



**FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN DE PALENCIA
UNIVERSIDAD DE VALLADOLID**

**LGBTQ+ DIVERSITY THROUGH CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE
DIVERSIDAD LGBTQ+ A TRAVÉS DE LA LITERATURA
INFANTIL**

**TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO
EN EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA**

AUTORA: INÉS ALONSO FERNÁNDEZ

TUTORA: PATRICIA SAN JOSÉ RICO

Palencia, julio de 2021



INDEX

RESUMEN	- 2 -
ABSTRACT	- 2 -
INTRODUCTION	- 3 -
BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: COMPETENCES	- 4 -
OBJECTIVES	- 6 -
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	- 8 -
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST QUEER PEOPLE	- 10 -
LGBTQ+ CHILDREN	- 12 -
EDUCATION AND QUEER YOUTH WELL-BEING	- 13 -
THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION	- 14 -
WHY FOCUS ON READING AND LITERATURE?	- 17 -
GENDER ROLES REPRESENTATION IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS	- 18 -
DIDACTIC PROPOSAL	- 22 -
CONTEXT & DESCRIPTION	- 22 -
THE MATERIALS	- 25 -
OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND COMPETENCES	- 27 -
LESSONS	- 29 -
CONCLUSIONS	- 36 -
BIBLIOGRAPHY	- 38 -

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de mi Trabajo de Fin de Grado es investigar cómo mejorar la inclusión queer en nuestras clases, utilizando la literatura infantil como recurso principal, teniendo en cuenta los retos actuales para la comunidad LGBTQ+. Considerando los resultados del estudio, he creado una propuesta didáctica para el aula de inglés que mejora la representación del colectivo LGBTQ+ y lo apoya. Esta propuesta ayuda a mejorar las habilidades en una segunda lengua con metodologías y actividades divertidas, interactivas e interesantes, diseñadas para primero de Educación Primaria en España.

Palabras clave: literatura infantil, queer, LGBTQ+, habilidades lectoras, inclusión, roles de género.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of my Final Degree Project is to research how to improve queer inclusion in our classes, using children's literature as the main resource, taking into account current challenges for the LGBTQ+ community. Considering the results of the study, I created a didactic proposal to implement in the English classroom that improves LGBTQ+ representation and support. This proposal further develops second language skills through fun, interactive and engaging methodologies and activities, designed for the first year of Primary Education in Spain.

Key words: children's literature, queer, LGBTQ+, reading abilities, inclusion, gender roles.

INTRODUCTION

This document reclaims the inclusion of queer students in our system. Through research and a didactical proposal, I demonstrate the possibility to create a safe space to our LGBTQ+ students and to improve life quality of non cisheteronormative people through education. The didactical proposal is carried out in the English classroom and uses literature as the main tool.

The research is conducted from a global perspective, and it shows that not only Spanish policies and social situation influence our students' perspective; foreign laws and ideas also transpire into our school. Therefore, we cannot ignore homophobic, transphobic, and misogynist policies and public figures outside our country as well.

Later on, the didactical proposal is created considering the importance (proved by the theoretical framework) of explicit representation of queer identities in children's books, films and TV series. It is also considered how representation can affect the views from cisheteronormative people. Therefore, this project is also intended for non-queer identities, proving that being exposed to LGBTQ+ people only eradicates prejudices and hostile preconceptions.

Furthermore, the research and the didactical proposal from this project serve as a guide to create queer-friendly learning situations. It can be done at every stage of a student's life, but it is easier to avoid creating prejudices than erasing them. Therefore, I chose to focus the didactical proposal in the beginning of Primary Education. It could be carried out also in Infant Education, choosing other books and reading strategies for

younger children. Therefore, my proposal, as an example, can be transformed and used at any stage of a child's development, by teachers, schools, workshops, or their parents.

It is important to maintain communication with our student's families because ensuring the children get an inclusive education is a shared task between school and their close environment. Sometimes it can be hard, as some families have already interiorised prejudices and hatred, but most of them can be talked out of them, showing data and educating them as well in reunions and little friendly talks.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: COMPETENCES

Every teacher must be able to plan educational action that adapts to their students in diverse contexts. In order to achieve it, the teacher must know and comprehend the social, psychological and pedagogical characteristics of their pupils. This project addresses the children's needs in two phases: researching and planning. The topics from this document are social-related and relevant for every student's life, therefore intensive investigation was the first step needed to adequate their learning process.

After conducting research, I created the didactic proposal, supported by the knowledges provided by all the subjects and classes from the degree. It is important to be able to select and organise the formal aspects of every didactic proposal to ensure quality education. Therefore, I chose and developed the methodologies, objectives and contents destined to the target learning group (the first year of Primary Education). This selection is supported by research and analysis done throughout the whole degree and applied in

the practicum, which provided enriching real experiences that allowed me to create projects like this one.

It is also important for a teacher to be constantly updating their knowledge, therefore this project draws from different sources. We must be careful with our references, consult diverse authors and select cautiously. For my project it is also important to consider the history and evolution of queer inclusion in social contexts, for this reason my references are from different decades: I selected extracts from 2020 and others from years ago. It has been enriching to verify the progress from the last decades throughout the different documents.

Teachers must promote democratic values, social justice, tolerance and human rights in their lessons. My project is created from the desire to improve queer inclusion from a democratic perspective, reclaiming LGBTQ+ rights and trying to erase discrimination in our schools. In order to fight without violence for inclusion, teachers must include these topics in their lessons, making their students see reality with empathy.

This project is created for the English classroom and advocates to improve reading habits in a foreign language. These routines are focused on having fun, teamwork and communication because it is important for our students to enjoy reading in order to create enthusiastic readers. It is also important to use a wide variety of resources and materials for our lessons to help our students learn how to communicate in English (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and they must participate in meaningful and active tasks.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this project is to create a didactical proposal to satisfy LGBTQ+ representation and educational needs, considering queer-inclusive politics, mental health issues, demographic information and family and community support. The proposal is designed for the English class and it focuses on literature. The project gathers resources and information on how to choose books and how to analyse didactic materials with a queer and gender perspective and it encourages to improve LGBTQ+ inclusion in our schools.

