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STORYTELLING AS A RESOURCE FOR TRANSMITTING THE VALUE OF INCLUSION IN KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: Considering that every educational system should aim at the integral formation of the person, transversal contents acquire a vital importance in all educational stages, especially in those that form the basis that will later support the rest of learning. In this sense, working on inclusion in the classroom from experience and from those resources that are close to the child facilitates the acquisition and assimilation of its importance. Therefore, the objective of this experience was to work on and highlight inclusion in the classroom through stories in Pre-school and the first stage of Primary Education. The project involved 2,000 students from 7 schools, 1,400 of whom were in kindergarten, aged 3 to 5 years, and 600 in primary school, aged 6 to 7 years. The data collection was carried out by means of an observational record sheet, which was used to measure the level of comprehension of the texts and the knowledge of the value of inclusion, contained in the moral of the stories. A total of 40 sessions were used, attended by an average of 55 children in each one, and where a total of 50 stories focused on inclusion were told through kamishibai (Japanese paper theater). As a result, 90% of the students understood the story globally and learned the meaning of inclusion. This shows the value of storytelling as a transmitter of values and a means of learning in the early years of schooling.

Keywords: story, inclusion, education, values

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are called to live in society, not only for their survival, defense and search for the resources necessary for life, but also for their intellectual and affective development. Therefore, and by virtue of this need, he has developed throughout his evolution different strategies for communication and interaction with his peers (Carballo and Portero, 2018). In this sense, the educational center plays

a fundamental role, since it accompanies the minor in the stage of life where a series of sensitive periods occur in him where he acquires knowledge, skills and abilities; in short, the competences necessary for life.

Whenever we talk about education, we refer to all the aspects that encompass the integral formation of the person, therefore, not only those focused on the merely cognitive, but in some attitudinal principles and values that must motivate the further development of his life. In addition, globalization has called for the modification of approaches, not only in the economic, political and social spheres, but also in education. The diverse society in which we live invites both teachers and families to know and provide the child with a series of values, such as diversity and inclusion, which he/she will discover through experience and respect for his/her freedom (Sánchez, 2016). These values, which he will acquire throughout his life, hand in hand with the family, the school and the society around him, will be responsible for his future actions and objectives that will mark his adult stage (Martín, 2012). Therefore, values are related to behavior, since they guide it. Thus, from the first years of life, children grow up surrounded by values that will guide their actions. Therefore, education plays a fundamental role in this training, not only in theoretical learning, but also in the value of these principles that they will experience as their own in the classroom, creating in them a rich and esteemed scale that will begin to mark their first actions (Quintana, 2005).

The education of children at an early age must always be accompanied by reading, by stories, since they are part of their life from birth. In this sense, these texts are presented as a valid resource to work with the students of Pre-school and Primary Education, becoming even a basic axis in their learning; a learning not only of curricular content but also of transversal content, such as values (Cerrillo,

2020). The story, despite its simplicity, is a transmitter of values that will allow children to learn the principles on which they will later base their adult life. Therefore, good always wins over evil, thus presenting a way to respond to future crossroads that will be found throughout their existence and will be able to discern good versus evil (Tejerina, 2005).

Thus, following this principle, the child can learn the value of inclusion through the text. And why this value? Because the schoolchild does not live alien to diversity and difference; as a social being, he lives surrounded by what is different and, therefore, this is not something distant from him or his environment: classroom, family, neighborhood... (Sánchez, 2016). The discovery of the world around him, the knowledge of the environment, leads not only to his learning, but also to the raising of numerous questions to which family and school must give answers; and what better way than through stories. For this, it is essential to develop critical capacity (Cerrillo, 2014), which again leads us to the need for children's literature.

In the search for text comprehension, so important for learning, illustration is of vital importance in the initial stages, since it is thanks to illustration that not only the story itself is shaped, but also the understanding of the story, without which the child would neither want to listen nor learn (Colomer, 2008). Hence the use of new resources that promote the two fundamental elements of the story: the text and the word.

For this reason, and in an attempt to arouse curiosity on which to sustain the attention essential for later comprehension, this intervention project uses the kamishibai, a small paper theater of Japanese origin, where the illustration, large in size and clearly understood, helps the assimilation of the narration. This paper theater (literal translation of the word) was born in Japan with the idea of entertain-

ing children in the midst of the economic crisis in the early twentieth century. It consists of a wooden structure with three doors (two lateral and one upper) that gives it the appearance of a small theater; once opened, a series of sheets with large illustrations appear with which the story is narrated. Thus, the beauty that lies in the word (Estébanez, 2016) becomes a learning tool that will help the future adult to cope in an increasingly globalized society.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 2000 students from 7 schools in the Region of Murcia (Spain) participated in this experience. Seventy percent of the children belonged to the second cycle of Infant Education, aged between 3 and 5 years; 30% were students in the first and second year of Primary Education, aged 6 and 7 years. It should be noted that 1.5% of the students had a diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and visual impairment. In addition, 15% belonged to immigrant families. Also, 100 teachers and 100 parents participated, who accompanied the children in the sessions; and 100 students of the degrees in Early Childhood and Primary Education of ISEN university center, a faculty attached to the University of Murcia.

