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**GIVE ME YOUR HAND:
SOCIAL INTEGRATION
AS A SERVICE TO THE
COMMUNITY**

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Abstract: Sixth grade Primary students are involved in a service-learning project, where they learn about immigration, diseases, animals, plants and social integration. In collaboration with Cáritas, the Ministry of the Environment, Mutua de Levante, the San Roque Market and the Rotary, it provides a comprehensive service to seventeen women and children of families at risk of social exclusion through the gift of a mobile application, a job recommendation letter, cultural routes through the city, round tables, workshops, literary gatherings, academic support sessions, they improve the Cáritas classroom and invite them on weekends. And together hand in hand, they participate in the recovery of endangered animals; they collect medicinal plants; they organize a Master-chef for the whole city with the San Roque Market; they are preparing two literary holidays for the elderly at the Emilio Sala residence and for the Gormaget occupational center; they hold social gatherings and a day of fraternity with people with addiction disorders from AEPA; with AECC and Solc they fight against cancer; with the Unión Musical Contestana, they offer a benefit concert; and they hold a final party at the nursing home. A project that manages to raise 7,310 euros in solidarity.

Keywords: Service-Learning; People; Dignity; Integration; Immigration; Socio-labour reinsertion.

INTRODUCTION

This Educational Intervention Project is directed towards the service-learning methodology (hereinafter, ApS), so necessary in today's education. This intervention proposal entitled Give me your hand, is firstly addressed to the seventeen women of the Cáritas Alcoy Mujer-Mother program, which pursues the social inclusion of vulnerable women, coming from families at risk of social exclusion, referred by the shelters of

the different Parish Caritas of the city and by the Municipal Social Services. Women with minors in their care, with a low cultural level, the majority without primary education, with few job skills, few computer skills and few economic resources. It is, therefore, people deprived of a right as basic as that of positive motherhood.

Give me your hand, firstly, it has tried to solve or alleviate six problems that refer to these women and, secondly, together with them, different social services have been provided to causes such as the defense of nature, the fight against cancer, accompanying the elderly, people with addiction disorders and students in a special education center.

The ApS is an innovative educational project with social utility that integrates service to the community with the learning of content, skills, abilities and values (PUIG et al., 2007; MARTIN et al., 2010).

In addition to different academic contents, social and civic competence, initiative and personal autonomy are developed. Empowerment, responsibility and commitment are also stimulated, and socio-emotional skills are strengthened (HERNÁNDEZ, 2019).

The student body, the maximum center of learning, is empowered to set an inclusive social example that transcends the entire society. For this reason, it enhances self-esteem, achieving values that go far beyond the Education Law, such as equality, respect, solidarity or resilience. The project proposes an applied learning, connected with reality, so it is a lived learning and, consequently, deeper (MENDÍA, 2012).

THEORETICAL FUNDAMENT

The ApS is an innovative didactic methodology that consists of students learning curricular knowledge of a specific subject (GARCÍA-PÉREZ, & MENDÍA,

2015). However, it also aims to learn other knowledge that students acquire during their practice, such as the development of cooperative values while performing a service to society (BATLLE, 2010). In other words, the ApS aims to show help to a vulnerable group to improve the environment that surrounds them. Therefore, pedagogical and social intentionality is combined, demonstrating, through the numerous experiences carried out, that the ApS contributes to a better learning of the contents to be studied and to a better understanding of the world in which we live (DE HEVIA, 2016).

With the present work it is intended to implement the service to the community of an Alicante town, with diverse needs, as a relevant learning resource within the stage of Primary Education.

According to Romagnoli and Gallargo, (2018) the human being is a social being and learns by interrelating, which leads to an increase in emotions, however, how to ensure that this emotion in a child is motivated by learning from it? With initiatives such as the ApS, the student body, in addition to working oriented, knows first-hand different realities of their environment, which otherwise would go unnoticed by them. The fact of helping others displays an increase in motivation and subjective well-being (GARCÍA, 2016).

Among the positive effects of helping others are well-being (mental and physical), decreased stress and increased self-esteem.

This perception that we have about ourselves affects our behavior with others, so it can be said that an adolescent used to being supportive is more decisive and a better conflict manager (LUY-MONTEJO, 2019). However, the final objective of the ApS is not only based on specific help to a vulnerable group and to the student's own motivation at a given moment, but to trigger in the students their own awareness that their own perceived

well-being when they help people outside his closest circle, can be present throughout his life (RABANAL, and DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, 2021).

Ethics must be present throughout the curriculum. Thus, students must develop their empathy and forge a critical judgment on human rights, asking questions about how to build a better society. This way, they will reflect before occupying positions that have a direct impact on society (SANMARTÍN, 2017).