To ensure that the proposal meets the needs from the queer community, this project is based on research. This analysis focuses on three main areas: basic needs (health risks, discrimination, politics), queer children's needs (representation in media, school risks and community support) and progress in queer inclusion through the last decades. Considering this research, the didactical proposal is developed focusing on the most needed changes (representation and visibility).

Furthermore, the didactical proposal develops reading abilities, as they are a fundamental tool in life. This development is achieved by active and fun methodologies, engaging tasks and peer support, considering the students' needs, backgrounds and interests. Every activity starts from the children's experiences and their previous knowledge, creating meaningful learning situations.

The didactical proposal is developed for the English classroom, providing students fun, enriching and relevant topics and activities to involve them in meaningful

conversations in which they will use the English language to participate. Therefore, the children develop communication abilities in a foreign language, not only as a tool for basic situations but also to participate in complex conversations.

This project also covers the need for activism in our schools, as it is in our job as teachers to be aware of social problems and act accordingly. Education is a fundamental tool to improve society, to promote respect and social justice. Therefore, with the didactic proposal, students will also be involved in this change, normalising gender and sexual diversity from early ages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE LGBTQ+?

Growing up, we are usually unaware of the gender and sexual diversity that exists. Most of us did not know a single queer person in our childhood. Some students joked about someone being gay, maybe we watched a TV series with a stereotypical queer character; but most of us never got to interact with queer people. When we got into our teen years, we met several queer people: teachers, friends, families, singers, actors... Did they suddenly appear? Were they hidden? No, they were not. We just grew without knowing how many queer people surround us.

There have been attempts to know exactly how many people identify as LGBTQ+. These attempts have failed, getting completely different results between countries, continents and cultures, therefore we cannot get accurate results. Although they are not completely reliable, the values from the European and North American studies are relevant for this project, as it is developed for Spanish's schools, an occidental context.

In the United States of America there have been several studies trying to estimate how many Americans identify as LGBTQ+.

Averaging across surveys provides a way to smooth out the impact of any individual survey bias. I found that the average across all surveys is 3.8 percent of adults self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. That implies that there are roughly nine million LGBT-identified Americans. (Gates, G.J. 2012, p.698)

Although these numbers might not seem big enough, many people across the country disagree with them:

U.S. adults, on average, estimate that 25% of Americans are gay or lesbian. More specifically, over half of Americans (52%) estimate that at least one in five Americans are gay or lesbian, including 35% who estimate that more than one in four are. Thirty percent put the figure at less than 15%. (Morales, L. 2011 n.p.)

In Europe, based on a survey conducted in August 2016 by Dalia Research (20 Minutos, 2016, October 10th, n.p.), almost 6% of the population identifies as LGBTQ+. There are significant differences between European countries, varying, for example, from 7.4% in Germany to 1.5% in Hungary. In Spain, the percentage of LGBTQ+ identifying population is higher than the European one, ascending to 6.9%. Even though these numbers are already significant, we must consider that not everyone admits their sexual orientation and gender freely. There are many people that do not come out of the closet in their whole lives or even they never get to realise who they really are. Therefore, the number of queer people might be much higher across the globe.

My project is destined to improve queer inclusion in society and their life quality, and to reduce their health problems. This means that many students could get benefits from it. Considering the data mentioned, we can estimate that in a teacher's career, they will encounter more than fifty students that identify or will identify as LGBTQ+ in their classes, which is a great number even without considering their families or other acquaintances. Therefore, following my project or other queer-inclusive projects could improve the lives of many people throughout several generations and create a massive change in society.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST QUEER PEOPLE

There are different types of discrimination against queer people. Some of these types of discrimination are more harmful than others and they are present in different contexts. It is present in every aspect of a queer person's life, from medical treatments to their country policies. Some forms of discrimination are often linked to certain groups, as the fetishization of trans women and cis lesbians, as it is shown in many sex-related crimes, in which cis hetero men abuse these women and, in some cases, they end up killing them, specially trans black women. Other forms of discrimination are shared along the whole queer community, such as physical violence and aggressions from strangers in the streets, stereotyping in the media, being rejected at home and reproductive policies that ban queer people from adopting children.

There are laws in several countries that punish LGBTQ+ people for their existence, such as Russia with the Mizulina Law signed in 2013 aiming to "protect" children from "gay propaganda" (Vazquez, D. 2020, p.2) or, according to Nyoni, Z. (2020, pp.2-13), the "antisodomy laws" inherited from the colonialism in some parts of Africa that are still present in some countries nowadays, such as Malawi and Namibia.

These laws might seem distant, we can assume that they are from other countries that have nothing in common with Europe or Spain besides the political and historical relationships, but it would be a huge misconception. In recent years, hate crimes and homophobic and transphobic policies have been growing at an alarming pace in some countries, especially in the Balkans and some others like Poland. The European Union has policies and principles to work against discrimination towards minorities but somehow, it is allowing these countries to apply these laws, as Godzisz, P. (2019, pp.292-

295) explains. Why is the EU acting so relaxed with the emerging policies against gender and sexual diverse citizens of its countries? It should act as soon as possible and condemn these laws.

Every queer-friendly policy is questioned by people. Spain was one of the first countries to allow same-gender marriage, but this law was questioned for years. When the Spanish government proposed the draft for the new Gender Self-Determination Law, it was no exception. There was a huge debate between the government partners, with some sections of the main party (PSOE) against the draft. As Álvarez, I. (2021 p.5) states, the main conflict arose from erasing the need to take hormones that improve physical transition or undergo gender reassignment surgeries, which are requirements to be recognised as a trans person in Spain. Requiring these treatments is discriminatory against trans people because no one should be forced to prove their gender through their appearance.

