takes into account the principles of democracy and transmits them to its students throughout their schooling. When analysing the educational practice of the TDL, it has been observed that it is a practice that stimulates the children's critical thinking, but that it needs reorganisation of the sessions so that the conversation between children becomes more appropriate. For this reason, an action plan has been designed that aims to meet the needs observed and which reformulates the session and its materials, trying to get the students to reflect beforehand and detect the topics to be dealt with to have a more dynamic conversation. Finally, this article also intended to understand children's participation in the school Edumar. From the interview with the head of studies, it has been concluded that the school encourages children's participation in most areas, but in governance and decision-making they avoid children's participation. For this reason, an annual programme has been drawn up as

another part of the educational action plan, with the aim of organising a school year and encouraging children's participation in the governance of the school.

In addition, in the course of writing the article and carrying out the research, I have encountered some limitations. First, the research was conducted in the school where I have done my university internship and therefore I knew some of the children who participated in this study. Thus, I am aware that knowing some of the participants may condition or limit the objectivity of the study. Also, the analysis of the TDL sessions was problematic, as these sessions take place in the upper cycle and they depend on the timetable of the school. For this reason, it was not possible to observe any TDL sessions in the sixth grade, as they only practise TDL in the first term of the school year and the research was carried out in the second and third terms. Thus, this fact limited my observation to four classes instead of six, reducing the number of participants in the study.

Finally, I would like to refer to the future lines of research that stem from my current investigation. As previously mentioned, this article, among other issues, has shown the importance of children's participation in school in order to develop a democratic education. In this sense, this research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation and I consider it would be particularly interesting to analyse the influence of family and society, including local institutions, in the democratic education of future citizens. Moreover, another worthwhile research would be to carry out a longitudinal study of children's participation in school to analyse in-depth the moments throughout a school year in which children's participation becomes essential. On the other hand, this article presents an educational action plan that cannot be implemented due to time constraints. Thus, I consider that a future and challenging research could be to implement my suggestions in the reality of the school and evaluate its outcomes, observing and analysing if it is an effective and useful plan.

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## **APPENDIX**

### Index

[Appendix A](#) - Relation between my article and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda.

[Appendix B](#) - Interview transcript

[Appendix C](#) - Observation grid

[Appendix D](#) - Educational action plan: Planning of a TDL session

[Appendix E](#) - Educational action plan: Children's dossier for the TDL session

[Appendix F](#) - Educational action plan: Programme about children's participation in the school's decision-making

[Appendix G](#) - Informed consent

## Appendix A - Relation between my article and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda.

This section of my article aims to analyse the relationship of my article on democratic education, critical thinking and children's participation in school with the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter, SDG) proposed by the United Nations in the 2030 agenda. Therefore, this section gives a brief overview of the contribution of my article to improve the present challenge of educating children to become responsible, critical, creative, autonomous and active future citizens in society.

To begin with, I consider it necessary to contextualise my research in order to understand the significance of this topic and why I have chosen this theme. As I have previously mentioned in the methodological section of my article, this research is carried out in a public school in Castelldefels, Barcelona. This school is considered inclusive and innovative, as well as mentions its concern for the democratic education of children at all levels. After analysing the data gathered with the instruments during the study, we observed that there is a lack of participation of children in the school's decision-making process, which directly affects them, as well as a poor approach to the activity of literary discussions, sessions that aim to encourage critical thinking in children. Consequently, this research is based specifically on the needs found in a given context, which justifies the importance of developing an action plan that responds to these needs in a concrete way. With all this, my article and research provide a response to the needs found in this matter and aim to give tools to the school to promote critical thinking and participation of children, as well as democratic education, in a more appropriate and coherent way.

As this article focuses on the concrete needs of a particular school, the results of this research are specifically designed. Nevertheless, democratic education, critical thinking and children's participation in school is an issue of growing concern in the world of education. Education experts convey that education should not only be based on the transmission of content, but should be a preparation for life. As Freire (1998, p.49) expresses, "to teach is to create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than to be engaged simply in a game of transferring knowledge". For this reason, I think that although this article is focused on a specific context, it can be extrapolated to any school that needs tools to foster critical thinking or children's

participation in decision-making. All of this demonstrates the benefit of this study being taken into account in all schools, as children would end up better prepared to be critical citizens and participate in democratic processes and coexist with others. Thus, this article has a vision of change to try to improve the society in which we live.