In this sense, the relationship and collaboration between people is increasingly necessary due to the variety of resources, sources and communications. Therefore, the school must be redefined, open its doors to all of society and work towards the outside, since our current students are the future of our society (FURCO, 2011). The ApS offers that the opportunity to work in a network goes further; teachers, students and institutions are committed and collaborate to carry out the different proposals (PUIG et al., 2009).

According to Delors (1996), to guide the education of the 21st century, four basic pillars must be proposed; learning to think, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Traditional education is only oriented towards learning to think, on the other hand, the other three pillars open the door to an education of the human being as a person and member of a society, that is, to an integral formation that serves for a lifetime. Exactly, the ApS intends with its learning to achieve these pillars in the putting into practice of knowledge, teamwork, initiative capacity, communication capacity to face and solve conflicts, understanding of the other and empathy, respect for diversity, tolerance, plurality, autonomous and critical thinking and personal responsibility (PASCUAL-SOLER et al. 2014).

As it has been seen after reviewing the

scientific literature, the ApS is an educational proposal that combines learning and being processes. In summary, previous empirical studies such as the one prepared by Puig and Palos, (2006), show that ApS is a teaching and learning methodology, through which children develop their knowledge and skills through a practice of service to the community. In short, service-learning could be defined as a supportive educational project led by students, whose objective is not only to meet a need of the recipients of the activity, but also to improve the quality of school learning (TAPIA, 2001). In this sense, the ApS combines learning with the provision of a service, that is, “service, combined with learning, adds value and transforms both” (HONNET AND POULSEN, 1989, p.1).

Dewey (1926) is considered a pioneer of the ApS, being his fundamental contribution to the gestation of the ApS. His pedagogical thought was based on principles such as activity, interest, experience and “activity associated with social projection”. It is a necessity that education starts from the real experience of the students (who are the protagonists), carried out collaboratively with peers and adults, and that this redounds to the benefit of the community; that is, that it is done for the benefit of the environment.

According to BATLLE (2020), there are currently thousands of initiatives related to ApS around the world. The Ibero-American ApS Network, which was founded in 2005 and now has more than 70 members, is led by the Latin American Center for Solidarity Learning and Service (CLAYSS) in Argentina and the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) in the USA.

Argentina is the country that best develops ApS in the world. Already, since 2009, there is a regulation that prescribes a compulsory practice of ApS in Secondary Education, called “solidarity socio-community projects”.

Likewise, in Mexico, since 1945 there has been the obligation of social service as a requirement to obtain a degree or university degree. And Peru obliges universities to develop their “University Social Responsibility”, with learning based on social projects. Others such as Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay also include different networks of practices with ApS.

In Europe, however, the practice of ApS has awakened later, but little by little, new initiatives are becoming known. In this sense, there are experiences in Germany Lernen durch Engagement (learning through engagement) as the main organization promoting ApS. Likewise, in the Netherlands, the ApS is mandatory in Secondary Education since 2011, where students must carry out internships with social entities, and in the same way in Hungary the ApS is mandatory in their internships in order to graduate.

Finally, in the USA, with the NYLC as a reference organization, a network of schools, teachers, students and entities has been created where information on the different initiatives can be exchanged. (GONZÁLEZ and DE FRUITS, 2021).

In Spain, the ApS is of recent creation, since it was not until the year 2000 when different initiatives related to this learning methodology began to be developed. Until then, there was only tradition in the solidarity movement, but the link with the curriculum, which is what characterizes the ApS, will not begin until 2003-2004. Today its practice is more than widespread, and it is very valuable, but not as it is not yet mandatory in our country, it is not known exactly how many ApS proposals are being carried out in our country Batllé (2017).

From the creation of the Spanish Service-Learning Network (RedApS), the exchange of experiences at the national level is encouraged, sharing resources, methods and knowledge

between the different initiatives. Said RedAps is made up of the seventeen autonomous communities that make up our national territory. Its members come from educational institutions at all levels from primary education to university and from other institutions of a social nature (REDONDO and FUENTES 2020).

The Organic Law of Education 8/2013, of December 9 (LOE), in force when the project was carried out, states in its preamble that the student body is the center and the *raison d'être* of education, without forgetting that the Education is the engine that promotes the well-being of a country.

Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education) is a legislative document that repeals the LOMCE, Education Law of 2013, and that, as its name indicates, updates, modifies and complements the LOE: Educational Law of 2006, also includes that the student body is the center and the *raison d'être* of education. Learning at school must be aimed at training autonomous, critical people, with their own thinking. All the students have a dream, all the young people have talent. Our people and their talents are the most valuable thing we have as a country.