It was also controversial the possibility to start hormonal therapy as a kid when their parents allow it, which is beneficial as it makes physical transition, if they need it, easier and more effective. Some people believe that these treatments are irreversible and might hurt the kid if they change their mind; but these treatments are completely safe: they just block some body developments that can be continued at any time in their lives. Therefore, these procedures combined with trans inclusive projects in schools, such as this one, would improve the child's life.

As teachers, we cannot change the laws directly, but it is important to raise awareness in our students and their families to stop the hate and discrimination from spreading, minimising the violence risks. Providing them information and queer friendly

projects as this one, we can eradicate negative prejudices and misconceptions against LGBTQ+ people, increasing the chances to vote out discriminatory laws in democratic countries (such as ours). Furthermore, if we erase these policies in our countries, it pressures other places to do the same. This means that it is important not only for our community to eliminate discrimination, it also helps eradicate hate in other places.

LGBTQ+ CHILDREN

As Rosky, C.J. (2013, p.608) explains, throughout history it has been common to find cultures that feared that a child would grow up and become gay if they joined adults in homosexual activities, but in recent years this fear has transformed further from there, believing that a child will become homosexual if they are exposed to queer characters in media or in their lives. It has been a response from religious and conservative groups to the quick rise of the LGBT movements. (Rosky, C.J. 2013 pp.608-609)

This response was just a queerphobic myth that attacked LGBTQ+ communities, attempting to ostracise queer people from society. Some conservative sectors of society think that queerness is a choice, therefore if they could hide every LGBTQ+ representation from view, it would eventually disappear, as no one would choose something they did not know it existed. They consider indoctrination exposing children to LGBTQ+ people and narratives (Rosky, C.J. 2013 p.609). Therefore, queer-inclusive projects such as this one, will not contribute to a raise in LGBTQ+ population, it will only help students and families to learn about the reality of queer lives without prejudices.

It is quite normal nowadays to accept the existence of queer teenagers, but it is still uncommon to speak about queer children (Rosky, C.J. 2013 pp.616-617). Although there are many examples of queer children everywhere, people still say that kids cannot know they are gay because they are still young. On the other hand, if an adult comes out late in life, they will face comments about being a fake because they would have realised it sooner. It is almost never a fake, in many cases it is about internalised queerphobia and the education this people received, hiding their true selves even from themselves. It is important to include inclusive projects in schools to prevent internalised queerphobia and to help students to get to know themselves and who they are.

EDUCATION AND QUEER YOUTH WELL-BEING

It is needed for our elementary students to learn about LGBTQ+ topics from a very young age to ensure their mental well-being when they grow and to avoid discrimination from their peers. Nowadays, many LGBTQ+ teenagers and young adults suffer mental health complications, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

In a survey, Mayock, P. Bryan, A. Carr, N. & Kitching, K. (2008, pp.72-102) have concluded that 86% of the participants have reported having feelings of depression throughout their lives, 60% link these feelings to their experiences as LGBTQ+. 27% of the participants have self-harmed at least once, most of them in their teenage years. 17.7% of the sample had attempted to end their own lives in an age range from 8 to 42 years.

This data is concerning, therefore we must promote change between our students, encouraging them to accept themselves and their LGBTQ+ peers as soon as possible, so

we can minimise the impact of discrimination and mental health risks in queer people. Teachers should cooperate in the improvements of social acceptance of queer people, dismantling prejudices from students and families, including LGBTQ+ representation in their lessons, helping to create a safe environment for everyone, being open about their own gender identity and sexual orientation if they are queer, and providing resources and support to the families. My project implements these ideas from the beginning: it teaches young children to accept themselves and their peers and it provides a safe space for everyone. It is a first step towards inclusion in schools and in their whole lives.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION

It is important to provide children with information about gender identity and sexual orientation from a young age because not everyone has the same development and discovers themselves at the same age, and it could be beneficial for them to learn about these topics as soon as possible. According to Ryan, C. (2014 p.334)

Children usually develop a sense of gender identity by about age three and express this in a variety of ways. For example, very young children express gender through their preferences for clothes, colors, hairstyles and toys. They have a personal sense of gender, even though the people around them may not understand that and may try to push or force them in a different direction. We have seen, not only through our research but also through the family intervention work we have done for the past ten years with LGBT children, youth and families that young people have a deep sense of who they are from very early ages. Increasingly, we have seen children identify as gay between ages seven and twelve.

Therefore, being the first year of primary education the first compulsory one, it is the earliest we can ensure all our students get the information about gender and sexuality related topics that will help our queer students discover themselves without negative feelings about “being different” and to ensure that non-queer students do not embody

prejudices and stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people. Even though teachers might be a great aid to improve queer representation, it is not enough. Children consume books, TV series, videogames and other entertainment forms that do not contain any LGBTQ+ people at all, making them perceive non cis-heterosexual people as an oddity, not as a normal person that they can encounter every day in their daily life.

In recent years we can encounter some good examples about queer representation in adult media in different platforms, such as Ellie, the main character from the Naughty Dog videogame *The Last of Us Part II* (2020), the characters from the FX series *POSE* (2018), the Logo TV Reality Show *RuPaul's Drag Race* and many more, which is a huge improvement from the previous decades, even if there is still work to do, as Fouts & Inch (2005) as cited in Caldwell, M (2014, p.7) found that 2% of the characters were queer-identifying, describing it as a “gross under-representation”

Even if adult's media is improving, what about children's mainstream media? There are a few great examples, such as some of the characters from Cartoon Network's *Steven Universe* (2013), in which, according to Wright, H. (2018 pp. 32-34) the series advocates for patience, empathy and positivity to transform people, denying a clear line between good and bad. There are some couples (like Ruby and Sapphire) that, although they are presumably sexless, they show themselves in feminine manners, making their relationship an explicit lesbian couple. Gender roles are also challenged in this series: the main character for example, sings in drag in a festival. This is presented as something natural in the series, it is the viewer the one that confronts their views about a boy in a dress Wright, H. (2018 p.37) Although this example is absolutely heart-warming, positive

and comforting to the queer community and to every kid that likes the series, it is still an oddity and queer identities are often inexistent or hidden with subtlety.