In terms of the actors involved in this project, this research concerns children in the school, the teachers and the management team. Bearing in mind that in most schools the relationship between students and teachers is one of superiority on the part of the latter, democratic education and this article aim to demonstrate the need to change this way of relating and to equalise this relationship, so that children can participate in their education in a critical way.

Finally, taking into account the 17 SDGs (United Nations, n.d.), this paper focuses mainly on SDG 4, which concerns quality, inclusive and equitable education with equal opportunities for all learners. In reference to this SDG, this article essentially focuses on target 7 as it emphasises education for citizenship and preparing children to live in society, promoting aspects such as human rights or the culture of peace and non-violence. In relation to this, this paper promotes democratic education and tries to ensure that children develop all the skills and abilities to be prepared to face life in society. Therefore, this article is directly related to this objective and to promoting education in values and citizenship at school.

Furthermore, this work could also be associated with SDG 16 (United Nations, n.d.), "peace, justice and strong institutions" and its target 7, which aims to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". This research and the suggested action plan take into account that children must participate in the governance of the school and must learn to have a critical voice in decision-making. In this case, if children learn to participate and be critical from an early age, they will be more responsible and able to participate actively in society in the future.

## Appendix B - Interview transcript

*Soc la Mar García Valero, alumna de 4t del grau d'Educació Primària a la universitat de Blanquerna. Estic duent a terme el meu treball de final de grau sobre l'educació democràtica i la seva relació amb el pensament crític i la participació dels infants dins de la comunitat educativa. Durant la següent entrevista, el meu objectiu és entendre quina rellevància dona l'equip directiu de l'escola Edumar a la participació dels infants dins de la comunitat.*

### *1. Quina és la seva trajectòria professional i quina relació té amb l'escola Edumar?*

Molt bé. En la meua trajectòria professional en el món educatiu, vaig començar a treballar a l'escola privada ja fa uns vint anys segurament, uns dinou o vint anys, a Barcelona, en una escola petiteta, d'una línia només. Vaig estar tres o quatre anys allà, en aquesta escola privada. Després vaig passar a l'escola pública, vaig aprovar les oposicions i vaig estar treballant un parell d'anys a Sitges i després vaig venir a Castelldefels. Tant és que porto 14 o 15 anys aquí, a l'escola Edumar de Castelldefels. Sí que és veritat que fa cinc anys que treballo com a membre de l'equip directiu i la resta sempre he estat mestre-tutor, sobretot de grups de grans, al cicle superior amb 5è o 6è, de la comunitat de grans.

### *2. El filòsof, pedagog i psicòleg John Dewey (1998) defineix la democràcia no només com una organització política, sinó com una manera de viure i concebre la vida personal i social. Per a ell, la democràcia s'aprèn a partir de la pròpia pràctica, fent que l'escola esdevingui un espai significatiu per aprendre els seus valors i funcionament, amb l'objectiu de construir una societat més igualitària, participativa i democràtica. Així doncs, Dewey considera que la democràcia hauria de ser una experiència que els infants haurien de viure dins de l'escola, cosa que vol dir que haurien de poder participar en la presa de decisions de l'escola i ser capaços de reflexionar críticament sobre el món que els envolta. Tenint en compte la concepció de John Dewey respecte a l'escola democràtica, què opina d'aquesta manera d'enfocar l'educació?*

Doncs la comparteixo totalment, però jo afegiria democràcia participativa, perquè hi ha vegades que les coses ens venen donades. Només votar, per exemple, una opció que ens ve donada, això ja es diu que és democràcia, però hem de veure què estem

votant, hem d'anar una miqueta més enllà... Veure on estan els principis democràtics i d'on ve aquesta opció que nosaltres tenim per participar. És a dir, nosaltres hauríem de tenir la possibilitat de poder crear, és un esglaó una miqueta inferior. Anem pujant i l'esglaó inferior és que nosaltres deixem aquesta llibertat de poder crear el nostre propi camí i, després, evidentment votar-lo i poder escollir-lo. No només el fet de poder escollir, no sé si m'he explicat, sinó la participació en la creació, en poder crear el nostre camí. No que ens vinguin les coses donades i poder encetar-ho o poder escollir-ho, sinó participar en l'apartat de poder crear.