The ApS Give me your hand project has the following objectives: to make visible the problems of others that go unnoticed in society because they are linked to poverty and immigration; the promotion of reading; direct help to people and the importance of joint work with people at risk of social exclusion.

The specific objectives that the project has set out to achieve have been: Knowing the problems that immigrants arriving in the city have, carrying out a plan to achieve a more egalitarian world and defending the dignity of all people; Integrate socially excluded women by providing joint services to benefit the elderly in a residence, people with addiction

disorders, students in an occupational center, endangered animal species, fight against leukemia and offer knowledge; and empower a group of women to improve their personal situation, act as a social example and promote the contagion effect in other populations with *Cáritas* through dissemination.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

This research project was developed with 97 students (51 males and 46 females) in the sixth grade of Primary School at San Roque de Alcoy (Alicante, Spain). The student body was eleven years old.

INSTRUMENTS

The ApS approach is more than a methodology. It is a philosophy, a way of learning that is characterized by bringing to society in the form of a service those curricular elements that have been worked on in class (Batlle, 2020).

The students carried out classroom activities that, in turn, provided data for the investigation, such as mental maps, murals, oral presentations, competency activities and videos.

The curricular elements of the course were linked through exercises and activities such as mental maps, murals, exhibitions, diagrams and video analysis. The classroom work was carried out through different instruments derived from the use of methodologies such as the culture of thought, with The parts and the whole or Compare and contrast; cooperative work, highlighting the Puzzle of Aronson``; the ``*Flipped Classroom*`` , viewing videos and documentaries at home to work on later at school. Manipulative activities and real experiences were prioritized, many of them as hard and dramatic as necessary.

The evaluation was carried out using

rubrics, targets, checklists and a portfolio of evidence, giving maximum importance to the reflections of the students reflected in this evaluation instrument, which became an instrument of life. They did it in digital support (iPad), where all the activities carried out were recorded and images of each activity / service they carried out were added.

For the elaboration of the activities in the classroom, stationery material was used; iPad and field notebook; video camera; video editing program; projector and wifi; creative stuff; Recycled material; cardboard and markers; and computers and printers.

PROCEDURES

The project spanned a school year. In September, the project was presented and designed, which began shooting in October. In fact, Give me your hand has transcended beyond the school year, because activities have been carried out in July.

The project proposal goes through a first service, where the students have provided academic, human and inclusive help to 17 women and families at risk of social exclusion through private classes, literary gatherings, workshops, excursions... Afterwards, students and women Together hand in hand, they have improved society with services as important as the fight against cancer, accompanying vulnerable people and defending nature. They have organized a charity concert and designed a mobile application with the aim of making life easier for people arriving in the city for the first time.

It all started with a round table where the women participating in the project exposed all the problems. For this reason, the students started the machinery of Give me your hand to try to solve them. First of all, the Taste Between Cultures activity was carried out, where they learned about the different customs of the countries of origin of these women.

The first thing they did was organize two gatherings to work on two comics related to immigration and the problems encountered when arriving in the destination country: African Nana and I can't help you without papers, to discover how the same thing had happened to these people. than the protagonists of the stories.

Several workshops were organized within the class: the computer workshop in which the women learned to send an e-mail, upload files to the cloud or browse the City Council website. The academic support workshop to learn Valencian, Spanish, add, subtract, handle euros and play board games. The medicinal plants workshop, directed by the specialist Ferran Albers, which allowed them to learn about the aromatic plants of the Sierra de Mariola. They made glycerin soap with them for a charitable purpose that will be detailed later.

To alleviate the problems that immigrants encounter upon arrival, a mobile application was designed with the most basic information to facilitate their integration: telephone numbers for the town hall, outpatient clinics, hospital, police, social services, etc. And with an integrated educational video game where the children of newcomers can entertain themselves and learn the most basic subjects. The APP cost €900 and the financing, as an initiative of the students, was provided by the friends of the Fundació Mutua de Levante.

Subsequently, as a complementary activity and outside school hours, from January to June, the students went every Tuesday and Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. to the Càritas classroom to provide a school service to the children of women with serious problems schools, especially in the Valencian language. This service provided added a total of 84 hours of private classes.

The problem of relations with people and integration in the city was softened

with invitations to the private homes of the students during the weekends of the month of February. These meetings made it possible to discover and learn, a little more if possible, the lives of these people and their families.

On the other hand, a route through its streets was organized to learn how the Spanish Civil War affected the city. The students were the guide of the friends walking more than 7 km through the historic streets of Alcoy.