One clear example of these subtleties would be in the animation series *The Legend of Korra*, that, as Wright, H. (2018 p.16) points that, “it is certainly bold in its subject matter, exploring issues of trauma, terrorism, and fascism, its on-screen representation of a queer character, though widely lauded, ultimately falls short”. Why is it more difficult to explain to kids that two women can love each other than to explain incredibly painful topics as terrorism and fascism? Writgh, H. (2018 pp.16-18) describes how the scene that hints that the main character is queer falls short. In this scene, Korra, the main character, sits with her friend during a wedding. A portal to the spirit world opens and they decide to travel together. They exchange smiles, hold each other’s hands and they mirror the pose of the wedding couple, giving a sense of romantic intimacy but without any confirmation.

Caldwell, M. (2014) analysed children’s animated films, focusing on hinted queer characters, their transgression from heteronormativity, their involvement in the story and if they were portrayed as a satire or not. The results he expected where that gender transgressions would be most exclusively from male characters and the films would show support to traditional structures. Caldwell, M. (2014, pp.18-20) describes his feelings about his findings related to gender-role transgressions with the following statement:

It came as no big surprise that gender-role transgressions were by a large margin used for humor in the scripts of the five movies, albeit slightly less of a majority than expected. This phenomenon can nonetheless be seen as problematic, because the instructions for young audience members might portray more fluid expressions of gender as illegitimate and even undesirable. What may be an indication of progress however, is the higher than expected proportion of supported

transgressions, even if used as humor, that potentially gives direction towards social permissibility of fluid gender expression and sexual desire.

And related to attraction results he states the following:

Every one of the categories in my coding scheme upheld the hypothesis even more with instances hinting at LGBT culture or desire coded to be for humorous means least 80% of the time. This may indicate that alternative lifestyles and expressions of gender are still seen as *inappropriate* for the protected class of children. While it is indeed an improvement that these alternative realities for sexuality and expression of gender and gender roles even exist within the plots, the message may still be that LGBT lifestyles and expressions are ludicrous, not realistic for children, or a reason for being focuses of satire themselves. Caldwell, M. (2014, p.20)

Where do queer community have to draw the line? Is it reasonably to accept being portrayed mainly in comedy situations? Can representation be better or is it enough? My project advocates for better representation, for explicit queer characters and for gender-role transgression. Children must be exposed to representation that does not show queer identities as a joke. Therefore, through my proposal, students will learn to question the way characters are represented in different books and audio-visual content, so they can be aware of prejudices and disrespectful portrayals.

WHY FOCUS ON READING AND LITERATURE?

The Real Decree 126/2014 that establishes the basic curricula in Primary Education states that reading and writing are tools that promote cognitive processes that elaborate knowledge of the world we live in, our environment and ourselves. Therefore, it is fundamental for teachers to focus on reading and literature to ensure that students acquire the tools to continue learning throughout their whole lives.

According to Dris, M. (2011, p.2) reading is a complete activity and it provides information, creates habits of reflection, effort and concentration routines, and it is also fun and entertaining. The author points out benefits of reading (Dris, M. 2011, pp.2-3), from which I selected the most important for my project. The main ones are those related to cultural and social approaching: throughout reading, students will develop their knowledge about LGBTQ+ people and how to create healthy relationships with them. It will also provide queer students with role models and representation to inspire them. Another important goal in this project is getting to know oneself, which is another reading benefit. Reading is also beneficial because it helps to develop language skills, which is important as second language students.

GENDER ROLES REPRESENTATION IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

It has been considered for years that

Throughout the history of children's books, authors have told their stories not only to entertain but to articulate the prevailing cultural values and social standards. Children's books are especially useful indicators of societal norms. And, children's books have, for a very long time, defined society's prevailing standards of masculine and feminine role development. (Peterson & Lach 1990, p.188)

Furthermore,

Gender bias exists in the illustrations, content, and language in many children's books today. A study from 1995 has shown that male names are represented almost twice as often as female names in the titles of books. It is also proven that in books regarding neutral-gender names frequently revolve around a male character. Many classic and popular stories where girls are portrayed usually reflect stereotypes of masculine and feminine roles. Such gender stereotyping is not only found in classic children's books, but even Newberry and Caldecott medal winners. Girls are usually represented as sweet, naive, conforming, and dependant while boys are typically described as strong, adventurous, independent, and capable. (Singh, 1998, as cited in Meis, J. 2010, p.1)

Therefore, as teachers, we must carefully select the books we propose in our classrooms (textbooks and fiction) and different materials. Gender issues and LGBTQ+ are related and we cannot give inclusive education towards LGBTQ+ people without considering gender issues.

Children's books often differentiate between "boys' literature" and "girls' literature", offering them different views in how they ought to act. Children perceive gender roles from their books and create stereotypes about gender because of the images they see, and the actions performed by the characters in every scene. Many children perceive every day the image of the innocent and helpless princess and the strong and capable superhero, creating long-lasting effects on their perceptions about gender.

It is also important to think about the history of how children's books became their own literature genre to understand how they influence gender development in kids. "Prior to the eighteenth century, messages about expected behaviour were the same for girls and boys" (Peterson, S. and Lach, M. 1990, p.189). These authors explain that, from around 1750, the publishers started to differentiate between male and female audiences. Schools were segregated by gender, so they gave female led books to girls and male led books to boys. These books did not converge until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when they became intended for mixed audiences. The messages were so distinguished from boy's literature to girl's literature and dictated so much what was expected from them that it had an enormous effect in society (Peterson and Lach, 1990, pp.189-190).

Many children's books do not show gender roles consciously. Some issues about these unconscious representations are that boys appear more times in books and colouring

books, girls are often portrayed indoors and boys outdoors, male characters are more aggressive than female ones, the jobs they have are very traditional gendered occupations, female illustrations are usually rounder and smaller than their male counterparts, etc; as Fitzpatrick, M. & McPherson, B (2010, pp.132-135) explain.