3. *Creu que a l'escola es posen en pràctica els ideals de l'educació democràtica?*

*En cas que sí, de quina manera?*

Sí, aquí s'intenta. Nosaltres tenim diversos òrgans que es poden considerar democràtics. Tenim òrgans macos on es poden debatre idees, es poden agafar uns camins o es poden agafar uns altres, on l'alumnat pren una part molt important. El consell d'alumnes, per exemple. Nosaltres fem una reunió o quinzenal o mensual, de vegades ha de ser mensual perquè no tenim gaire temps. Al nostre òrgan de consell d'alumnes hi participen els representants de cada curs de primària, evidentment, perquè als petits encara els hi queda una mica lluny i potser no tindrien una participació molt oberta en aquests espais. Amb ells ho fem d'una altra manera, potser amb els petits ho fem ja directament amb la tutora o amb el que es respira o el que s'observa a l'aula. Però a partir de la primària, tots els que són delegats de grup, de curs, els presidents, van a una reunió on expressen aquelles idees que han pogut sortir a les assemblees i allà es debaten, es parlen i s'arriben a acords. Intentem que aquests acords, aquestes opinions i aquestes idees siguin tractades totes amb la mateixa importància, no des d'una visió de l'adult, sinó una visió de l'infant, perquè si surt algun tema vol dir que per a ells és important i rellevant. Evitem aquesta visió que nosaltres a vegades tenim quan hi ha un tema que creiem que no és molt important i intentem passar pàgina. No, si és important per a ells, aquests temes s'han de mirar i s'han de tractar i s'han de contextualitzar en el seu món, el món de l'infant és aquest. A partir d'aquestes reunions, aquestes trobades, intentem buscar tots plegats amb el guiatge de l'adult, sí que és veritat que hi ha una sèrie de normes, per això et deia, la democràcia a vegades ens dona uns límits i a partir d'aquí doncs construir tots plegats en la millora de l'escola, de la vida o de l'aspecte emocional de tots.

4. *Segons el grup de recerca Àmbit de Participació Infantil i Juvenil (PIJU) i la investigadora Ana Novella (2019), la participació dels infants a l'escola promou el desenvolupament de l'educació en valors i fomenta les pràctiques democràtiques dins la comunitat educativa. Considera que els infants tenen un paper actiu dins de l'escola?*

Sí, en el consell d'alumnes, en l'assemblea... També penso que és una actitud que no només s'engloba en un moment del mes o de la setmana, sinó que és una actitud diària, de cada moment. Escoltar, observar i donar un model mostrant que "todo es válido", sempre dintre d'uns límits, o que tot és escoltat i anem a veure on podem arribar a pactes o consens entre tots. Discutir sobre una cosa, sobre conductes, aquestes coses que es donen dia a dia. Sí que és veritat que el "momento álgido" és potser el consell d'alumnes o l'assemblea, però en el dia a dia es van donant contínuament aquestes oportunitats per intentar ser el més democràtics possible. O sigui això, cada dia.

5. *Quin rol tenen els infants en la presa de decisions d'aspectes que tradicionalment assumia l'equip directiu, com per exemple l'establiment de normes, la selecció de continguts, l'organització de l'horari escolar o l'avaluació dels mestres?*

Clar, nosaltres estem en un procés de canvi de la nostra escola. Fa relativament poc, tres o quatre anys, que hem agafat una direcció de buscar més els interessos dels infants. Però entenem que a primària i a infantil encara se'ls ha d'ajudar molt. No podem dir "barra lliure" i "feu el que vulgueu", sinó que hi ha uns principis, uns paràmetres i uns objectius. És veritat que nosaltres els tenim definits pel departament, aquests objectius, i els podem regular una miqueta. Podem regular la manera d'aconseguir aquests objectius. Intentem que aquests objectius els puguin aconseguir d'una manera doncs més lúdica, més participativa, més activa. Que no siguin objectes passius. Sinó... més creativa també. Entenem també que som una escola que intentem promoure aquesta activitat amb l'alumnat en diversos moments del dia o en tot el dia. Respectem molt la individualitat. I sí que és veritat que els hi deixem escollir

certes coses, potser menys de les que haurien d'escollir, però estem en procés, estem en un procés de canvi. Penso que hem d'anar a poc a poc també i amb molt de seny.

