

# Chapter 3

## Migrations and Interculturality:

### Design of a Strategy in the Degree of Early Childhood Education From Social Geography

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#### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, the Canary Islands have experienced a notable increase in the number of students from diverse international backgrounds entering school classrooms, fostering the emergence of a distinctly multicultural society. Addressing the educational needs arising from this demographic shift is crucial at the early childhood education level, where the foundation for mutual understanding in a multicultural context is established. In this regard, it is vital to underscore the role of Social Sciences education in cultivating democratic citizenship, with the overarching goal of equipping society to make collective, inclusive, and informed decisions that shape its actions. Achieving this requires educators proficient in these competencies, emphasizing the urgent need for strategies that support their professional develop-*

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*ment. This study aligns with that goal, advocating for cooperative learning, social integration, and solidarity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today's globalized world is marked by the coexistence of individuals from diverse countries and cultures, the significant flow of social movements, continuous innovation, and the expansion of information and communication technologies. These new trends in mobility have “implications in political, social, economic, cultural, and consequently, educational life, underscoring the need to create new spaces for coexistence that foster understanding and social cohesion” (Rodríguez-García et al., 2019, p. 60).

School classrooms are the setting where these dynamics unfold. Thus, educators capable of guiding these groups of children, especially in early childhood education, toward healthy and enriching coexistence are essential. One of the key objectives of this formative stage in early childhood education is to contribute to the cultivation of civic values that promote student coexistence and the development of civic competence.

In this regard, the inclusion of Social Sciences in the formation of democratic citizenship is essential, as it fosters the development of a society capable of making decisions in a free and informed manner, collaboratively, with such decisions guiding collective actions (Benejam Arguimbau, & Pagès Blanch, 1997; Funes et al., 2019). With these two principles in mind, we emphasize the importance of addressing these issues from the earliest stages of education to prepare students for the processes of migration and the intercultural dynamics that emerge as a result. However, are future early childhood education teachers equipped to handle this responsibility? Do they possess the necessary tools to adequately develop these skills?

The phenomenon of migration has gained considerable importance in Spain, and particularly in the Canary Islands, over recent decades. Immigrants come from diverse regions, including Asia, Latin America, and Africa, arriving in the Canary Islands through various means and with life experiences. Thousands of children from these regions, fleeing poverty, conflict, and socioeconomic and political instability, enter Canary Islands' classrooms at the preschool level. The integration process is complex and challenging, not only for immigrant children, but also for their peers and, most importantly, for Early Childhood Education teachers, who require additional tools to effectively address migration and interculturality within their classrooms. This study focuses on these two concepts: migrations, defined as displacements involving a change of residence (Domínguez-Mujica, 2008), and interculturality, understood as a value that shapes personal behavior and promotes a

lifestyle to be encouraged by educators (Hernández-Prados et al., 2021), who must first develop competence in intercultural literacy.

Therefore, this study presents an innovative educational proposal centered on the design of a strategy aimed at developing civic competence in future Early Childhood Education teachers through the course Didactics of Social Sciences in Early Childhood Education, offered in the first semester of the 4th year of the degree program at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The objective is to enhance the preparation of future early childhood educators within university classrooms by addressing contemporary issues, thereby enriching the teaching and learning process.

The content is structured into several sections. First, a curricular framework is presented, followed by a discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the significance of initial teacher training. Next, the current socio-educational context in which the strategy is implemented is analyzed, followed by a comprehensive description of the strategy. Lastly, final considerations and definitions of key terms are provided from the authors' perspective, concluding with the bibliographical references that support the study.

## 1. CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education (hereinafter LOMLOE), is a comprehensive legal reform comprising a single article with ninety-nine sections that either rewrite or modify the previous Organic Law on Education (hereinafter LOE). It includes eleven additional provisions, five transitional provisions, one repeal provision, and six final provisions (Montero Caro, 2021).

The LOMLOE incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDGs), particularly Goal 4, into its Preamble. According to Montero Caro (2021), the integration of the five fundamental approaches upon which the law is based reflects a strong commitment to shaping education through the lens of sustainability. These approaches are as follows:

1. Children's rights serve as one of the guiding principles of the system.
2. Promotion of gender equality through coeducation.
3. Mainstreaming to ensure that all students have opportunities for success.
4. Focus on sustainable development as outlined in the 2030 Agenda.
5. Emphasis on digital transformation (LOMLOE, 2020).

The promotion of democratic values and a culture of sustainable development are emphasized both in the Preamble and throughout the articles of the law (Montero Caro, 2021).

In the context of Early Childhood Education, the LOMLOE redefines its purpose, focusing on contributing to the development of cognitive, emotional, psychomotor, and volitional capacities, integrating various areas of learning through a holistic approach (Pallares Jiménez & Lleida Añón, 2023). The goal is to cultivate an autonomous, imaginative, and critical childhood, with a strong sense of personal identity (Resa Ocio et al., 2023).

Royal Decree 95/2022, of February 1, outlines the organization and minimum educational requirements for Early Childhood Education and incorporates education for responsible and sustainable consumption as one of its pedagogical principles (art. 6.4).

Among the various key competencies, this study will focus on civic competence, which seeks to lay the foundations for practicing democratic citizenship. It emphasizes models that promote learning attitudes grounded in values such as respect, equity, equality, inclusion, and coexistence, alongside the peaceful and dialogued resolution of conflicts. This competence establishes the conditions for fostering behaviors that are respectful of oneself, others, and the environment, while also preventing discriminatory actions of any kind.