This is not exclusive to children's literature books, it is also shown in school textbooks, the way some activities are written and the pictures they contain. It is also shown in toys' catalogues by pictures of girls playing with dolls and boys playing with cars, which still happens today unfortunately. Children are exposed to a biased look on reality that mostly includes only traditional family roles: the caring, loving woman that sacrifices everything she loves for her family and the hardworking ambitious detached from the family man.

It is important to consider that this does not only affect cis hetero people, but queer people are also affected, as they often break gender roles that do not fit with their identity. Queer identities include aromantic and asexual people that do not involve themselves romantically and/or sexually with partners, non-binary people that are neither boy or girl, they can be both, none or something else in between or outside the binary; gay people that do not follow traditional gender roles, polyamorous people that engage in non-monogamous relationships. Gender roles are harmful to everyone, no matter the gender, sexual orientation or partners, therefore it is needed to broaden the views in media. Changing representation and including all types of characters in children's books would be an incredible aid dismantling traditional views on society, but as teachers we do not possess that power, so we must improve gender and LGBTQ+ representation choosing and carefully creating the materials we use in our lessons.

Therefore, my proposal is created to ensure representation, to acknowledge queer identities, to provide support to students and families, improving their mental health, creating safe spaces in school, to promote change in society, and to erase prejudices and stereotypes. This proposal is an example of how to select queer-inclusive materials, how to include LGBTQ+ identities in the lessons and in the school life and how to create an accepting environment in which diversity is normalised. Even though this proposal is complete and focuses on the most important topics (gender, families and identity) it must be supported by queer-inclusive measures in the school: gender neutral bathrooms, queer teachers talking about their experiences, recognition of trans students (respecting their needs, names and pronouns) and using neutral forms in their documents that do not assume that a family is one mother, one father and children, among other inclusive methods.

DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

CONTEXT & DESCRIPTION

The unit is aimed at the first year of Primary Education and will be organised in five different sessions of one hour in the last weeks of June for its proximity to Pride's celebrations. The main tools to develop the unit will be children's drawings, conversations and different books. It will also serve as a revision of many of the learnings of the academic year. It will be very participative and active, focusing on each one's experiences and contributions.

As it is stated in BOCYL n. ° 142 (2016, p. 34465), the main objective for the Foreign Language area is the use of the English language as a form of communication in social contexts. Focusing in the four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will have to read different texts to develop their reading abilities, they will have to participate both in prepared expositions and spontaneous conversations to develop their speaking skills and they will face some tasks that involve writing in order to develop these reading skills.

The unit starts from the student's experience, considering what they see at home, what they know and who they know because "In teaching it is important to know how learners learn. If we teach in a connected and related way, most of them will learn properly. Otherwise learning difficulties may arise." (Ausubel and Novak, 1983 as cited in Ballester, A, 2014 p.200), therefore connecting their experiences to the topic, which improves comprehension and developing of the unit.

METHODOLOGY

The first activities when introducing a new topic will consist of a conversation about the students' thoughts about the topic, helping themselves with drawings. The drawings will serve as a source of information following the "open work" theory proposed by Ballester, A. (2014 p.201). These topics are social in nature, therefore the students' experiences, their knowledge about their families and their acquaintances serve as a source of information.

Open work promotes meaningful learning experiences. When learners do open works their learning process is reinforced. It should be added that a bit of flexibility is needed in that situation. A practical session concerning open works can be easily carried out in the classroom. That activity may consist in asking learners to bring into the classroom whatever source of information they find regarding an issue or a unit of work, such as maps, photos, graphs, drawings, sketches, texts and photocopies of photographs. It is very important to let the proposal open, so that the activity becomes enriching and interesting. (Ballester, A. 2014 p.201)

The students will have just a couple of directions to draw their pictures that help them focus on the topic but allow them flexibility and space to express what they believe it would be interesting for the class or just what they want to express and share.

The lessons will also focus on teamwork. They will work in small groups of three, four or five students, as

Collaborative works strengthen the effect of giving them a great number of incoming information, by using a multiple diversification of resources. When it comes into meaningful learning experiences, students work fine when cooperating in pairs, although a group of 4 is considered ideal. (Ballester, A. 2014, p.201)

These teams will not be decided at random; they will be determined by the teacher selecting different students with different backgrounds, abilities and interests to make ideal teams:

“Well-balanced teams are recommended [...], so teachers should take into account some information about learners: initial evaluations, results obtained in several subjects, academic curricula, educational records, or directly observing the class group. This works out better if teams are set up by the teacher, as he knows his students well. Teams should be made up of members with different capabilities, that is, putting together an advanced learner, an active one (capable of leading the group), a slow-witted or withdrawn student and a learner using curriculum adaptation (with special educational needs, bad behaviour ...) (Ballester, A. 2014, p.201)

This unit is designed from a ludic perspective because gaming helps the students develop their abilities: it helps in socialising, meaningful learning, stimulating imagination, developing logic thinking and emotional learning (De Borja, M. 1998 p.156). Consequently, most tasks proposed are based on interesting and fun activities that children like to do (drawing, participating in storytelling, roleplaying and watching cartoons). Furthermore, this kind of activities are useful for the English class because the students use the language in a significative way, using its potential to sing, play, draw, roleplay and improvise. (Alcedo and Chacón, 2011 p.73)

For language learning, communication is key: translation is never used through the proposal and student participation is required. Most of the activities will not have any written report and they will follow the principles of the direct and the oral method and communicative approach gathered by Pino, M and Rodríguez, B. (2006, pp.134-136). The tasks will focus on only using English (without translating), oral practise through questions and answers, student interaction, progressive change through the different stages of the unit, student's responsibility in communicative tasks, programming based on topics, and oral communication and evaluation through communicative situations.