*6. Quina col·laboració hi ha entre infants dins de l'escola?*

Col·laboració, ara en pandèmia, poca. Però nosaltres sempre hem sigut una escola que ens ajudem molt *interedats*. *Interedats* vol dir que els alumnes de cada comunitat, com els petits per exemple. A P3, P4 i P5, les classes estan barrejades amb alumnes de tres edats diferents. A mitjans també tenen molta participació, ara no en pandèmia perquè són grups bombolla, però en circumstàncies normals, els alumnes de 1r, 2n i 3r es barregen i s'ajunten per fer depèn de quines activitats. I 4t, 5è i 6è doncs també. També tenim padrins de lectura, que són activitats que creen molta sociabilitat, estima, respecte i interès cap a altres grups d'edats i això és com una mena de col·laboració d'escola.

*7. Quina llibertat tenen els infants de promoure accions comunitàries i projectes que neixen dels seus interessos?*

Molt bé. Nosaltres hem vist un cert canvi en aquest tema, perquè en instaurar els projectes, justament, intentem cada vegada més que no siguin guiats pel mestre, i ho estem a poc a poc aconseguint. Al principi eren com unitats didàctiques i els mestres deien "tal projecte" i ho preparava gairebé tot el mestre. Ara, veiem que els alumnes ja estan més preparats i que són més autònoms, en deixar que ells aportin coses, cada vegada ho fan amb més assiduitat i veiem que cada vegada estan més preparats. Per exemple, els projectes de 4t que han preparat ells mateixos unes Olimpíades, han preparat també unes activitats amb bicicleta, ja que són el camí de les bicicletes. Els de 6è volien fer unes entrevistes amb Open Arms, per exemple, i han contactat amb ells. Vull dir que tenen molta flexibilitat i cada vegada més, en aquestes franges de projectes, ells poden estudiar, poden entendre o poden indagar en aquelles coses que els inquieten. Li donen forma ells mateixos al projecte. I això és una de les coses "xules", no?

Ara també a 6è, per exemple, faran les seves "caixes de propostes". Així com fins ara les caixes que nosaltres hem creat, ells les posaven en pràctica. Ara 6è fa la seva caixa. Després d'estar a 4t, 5è i 6è resolent i solucionant caixes elaborades pels mestres, ara a 6è tenen l'oportunitat al segon i tercer trimestre d'elaborar la seva pròpia caixa, amb tot el que això comporta. Aquí també poden escollir la seva

temàtica, la seva estructura de la caixa. Això també està molt bé. No els ve donat sinó que ells tenen aquesta llibertat.

*8. Per acabar, vol afegir alguna cosa sobre la participació democràtica dels infants a l'escola?*

Sobretot queda't una mica amb la idea que la democràcia és el que es respira dia a dia. Nosaltres sempre és veritat que de cara a les famílies i als infants, tenim el consell d'alumnes o l'assemblea, intentem que sigui democràtic. Però sí que és veritat que després "cada maestrillo tiene su librillo", cada mestre ho fa de la manera que ell vol. Sí que és veritat que hi ha mestres que tenen una mentalitat més democràtica, més integradora, més de saber escoltar els altres. Hi ha potser altres mestres que ho senten d'una altra manera i són potser una mica més directius.

Igual que el moment de portar unes tertúlies, que és un moment que has de deixar molta llibertat i deixar fluir molt i sentir-se un més del grup. Si es poden regular ells, molt millor, si pots participar com un més, et llegeixes tu també el capítol i pots participar com un més, molt millor. Integrar-te, perquè així també no tenen aquesta imatge que tu ets el regulador o el que portes la batuta, sinó que ells es veuen com un grup d'iguals. Això és super important, que el docent sàpiga rebaixar-se, posar-se al nivell dels altres. En assemblees jo sempre ho he fet quan he sigut tutor i en tertúlies també. Jo també participo i soc un més. En aquest tema, compta molt també el model que un dona. Si som autoritaris, per molt que després hi hagi una assemblea, un consell d'alumnes o una altra activitat d'aquestes que es consideren democràtiques, si tu no t'ho creus i no actues d'aquesta manera, si ets impositiu a l'aula, no reculls les idees, no li dones el temps suficient per resoldre algun problema o un conflicte que acaba de sortir, sinó que dius "això ja no m'interessa", no estàs sent democràtic. S'ha d'actuar en conseqüència d'allò que tens al davant.