INSTRUMENT

A record sheet was prepared for the collection of information in each of the sessions, which were used for data collection through direct observation (Annex 1). The following variables were assessed: motivation, attention, text comprehension and participation. A satisfaction questionnaire was also used for the teachers who accompanied the children during the sessions.

PROCEDURE

The objective of this educational project was to work on the value of inclusion with the students of kindergarten and primary school through storytelling. It should be noted that the kamishibai was used as a resource that facilitated the understanding of the texts throughout the storytelling sessions. In addition, it should be noted that drawings should always support the oral text, so the images should be concrete, with clear strokes and with the detail necessary for understanding. On this occasion, 200 kamishibai were made, both the structure (in wood or cardboard) and the sheets, with a DIN A3 size (30 x 42 cm) and were decorated on the outside, avoiding doing so on the inside to prevent possible distractions and thus making it easier for the students to focus their attention on the sheets.

For this experience, which was developed over three school years, 40 storytelling sessions were designed, with a duration of 50 minutes, in which 50 to 60 students participated in each session.

The common characteristics that the texts had were:

- Extension of 12 sheets.
- Clear illustrations.
- Simple argument.
- Inclusion as a theme.

To highlight among the chosen stories:

- “Orejas de mariposa” (Butterfly Ears), by Luisa Aguilar.
- “Yo voy conmigo”, by Raquel Díaz Reguera.
- “I love you (almost always)”, by Anna Llenas.
- “For four little corners of nothing”, by Jérôme Ruillier.
- “Lorenzo’s dipper”, by Isabelle Carrier.
- “It’s OK to be different,” by Todd Parr.

- “Rosa caramel”, by Adela Turin and Nella Bosnia.
- “Pink Monster”, by Olga de Dios.
- “Elmer,” by David McKee.
- “Wonder, we are all unique”, by R.J. Palacio.
- “Totally Adrian,” by Tom Percival.

For the storytelling, a large room was set up with a small exhibition of the kamishibai and a model where the children could listen to the stories, arranged around a small table on which the wooden theaters were placed.

The students were greeted by a gaito kamishibaya (the term used to refer to the kamishibai storyteller) and were invited to participate in a show where the protagonists were the child and the story. Each narration was introduced by the sound of the keys (as the Japanese tradition dictates), thus announcing the beginning of a story. Once the doors were opened, the narrator introduced the title of the story and its author, and the text began.

It should be noted that, since interaction with the children was important to keep their attention, a blank sheet with a big question mark was included among the sheets, allowing the children to make a prediction or monitor what they thought might happen or what the correct action of the protagonist should be; therefore, the question was always placed in a strategic place in the story. Likewise, once the story was over, the narrator talked with the students about the moral, i.e., the importance of accepting those who are different or being aware that we are all different, but at the same time equal. Also we must emphasize the freedom of the participants to intervene, as this promoted the understanding of the text.

Once the session was over, the children were invited to see and touch the kamishibai exhibited in the room and learn about other stories that were collected inside. As for the adaptations to the diversity of the students, we have to point out the following:

- The visually impaired schoolchild: the relief plates were made and he was accompanied by a specialist from the National Organization for the Blind.
- ASD: in addition to a support teacher, we worked from the classroom to prepare for the session by means of planning and pictograms.
- TDH: the images, the atmosphere created and the agile dynamism of the development of each of the sessions served to focus their attention.

RESULTS

In relation to the results obtained with this experience, we will say that, with respect to the students who attended the storytellers:

- 90% understood in a general way the arguments of the texts, understanding through the examples of the stories what inclusion is, what it is to be different and how this can enrich their classroom. The overall understanding of each of the stories, including the moral, led to the recognition of the value of inclusion in concrete actions and situations reflected in the different texts. In addition, the children learned about physical, cultural, intellectual diversity, etc., thus valuing inclusion as a means of acceptance and recognition of difference as an enriching element that provides the classroom group with a means of learning and knowledge. In this sense, we worked on stories about ASD, such as “El caso de Lorenzo”; the acceptance of possible physical defects, such as “Orejas de mariposa”; character differences, such as “Te quiero (casi siempre)”; racial differences, such as “Está bien ser diferente” or “Rosa caramelo”.
- 98% of the students remained attentive throughout the storytelling session. It is important to point out that, in order for the

students to recognize the value of inclusion through the stories, it was necessary to understand them, which in turn was achieved thanks to a sustained attention that allowed interaction with the reader and active participation in the sessions, through questions and free comments. The questioning game helped enormously to awaken the child's curiosity and to maintain a critical sense in the face of the different situations presented in the stories.