THE MATERIALS

Camdlin (1987) as cited in Madrid, D. (2001 pp.215-216) offers a frame of reference to choose and design materials. Its key categories are: objectives and contents of the materials, tasks based on the materials, what they require the teacher to use them, variety of resources, adequacy to the language learning (sequence, structure and continuity) and adequacy to the learning processes that are required (autonomous learning, discovery learning, learning construction, content-based learning, cooperative learning...). Consequently, all materials are designed and selected following these guidelines. They are selected considering the learning process (focusing in three main areas: language learning through communication, embodying social values towards queer people and discovering themselves). They also consider the students' needs and the requirements for the teacher's to use them (especially knowing the main guidelines on how to address LGBTQ+ people and how to support their queer students. Lastly, they are designed and sequenced to use them starting from the experience, students' thoughts, and their ideas in the first sessions, expanding that vision to less known or even unknown topics in the last lessons (using tales to open up a conversation about what it means to be transgender or to discover other types of families).

The main reason that led me to choose specifically the materials I use in the unit is that, according to Avila-Saavedra, G. (2009 p.8)

Mass media, as a cultural and social institution, contribute to the maintenance of the sexual status quo expressed as the pre-eminence of heterosexuality in the representation of social interactions.

A queer perspective in media criticism requires going beyond issues of numeric representation of gays and lesbian towards an analysis of the nature and complexity of such representations in the context of a broader notion of hegemony.

Therefore, I chose the materials to challenge that status quo and open a critical conversation about these topics from an early age, with appropriate representation and considering the different ways to represent queer people and relationships.

Tofiño, I (2006, pp.87-88), considering how diversity is represented, distinguishes four categories of representation: discrimination/injury (texts where diversity is represented as a negative trait caused by sickness or not following the traditions), “kind” discrimination (texts that contain different family models but following a hierarchy in which monogamous heterosexual families are treated like the best option), invisibility (texts that do not contain diversity: the most common ones in children’s literature) and affirmation (texts that show diversity in a neutral way: they do not judge or hide that diversity). This last category is the one that I follow throughout my proposal because it is important to show diversity in a natural and neutral way.

According to Tofiño, I. (2006, p.83), teachers, parents and adults in general must act natural towards diversity in children’s books. Adults views are nuanced by our own assumptions about what it means to not fit in the cisheterosexual society as adults, so when we try to talk about diversity, we sometimes become paranoid, saying that we do not possess materials, that there is massive bullying towards queer students. Even though there could be more materials and it is true that some queer students suffer from bullying and discrimination at school, things have improved in the last decade and continue to improve day by day.

Tofiño, I. (2006, p.83) also states that young kids and teens nowadays have tools (such as the internet) and adult role models that help them to carry on with their lives.

Even though students have access to materials on the internet and other sources, this unit serves as a first contact and support to help them reach the materials and the help they might need, considering that there is still queerphobia, there is still bullying and other problems caused by hatred and misinformation and our students need to grow up challenging every form of discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community.

Another aspect to consider that Tofiño, I. (2006, p.84) mentions is that there is little information and studies about queer-related documents (information pamphlets, books, guidelines, books...) for LGBTQ+ kids in Spain. Compared to gender-related ones, which their discrimination is pointed for years now, there are little criteria to judge and analyse queer diversity in these texts. Therefore, he proposes some criteria to consider while selecting materials to deal with queer issues with children (Tofiño, I. 2006, pp.86-87). The materials chosen contain different types of romantic relationships presented as something positive. There are also different masculinity and femininity models and the characters are not forced to follow social conventions related to their gender.

OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND COMPETENCES

The unit has the following objectives:

General objectives

- Analyse gender roles and stereotypes.
- Acknowledge and value the differences between everyone's families.
- Develop communication abilities in English.
- Use literature as a tool to learn about the world.
- Improve understanding of oneself.
- Get to know and respect each other.

Specific objectives

- Dismantle prejudices about gendered activities and jobs.
- Acknowledge non-cisheteronormative families.
- Use drawings and non-verbal language to support oral communication.
- Develop reading strategies in small groups.
- Acknowledge that there are different approaches to books (paper, storytelling, audiobooks, representations, roleplays).

Furthermore, these objectives will be assessed focusing on the following goals:

Main goals

At the end of this unit all children must:

- Have participated in the activities, expressing themselves and their ideas about the activities in simple messages and drawings.
- Talk in casual conversations (during recess or in different situations in class) about the differences between their families and their peers' ones.
- Engage in English-speaking situations, listening and answering with non-verbal communication (nods, eye-contact, facial expressions).
- Answer simple questions about the books and stories from the proposal accurately, proving they understood them.

At the end of this unit most children must:

- Elaborate simple phrases in English about the unit, speaking about themselves, their families and/or their acquaintances or about the books and stories they read and created in the unit.
- Express their opinions about the stories and choose their favourite one.

At the end of this unit some children must:

- Create their own inclusive stories.

Competences:

All the competences from the Spanish' education system will be worked on in the unit. For example, the Linguistic Competence will play a big role throughout the lessons, as communication (oral and written) will be the main tool for all the activities. The Mathematical and basic competences in science and technology will be worked on creating the scenario and props for the roleplay, as the students must measure and plan the different sizes, materials and the arrangement of all the elements. The digital competence will take part in activities that involve the computer. Learning to learn will be important throughout the unit as the children will assess their own learning and regulate their rhythms. Social and civic competences, as well as cultural competences will be present throughout all the topics and contents of the unit, as the pupils will embody respect values and learn how to look after their peers. Entrepreneurship will be developed through the creation of the roleplay, as our students will have to designate roles, organise their work as teams and create a final product from scratch.

LESSONS

Every lesson of this didactic proposal is described below following the same structure. First, I mention the specific objectives for the lesson to support the brief description of the activities. Then, I specify the materials required for the task and which competences are the main ones. Lastly, I provide an assessment template used for every student throughout the lesson, which will be complemented by observation, teacher's notes and task's supervision.