## Appendix C - Observation grid

INDICADORS	ÍTEMS	DE QUINA MANERA ES DESENVOLUPA?
1. Participació de l'alumne	1.1. Quina és l'actitud dels alumnes durant les sessions?	
	1.2. Com és la interacció entre iguals durant l'activitat	
	1.3. Després de la intervenció d'un infant, com reaccionen la resta? Obren un debat tot respectant les idees dels altres?	
2. Participació de la mestra	2.1. Quin és el rol de la mestra durant la sessió?	
	2.2. Com és la seva actitud respecte a les intervencions dels infants?	
3. Disposició de les taules	3.1. Com se situen les taules durant la sessió?	
	3.2. Tots els infants poden veure's entre ells durant les intervencions?	
4. Espai de desenvolupament de la sessió	4.1. En quin espai es du a terme la sessió? S'utilitzen espais exteriors?	
5. Treball previ	5.1. Quin és el treball previ que han de fer els infants abans de la sessió?	
	5.2. Aquest treball previ està acompanyat d'instruccions de part dels mestres? Quines?	
	5.3. De quina manera s'utilitza el treball previ durant la sessió?	
6. Descripció de l'activitat	6.1. Com es desenvolupa l'activitat? Petit resum.	
7. Reflexió durant l'activitat	7.1. Es formulen preguntes i es plantegen dubtes, dilemes i contradiccions?	
	7.2. Els infants analitzen la informació, les dades, les idees i les contrasten amb les seves pròpies opinions, pensaments, experiències o també opinions de la resta?	
	7.3. S'analitzen causes, conseqüències, implicacions, raons, motius, concurrències d'allò que es llegeix, debat o analitza, i també de la resolució de problemes i de les conclusions a les que s'arriben?	
	7.4. Es demanen explicacions sobre la seva responsabilitat i actuació d'acord amb els seus judicis i en coherència amb les seves decisions?	
	7.5. Analitza els efectes de les seves decisions en relació als altres, identifica aportacions per a un bé comú específic?	

## PLANIFICACIÓ TERTÚLIES LITERÀRIES DIALÒGIQUES

<b>ÀMBITS</b>	<b>NIVELLS</b>	<b>TEMPORITZACIÓ</b>
Àmbit lingüístic (català i castellà).	4t, 5è i 6è de Primària.	1 hora per capítol i setmana.
<b>OBJECTIU D'APRENENTATGE</b>	<b>CONTINGUTS</b>	
Llegir obres i conèixer alguns autors significatius de la literatura clàssica universal.  Ser capaç d'interpretar, reflexionar i debatre sobre temàtiques de la literatura, gaudint de la lectura i compartint opinions i experiències personals amb els companys.	Gust per a la lectura de textos literaris.  Participació en diàlegs o debats, aportant idees pròpies i argumentades.  Coneixement d'obres i autors significatius de la literatura clàssica universal.	
<b>ORGANITZACIÓ DE L'ESPAI</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>	
 La posició de les cadires ha de ser en cercle o semi-cercle, permetent que tots els infants facin contacte visual.	Llibre de lectura.  Dossier de reflexió de tertúlies literàries.	
<b>DESCRIPCIÓ DE LA SESSIÓ</b>		
Abans de la sessió, és necessari que els infants llegeixin el capítol corresponent i omplin el seu dossier de treball i de reflexió. Tot just començar, s'haurà d'assignar el rol de moderador a un dels infants i se situaran tots en rotllana per a facilitar la interacció i el diàleg. El moderador anirà donant el torn de paraula als infants, els quals aniran comentant allò que vulguin del capítol llegit. És important que després de cada intervenció es deixi un petit espai perquè els infants reflexionin i pensin si volen aportar alguna cosa sobre el que ha dit el company o companya anterior. Una vegada acabada la sessió, entre tots farem una conclusió, reprenent les temàtiques més rellevants parlades i pensant què és allò que pot passar en el capítol següent.		
<b>ROL DE LA MESTRA</b>		
Pel que fa al rol de la mestra durant la sessió, és necessari que aquesta se situï en la mateixa posició física que els infants, per evitar transmetre una imatge de superioritat, de control o d'autoritat. Durant la sessió, el paper de la mestra serà acompanyar els infants i guiar-los en la conversa, però deixant en tot moment que els infants reflexionin i debatin allò que ells considerin interessant. Per tal que la conversa sigui fluida, si la mestra detecta que els infants estan bloquejats, pot interactuar amb ells fent preguntes sobre les intervencions, per així fomentar la reflexió individual de cada infant. En aquest exercici, la mestra es converteix en un infant més per al diàleg i, per tant, també pot conversar amb els infants sobre les temàtiques que li semblin interessants, cosa que donarà exemple sobre quin és el procediment a seguir.		