Regarding minors with a diagnosis, it should be noted that:

- The adaptations made were effective for the visually impaired child and for those with attention deficit. This is due to the fact that for the former, double sheets were used: those used in the kamishibai and those provided to the child, which were made in relief and with different textures; and he was accompanied by a support teacher who helped to coordinate the use of the sheets in a synchronous way. Regarding the children with TDH, we have to point out that the dynamics of the resource and the sessions (agility, interaction, the wooden structure, the layout of the classroom and the image accompanied by the word) helped to keep their attention.
- The children with an ASD diagnosis participated in the activity normally, although three of them had difficulty maintaining their attention, despite the support of the teacher who accompanied them.

Regarding the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires, it should be noted that:

- 100% of the participants rated the workshops and the resource used positively, as it allowed the children to maintain their concentration, interest and comprehension; therefore, they expressed their intention to use the kamishibai in the classroom to tell the stories.

RESULTS

This experience shows what Sanchez (2016) affirms about the diverse society in which the child lives, since the classroom group itself is, by itself, an example of this principle. The presence of students with different diagnoses and cultures presented a context conducive to the development of storytelling. Thus, and as the author asserts, the work of the school is necessary for the acquisition of values such as inclusion because, as Quintana (2005) states, these values acquired at an early age will regulate their future actions.

Although the results of this project do not guarantee this idea, it is possible to point out that at least the students did know the value of diversity and the need to promote the value of inclusion as a way of life; since, as Tejerina (2005) states, these principles will help them to respond to the situations encountered throughout their lives and in the different contexts in which they develop, such as in the classroom and with their classmates, as an example of diversity. In other words, the acquisition and recognition of inclusion is not a preparation for the future, but for a present that is experienced in the classroom.

This project highlights the importance of stories in the education of children, since they are not only valid for entertainment and the development of aesthetic taste, but also for the acquisition of knowledge, learning centered on oneself and the environment (Cerrillo, 2020). Therefore, they are also transmitters of values, as Sanchez (2016) assures, of experiential learning and recognition of inclusion. Thus, as stated by Salmerón-Vílchez (2005), these narrative texts bring children closer to the values on which society should be based and which will shape them as future citizens with the ability to act, distinguishing between good and bad, right and wrong, fair and unfair (Tejerina, 2005).

For the acquisition of any learning, it is necessary to understand the text and, for this, there must be sustained attention (Cerrillo, 2014), so this implementation highlights the validity of the kamishibai as a relevant tool or resource. Supported by the image and framed by a wooden theater, it encourages the child to follow the story with interest, fostering curiosity and participation in the narrative (Aldama, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of the results shows that stories are a valid resource to work with children on inclusion, considering it an essential value for their lives, especially considering that they develop in contexts where diversity is present. In this sense, the kamishibai manifests itself as an instrument that facilitates the comprehension of the text, awakening in the child the curiosity that allows him to focus his attention.

Continuing with the value of inclusion, this experience shows how storytelling sessions can be used to work on inclusion, a value that is not alien to the reality of children. Moreover, due to the way it is approached, it can be considered an inclusive activity in itself, since not only children with disabilities attended the storytelling, but also took part in it with the rest of the class, with no differences in the performance.

Therefore, and taking into account the objective proposed in this project, we will highlight the importance of working on the value of inclusion with the students of Infant and Primary School through stories. The short stories become a basic element in the learning of children and, therefore, also for the recognition of values as important as inclusion, a principle that should underpin any society and that, if worked from an early age, can be lived as an unquestionable value that allows the development of a fair and critical society, able to exist in freedom.

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ANNEX 1

Example observation record table

Variables	Stories	Alumni 1	Alumni 2	Student body 3	Alumni 4	Alumni 5	Student body 6	Alumni 7	Alumni 8
Shows interest in the activity	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Story 4								
Pay attention to the story	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Story 4								
Actively participates in the narrator's proposals	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Story 4								
Answer correctly to the proposed questions	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Story 4								
Make different hypotheses about what has been narrated	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Story 4								
REMARKS									