First session:

Objectives:

- Describe their families.
- Support verbal communication with non-verbal language and visual aids.
- Acknowledge the differences between their families.

Description: **My family and me.** Students will draw a picture of their close families, the people who they live with. Then they will briefly explain their families guided by questions asked by the teacher (“who do you play with?”, “who lives at your house?”, “who takes you to the hospital?”), and they will talk about the differences between each family (single parent families, divorced families, families that include grandparents, homo-parental families, youth centres, orphans) This session will focus on acknowledging and valuing the differences between the families of our students.

Materials:

- Paper.
- Drawing tools.

Competences: linguistic competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, cultural competences.

Assessment:

Item	Bad	Ok	Good	Great
Pay attention to the drawing.				
Follow the instructions from the teacher.				
Listen to the classmates' expositions.				
Point to the differences between families.				

Second session:

Objectives:

- Recognise and describe different jobs.

- Acknowledge discriminatory views about gendered jobs.
- Support verbal communication with non-verbal language and visual aids.

Description: **Gender stereotypes.** Children will draw a picture of different jobs. They will draw selected jobs, some jobs that are often gender-stereotyped such as firefighter, police, teacher, nurse, etc. Then they will do an analysis of what gender is the person they have drawn putting their drawings in the blackboard in three different spaces: one for the girls, one for the boys and the last one for other genders or non-specified gender. Then the teacher will ask questions for them to think about the stereotypes.

Materials:

- Paper.
- Drawing tools.

Competences: linguistic competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, cultural competences.

Assessment:

Item	Bad	Ok	Good	Great
Show interest doing the drawing.				
Follow the instructions from the teacher.				
Listen to classmates' exposition.				
Question the differences between "male jobs" and "female jobs".				

Third session:

Objectives:

- Support their peers and help each other read.
- Recognise the main characters and plot of the stories.
- Formulate opinions about the stories.

Description: **Analysing gender.** They will read in small groups the book *Are you a boy or are you a girl?* and later they will watch the video version (https://youtu.be/4_9F0RZUsIc) of the tale *Jamie - A Transgender Cinderella Story* (Pike, 2015).

Materials:

- *Are you a boy or are you a girl?* (Savage, 2015).
- Classroom's digital equipment (computer, screen).

Competences: linguistic competence, digital competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, cultural competences, entrepreneurship.

Assessment:

Item	Bad	Ok	Good	Great
Identify the main characters.				
Describe the plot with short sentences.				
Choose the favourite character.				
Stay silent during the video.				
Help the teammates read/let the teammates help.				

Fourth session:

Objectives:

- Support their peers and help each other read.
- Recognise the plot and main characters.

- Act according to the role assigned in the team.
- Participate in the planning and creation of the roleplay.

Description: **Lesbian and gay families.** In groups, children will read different books about same-gender parenting families. They will analyse the story, their characters and they will start preparing a role play about the story they have read. They will create the script and the costumes and scenery they may need. Books: *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman and Laura Cornell, *A Tale of Two Daddies* by Vanita Oelschlager and *Mommy, Mama and Me* by Leslea Newman.

Materials:

- *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell, 2005).
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman and Cornell, 2000).
- *A Tale of Two Daddies* (Oelschlager, 2010).
- *Mommy, Mama and Me* (Newman, 2009).
- Pencils, papers, cardboard, accessories.

Competences: linguistic competence, mathematical and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, cultural competences, entrepreneurship.

Assessment:

Item	Bad	Ok	Good	Great
Help the teammates read/let the teammates help.				
Identify the main characters.				
Describe the plot with short sentences.				
Choose the favourite character.				

Lead the team/let a teammate lead the team.				
Provides ideas for the roleplay.				
Participates in the creation of the roleplay (props, costumes).				

Fifth session:

Objectives:

- Participate in the creation and interpretation of the roleplay.
- Support their acting with short sentences and non-verbal communication.
- Respect other teams' roleplay.
- Provide feedback to their classmates and their roleplays.
- Describe the story of other teams' roleplay.
- Self-asses the unit.

Description: **Roleplay**. The different groups will finish creating the role play and they will do the play for the rest of the class. Finally, they will write or draw in a sheet of paper the three things they have understood better and the thing they did not understand well to implement improvements the following school years and focus on the weaknesses.

Materials:

- Costumes.
- Props.
- Materials to finish their costumes/props (paper, cardboard, paint).
- Paper and pencil.

Competences: linguistic competence, mathematical and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, cultural competences, entrepreneurship.

Assessment:

Item	Bad	Ok	Good	Great
Interpret the role assigned.				
Know their lines.				
Support the acting with non-verbal communication.				
Talk clear and loudly.				
Keeps silent during other teams' play.				
Identify the weaknesses and strengths during the unit.				

CONCLUSIONS

Creating didactical proposals aimed towards the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students in our classrooms should be a common practise. It is important for our queer students to feel included, represented and valued in our lessons to reduce their mental health risks in their future. Furthermore, these proposals are also important for our non-queer students, as they dismantle prejudices and hatred.

It is important to mention that in the last decades, queer inclusion in education has improved: there is more information, less discrimination and society is slowly progressing towards acceptance. This progress does not mean that we should relax: there are still laws and people trying to erase queerness from our society. As teachers, we cannot make these anti-LGBTQ+ ideas disappear directly, but we can influence many students and many families, creating a change in society from one of its pillars: education.

Teachers should be visible to their students; we must be open about ourselves to serve as an example for our children. We must show them kindness every day, we must normalise gender neutral language and erase phrases that promote sexism. It is not possible to move forward if all the queer inclusion in our schools is focused on certain didactical proposals and workshops: it has to be effective every day. We should use queer-inclusive materials for every didactical proposal, read books with diverse families, pay attention to the rate of male and female protagonists.