## ROL DELS INFANTS

Respecte al rol dels infants, són els protagonistes d'aquesta dinàmica i, per tant, són ells els que han de gestionar i participar perquè l'activitat funcioni. El paper d'aquest ha de ser actiu i atent a les intervencions dels companys, intentant interactuar amb allò que diuen i convertir les intervencions en diàlegs rics. Per aquest motiu, cal que els infants hagin llegit de manera profunda el capítol abans de la sessió i hagin fet una reflexió pausada. D'aquesta manera, la majoria d'infants tindran alguna cosa a aportar durant la sessió. A més, com s'ha mencionat prèviament, hi haurà un infant que serà el moderador de la sessió, sent la persona que doni els torns de paraula i reconduïx les discussions en cas que aquestes no siguin adequades.

## COMPETÈNCIES

COMPETÈNCIA  
COMUNICATIVA LINGÜÍSTICA  
I AUDIOVISUAL

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, i 11.

COMPETÈNCIA  
MATEMÀTICA

COMPETÈNCIA EN EL  
CONEIXEMENT I LA  
INTERACCIÓ AMB EL MÓN  
FÍSIC

COMPETÈNCIA  
ARTÍSTICA I  
CULTURAL

COMPETÈNCIA  
DIGITAL

COMPETÈNCIA  
SOCIAL I  
CIUTADANA

3, 4 i 5.

COMPETÈNCIA  
D'APRENDRE A  
APRENDRE

3 i 5.

COMPETÈNCIA D'AUTONOMIA,  
INICIATIVA PERSONAL I  
EMPRENEDORIA

1 i 2.

## AVALUACIÓ

Així com es menciona al PEC de l'escola (Escola Edumar, 2019), l'activitat de tertúlies literàries dialògiques no té com a objectiu avaluar el nivell de comprensió lectora dels infants, sinó fomentar la lectura dins de la comunitat educativa, descobrir autors i llibres clàssics universals nous pels infants i establir converses i diàlegs entre iguals per aprendre de les experiències i opinions dels altres. Doncs, no és una activitat avaluada. No obstant això, la mestra té un rol d'observadora i guia essencial, podent observar si hi ha alguna necessitat dins de l'aula o inclús podent analitzar el nivell d'expressió oral i de comprensió lectora. A partir d'aquesta observació, la mestra pot dur a terme després altres activitats per donar resposta a les necessitats de l'aula.

## Appendix E - Educational action plan: Children's dossier for the TDL session

Nom:

Data:

Títol del llibre:



### TERTÚLIES LITERÀRIES DIALÒGIQUES

Número del capítol:

Pàgina del fragment:

Línia del fragment:

Què ha passat en aquest capítol?

De quines temàtiques parla el capítol? Per què és important?

Quina part vols compartir amb els teus companys?

Per què l'has escollit? A què et fa pensar?

## Cronograma sobre la participació dels infants en la presa de decisions a l'escola.

### ASPECTES A TENIR EN COMPTE

- Es farà una **assemblea setmanal** a l'aula on els representants de cada classe recolliran les idees expressades per compartir-les al Consell d'alumnes.
- A partir de la formació del **Consell d'alumnes**, es farà una reunió **mensual** per compartir opinions, prendre decisions i fer acords.



### FORMACIÓ

#### Setembre - Octubre

- Formació sobre **Els drets dels infants** a tota la comunitat educativa (mestres, infants, equip directiu...).
- Reflexionem sobre el significat de la **participació**. Què vol dir participar i com ho podem fer?
- Posem aquests aprenentatges en comú a les sessions d'assemblea.

### ORGANITZACIÓ

#### Novembre - Desembre

- De quina manera podem **organitzar-nos** per participar en la **presa de decisions** del centre?
- Expressem el que pensem. Tutors i tutores recullen l'opinió dels infants. En quins àmbits pensen que podrien o els agradaria participar més?
- Constitució del **Consell d'infants** i elecció dels representants.

Arribat aquest moment on ja ha començat la formació i l'organització, cal que comencem a **dibuixar les directrius de l'escola en referència a la participació**. Comencem a partir d'aquells aspectes que **preocupen** als infants i **escoltem les seves propostes**.