Once these grants were made, and jointly, it was decided to provide services to causes as important as the fight against cancer, protect nature, make the city aware of the culinary customs of the different countries, accompany the students in a special education center, spend time with the elderly in a residence and support people with addiction disorders in a day center.

The first joint service was to fight leukemia. The final product of it was the recording of an inclusive and sensitizing video to encourage bone marrow donation using different languages: Spanish, Valencian, Portuguese, Arabic, Romanian, English, German, Japanese, in sign language, pictograms and even In latin. Following this path in the fight against cancer, a charity concert was held, raising €4,310, which went to the local associations Solc and AECC Alcoy that work against this disease.

The cockerels would arrive later in the classroom and *''los triops crancriformes''*, both endangered. This activity was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, and television: *''À Punt''*, regional level, echoed this in the children's program: *''Animalades''*. They were raised and cared for at school so that they could be released when they were adults and avoid the disappearance of these species from the ponds of the Mariola natural park.

A Master-Chef was also offered at the San Roque Market for the entire city. In it, typical dishes originating from the countries of origin

of the women were revealed: from Morocco: *aghrir, msaman, salou, baklawa, zalija, sabli, chabakiya, blighat, bachnikha, khobz o imakla kika*; Cuba was represented with the Pudding; Colombia, with its unmistakable arepas; and Spain also did it with a bacon and cheese cake. The morning session ended with the purchase in the market with the help of the schoolchildren, thus realizing the workshop on handling money in euros carried out in the classroom.

To do this, they used special tickets designed for the occasion, reaching a value of €400, courtesy of the San Roque Market itself and the solidarity material sold by the students.

Days later, students from the Gormaget special education center were accompanied. She went to their school to sing songs that we learned in class, to play games prepared by them, to dance and to teach experiments.

They continued with the joint service to the elderly of the Emilio Sala residence, to whom they offered an unforgettable day with songs, a poetry recital and dances of all kinds. The occasion was used to give away the key ring with the emblem of the project made by the women in the craft workshop, the glycerin soap that we made in the classroom workshop and the aromatic plants collected on the excursion to the Sierra de Mariola.

The following week, the literary gatherings continued with new guests. In this case, together with the women of the project, the members of the AEPA Day Center attended, to enter the story *El viaje de las gotas de lluvia* by Mireia Pascual and María Molina. It must be noted that the members of AEPA are people with addiction disorders and with an extremely hard life history related to drugs, alcohol and gambling, which was turned into wise advice for a student body.

A few weeks later, the Give me your hand tandem visited the AEPA center, being the

first schoolchildren in the history of Alcoy to visit this place. They spent a morning together to witness their testimonies, a poetry recital was offered, and gifts made in their respective classrooms were exchanged.

Once each and every one of these services was carried out together, the final party of the project arrived. In it, all the project participants, hand in hand, were able to celebrate the comfortable achievement of all the proposed objectives. It took place at the Emilio Sala residence, since the elderly could not move and the students of the Gormaget special education center and members with addiction disorders of AEPA were present. At this party workshops, interviews were held, danced, sang and the act of delivery of the job recommendation letters signed by the entire class for the girls in the project was held.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students have managed to completely change their relationship with immigrants who come to the city fleeing widespread stereotypes. He has made other people's problems his own and has learned to value things that he never stopped to think about before. Thanks to reading, they have put a face to many problems and have been able to give them names and surnames with the presence and life advice of the women.

At the same time, the students have understood that there are people with access problems to basic information and have sought solutions to remedy them. The skin has been left to integrate these girls into society

and, together with them, they have designed action plans to act as a social example and empower those who were previously invisible to the eyes of the entire city.

The students have understood that what they have learned at school is used to help other people who do not even know how to use the euro, send an e-mail, speak Spanish or access basic citizenship information.

CONCLUSIONS

Give me your hand has managed to really integrate 17 vulnerable women and has improved the environment with causes as noble and exemplary as those explained in the article. For this reason, this school work has been catapulted out of the classroom and has been disseminated in a multitude of media: on the regional television À Punt, in the provincial newspaper Información de Alicante, on the Ser chain, on COPE, on OndaCero, on ARAMultimèdia and in the newspaper El Nostre. As acts of celebration, a visit to the classroom was received from the mayor of Alcoy, the Councilor for Education and the Environment and the president of Càritas Alcoy, to thank and value the immense work carried out.

In summary, networking was structured where values such as compassion, solidarity, social integration and commitment, among many others, were the main actors. Give me your hand, without having it as a main priority, it managed to raise the sum of €7,310 in solidarity to go down in the history of our city.

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