The English classroom is ideal to implement gender-neutral proposals because English has the advantage of being quite a gender-neutral language, unlike Spanish, in which almost every noun is gendered. English also has a neutral set of pronouns, which is highly beneficial to help gender non-conforming students discover their identity. I ask English teachers to start teaching the use for they/them pronouns for third person singular

along with the rest of pronouns. This set of pronouns is becoming widely used in the English speaking non-binary community therefore, we cannot aim towards their inclusion without teaching our students all the alternatives.

Even though representation has improved, it is not enough yet. There are still low numbers of queer identities in children's media, and it usually focuses on homosexual characters and their identity. We must remember that queer characters have the right to exist outside of their identity: to live stories that do not revolve around the problems and discrimination caused by their sexuality or gender expression. There are still not enough trans characters (even though trans people suffers the most in the LGBTQ+ community), polyamorous families or aromantic and asexual characters. We are in the right path, but we have to keep going.

This project, among others, will help to continue towards diversity inclusion. Our students will likely be friendlier towards the queer community, and they will accept themselves and their identity, unlike many LGBTQ+ adults nowadays. Our schools must be unapologetically queer to ensure the progress.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 20minutos.es (2016, October, 29) *España, Segundo País Europeo Con Más Población LGBT*. 20 Minutos, news. Retrieved from <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2875500/0/espana-pais-europeo-poblacion-igtb/>
- Alcedo, Y. & Chacón, C. (2011) *El Enfoque Lúdico Como Estrategia Metodológica para Promover el Aprendizaje del Inglés en Niños de Educación Primaria*. SABER. Revista Multidisciplinaria del Consejo de Investigación de la Universidad de Oriente, 23, pp.69-76
- Álvarez, I. (2021) *Dudas Y Certezas Sobre El Proyecto De Ley Trans*.
- Avila-Saavedra, G. (2009) *Nothing Queer About Queer Television: Televised Construction of Gay Masculinities*. Media Culture Society, 31:5 pp.5-21
- BBC News (2019) *Lapidación de Gays en Brunéi: El Mapa que Muestra los Países que Castigan con Pena de Muerte Las Relaciones Homosexuales*. BBC News, mundo. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-47806575>
- Caldwell, M. (2014) *The Occurrences, References and Projected Attitudes About LGBT Lifestyles in Children's Media: A Content Analysis of Animated Films*. University Honors Theses. Paper 111.
- De Borja, M. (1998) *El juego infantil*. Barcelona, Spain: Aikos-Taus
- Dris, M. (2011) *Importancia de la Lectura en Infantil y Primaria*. Innovación y Experiencias Educativas, 38.
- Fitzpatrick, M. & McPherson, B. (2010). *Coloring within the lines: Gender stereotypes in contemporary coloring books*. Sex roles, 62(1-2), pp.127-137

- Gates, G.J. (2012) *LGBT Identity: A Demographer's Perspective*. *Loyola Law Review Los Angeles*, 45(3) pp.693-714.
- Godzisz, P. (2019) *The Europeanization of Anti-LGBT Hate Crime Laws In The Western Balkans*. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 71 pp:291-306
- Madrid, D. (2001) *Materiales Didácticos Para la Enseñanza del Inglés en Ciencias de la Educación*. *Revista de Enseñanza Universitaria Extraordinario 2001*, pp.213-232.
- Martín, M.M. (2019) *Incidentes LGTBIQ-Fóbicos En España: Más Allá De Los Delitos De Odio*. *Revista Electrónica de Estudios Penales y de la Seguridad*. 5 Especial.
- Mayock, P, Bryan A. Carr, N. & Kitching, K. (2008) *Chapter 5: Mental Health Risks. Supporting LGBT Lives: A Study Of Mental Health And Well-Being*.
- Meis, J. (2010) *Gender Issues in Children's Literature*. Issues Paper.
- Morales, L. (2011, May, 11) *U.S. Adults Estimate That 25% of Americans Are Gay or Lesbian*. Gallup, politics. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/147824/adults-estimate-americans-gay-lesbian.aspx>
- Nyoni, Z. (2020) *The Struggle For Equality: LGBT Rights Activism In Sub-Saharan Africa*. *Human Rights Law Review*, 00, pp.1-20.
- Peterson, S. & Lach, M. (1990) *Gender Stereotypes in Children's Books: their prevalence and influence on cognitive and affective development*, *Gender and Education*, 2:2.
- Pino, M & Rodríguez, B. (2006) *Análisis de los Principios Metodológicos que Fundamentan la Enseñanza del Inglés como Segunda Lengua en Educación Infantil*. *Enseñanza*, 24, pp.131-155.
- Rosky, C. (2013) *Fear of the Queer Child*, *Buffalo Law Review*, 61(3)
- Ryan, C. (2014) *Generating a Revolution in Prevention, Wellness & Care for LGBT Children & Youth*. *Temple Political & Civil Rights Law Review*, 23(2) pp.608-697

Tofiño, I. (2006) *¿Un Libro Homóforo? ¿Que Lo Lea Rita! Criterios De Valoración Con Referente Pedagógico Para Los Materiales LGBT Destinados A Menores.* Educación y biblioteca, 152 pp.83-88.

Vazquez, D. (2020) *LGBT Rights In Russia: The ‘Gay Propaganda’ Law And Its Consequences In Chechnya.* *The Bellarmine Law Society Review*, Volume XI, Issue I. pp.1-14.

Wright, H. (2018) *The Childish, the Transformative, and the Queer: Queer Interventions as Praxis in Children’s Cartoons.* City University of New York.

RESOURCES FOR THE UNIT

Newman, L. (2000) *Heather Has Two Mommies.* United States: Alyson Books.

Newman, L. (2009) *Mommy, Mama, and Me.* United States: Tricycle Press.

Oelschlager, V. (2010) *A Tale of Two Daddies.* United States: Vanita Books.

Parnell, P. & Richardson, J. (2005) *And Tango Makes Three.* United States: Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing.

Pike, O. (2015) *Jamie – A Transgender Cinderella.* United Kingdom: Pop’n’Olly.

Savage, S. (2015) *Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?* United Kingdom: TQUAL Books.