## REFLEXIÓ I PARTICIPACIÓ

### Gener

Revisem amb els infants les **normes** de l'escola i les **actualitzem**. Debatem sobre quines normes continuen sent necessàries i quines altres creiem important incloure o eliminar.

## REFLEXIÓ I PARTICIPACIÓ

### Febrer

Repensem els **patis** escolar i l'estona **d'esbarjo**. Com hem d'organitzar-los per tal que siguin adients pels infants?

## REFLEXIÓ I PARTICIPACIÓ

### Març

Organitzem les **sortides** i les **convivències**. Què volen aportar els infants sobre aquest moment tan especial?

## REFLEXIÓ I PARTICIPACIÓ

### Abril

Repensem les **festes populars** i les **celebracions** de l'escola. Com volen que siguin aquestes festes? Quines idees proposen per celebrar-les?

## REFLEXIÓ I PARTICIPACIÓ

### Maig

Estructurem l'espai de **menjador** amb els infants. Aprenem sobre **nutrició** i pensem un **menú** junts. Quines propostes tenen els infants sobre aquesta estona tan important com és el menjador?

*A partir de les reunions d'assemblea i del Consell d'infants, els infants han començat a participar en la presa de decisions de l'escola. Això no obstant, aquest programa només pretén ser una guia per **impulsar** la participació, però aquesta ha d'establir-se durant els anys següents i el calendari s'ha d'adaptar a les necessitats de cada centre.*

## CONCLUSIÓ I PLANIFICACIÓ

### Juny

Què hem **après** sobre la participació i què podem **concloure** d'aquest programa?  
Organitzem l'**any següent** tenint en compte els aspectes més rellevants de participació.  
Organitzem amb ells quins són els moments i espais per **donar veu als infants** i **compartir la presa de decisions**.

## Appendix G - Informed consent

### **CONSENTIMENT INFORMAT PER LA PERSONA PARTICIPANT**

**Títol del Treball de Recerca:** De quina manera l'educació democràtica és una eina per reforçar el pensament crític i la participació dels infants en la comunitat educativa?

**Investigador responsable:** Mar García Valero.

**e-mail:** [margv1@blanquerna.url.edu](mailto:margv1@blanquerna.url.edu)

Soc la Mar García Valero, alumna de 4t del grau d'Educació Primària a la universitat de Blanquerna. Estic duent a terme el meu Treball de Final de Grau (TFG) sobre **l'educació democràtica i la seva relació amb el pensament crític i la participació dels infants dins de la comunitat educativa**. Els objectius del meu TFG són els següents:

1. Entendre la importància de l'escola democràtica i descriure de quina manera es relaciona amb el pensament crític i la participació dels infants a la comunitat.
2. Explicar la metodologia educativa que l'escola Edumar utilitza per desenvolupar i reforçar el pensament crític.
3. Analitzar la rellevància que l'escola Edumar dona a la participació dels infants dins de la comunitat educativa.

D'aquesta manera, es demana als participants que formin part de dues activitats diferents: una entrevista semiestructurada a un membre de l'equip directiu de l'escola i una observació sistemàtica d'una sessió de "Tertúlies literàries" als cursos de 5è i 6è de Primària de l'escola.

El material i/o les dades obtingudes gràcies a la seva participació en aquest Treball de Recerca seran d'ús exclusiu intern de la Facultat de Psicologia, Ciències de l'Educació i l'Esport-Blanquerna. En el cas que fossin incloses en una publicació dins de l'àmbit acadèmic i científic complirien estrictament les condicions ètiques de confidencialitat exigides en una recerca d'aquestes característiques.

La persona participant ha de llegir i contestar les següents preguntes amb atenció (encerclar la resposta correcta):

Ha llegit tota informació que li ha estat facilitada sobre aquest projecte? SÍ / NO

Ha tingut l'oportunitat de preguntar i comentar qüestions sobre el projecte? SÍ / NO

Ha rebut suficient informació sobre aquest projecte? SÍ / NO

Ha rebut respostes satisfactòries a totes les preguntes sobre el projecte? SÍ / NO

Està d'acord en participar-hi? SÍ / NO

Autoritza la seva participació en el projecte? SÍ / NO

Autoritza la participació de les persones de les quals és responsable (en el cas d'una representació institucional)? SÍ / NO

Data: .....

Signatura de la persona participant (noms i cognoms entre parèntesis):

.....

Exemplar per al participant / Exemplar per a l'investigador