## **2. SDGS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

At a global level, societies, institutions, and organizations acknowledge the necessity of advancing toward sustainable development, a process that entails profound transformations, including shifts in values and principles (García Esteban & Murga Menoyo, 2015). UNESCO advocates for values associated with human dignity, fundamental freedoms, human rights, equity, and environmental stewardship, while endorsing the Earth Charter as a declaration of fundamental ethical principles that serve as the foundation for constructing a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society (García Esteban & Murga Menoyo, 2015).

In this context, in December 2002, the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was declared. The goal of this Decade was to refocus education and training toward sustainability, acknowledging the transformative power of education at all levels, from basic education to university instruction.

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses 17 objectives and 169 goals forming a global action plan focused on three key axes: economic, social, and environmental. This agenda

aims to foster the development of a global citizenship committed to sustainable development. Education is positioned as one of the fundamental pillars of societal transformation within the 2030 Agenda (Guardeño Juan & Monsalve Lorente, 2024).

Education for sustainability must commence at the early childhood education stage, as it is during this period that the foundational skills are cultivated, enabling students to acquire more advanced competencies in the future (Alacid de Pascual, 2021).

At the national level, the Ministry of Science and Innovation incorporated the achievement of the SDG objectives into its priorities for the 2021-2027 period. Similarly, the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (hereafter CRUE) has committed its resources, expertise, and influence to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Global Development (Pallarés Jiménez & Lleida Añón, 2023).

Students at this stage can and should be introduced to the learning process of the various SDGs, contributing from the outset of their schooling to the development of critical, active, and participatory citizenship.

In general, education for sustainability is approached through a gender perspective (SDG 5) or equality (SDG 10) at both the primary and early childhood education stages (Romero Claudio et al., 2023). However, the proposed experience seeks to advance education in values that foster interculturality and respect for diverse individuals and societies (SDG 10 and 16). This aligns with an approach that advocates for expanding freedoms, enabling individuals to take advantage of opportunities they deem most valuable, thereby contributing to overall well-being (Murga Menoyo, 2020).

*Table 1. SDGs to work on from this experience*

Goal	Issue
4	Quality Education
5	Gender Equality
10	Reduced Inequalities
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Source: United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals (n.d.)

The citizenship that will engage with the tasks related to the SDGs is of critical importance, as it compels us to reconsider educational approaches in order to train students with a planetary consciousness. This consciousness is rooted in the ethics of responsibility and care, structured around five fundamental pillars:

- a. Universal human rights.
- b. Democracy and participation.

- c. Equity.
- d. Protection of minorities.
- e. Peaceful resolution of conflicts.

This framework is grounded in a supportive and inclusive vision of the world (Murga Menoyo, 2020).

Furthermore, SDG 4 emphasizes the significance of striving for an Education for Sustainable Development that ensures students gain both theoretical and practical knowledge. This knowledge enables them to promote sustainable development through elements such as human rights, fostering a culture of peace and non-violence, appreciating cultural diversity, and recognizing the role of culture in contributing to sustainable development (Murga Menoyo, 2020).

This type of education encompasses three key areas of learning: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral. In addition, two more areas are included: behavioral skills and non-cognitive skills, which cover social abilities such as empathy, conflict resolution, communication, and the capacity to work in networks and engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives (Murga Menoyo, 2020). However, these approaches show a significant deficit, particularly in the training of future Primary Education teachers, and especially in Early Childhood Education, highlighting the need to promote strategies that address and overcome these barriers.

### **3. WORKING WITH SOCIALLY RELEVANT PROBLEMS IN THE SECOND CYCLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

The teaching of Social Sciences aims to cultivate students' social thinking, enabling them to understand and actively participate in society while confronting contemporary issues, all the while considering both past and future contexts. In this regard, it is essential to integrate the realities in which students exist as part of society, ensuring that the issues relevant to that society are reflected in the classroom (López et al., 2022). Various authors assert that school instruction in Social Sciences should be based on Relevant Social Problems (López, 2017), which have been referred to by different names, each with slight variations in definition—social controversy topics, controversial issues, pressing social conflicts, socially relevant problems, or socially alive issues, among others (Díaz & Felices, 2017). However, they all stem from real societal problems and conflicts that generate ongoing debates without consensus, distinguishing them from traditional, agreed-upon school subjects (González, 2011). In fact, some Didactics of Social Sciences scholars argue that teacher training focused on critical understanding of reality and social intervention would be ineffective

without the inclusion of social problems. Introducing such problems allows for the development of students' critical and social thinking, fosters their ability to make autonomous, constructive, and responsible decisions, and enhances their dialogue and consensus-building skills (Oller, 1999; in Díaz & Felices, 2017).

The teaching of Social Sciences based on social problems, socially relevant issues, or controversial topics aligns directly with the approach discussed here, as it fosters the learning of social justice and encourages active, engaged, and responsible participation through the development of responses or alternatives (Ortega & Olmos, 2018). Teaching based on real-world social issues in Social Sciences enables students to work with concepts, methodologies, and interpretive frameworks that help them navigate the complexities of reality. In order to understand social phenomena, such as migration and the cultural processes that unfold in host societies, a multidisciplinary approach is essential; we must draw on geography, history, sociology, and economics. Only by doing so can we comprehensively analyze the social phenomena associated with migration (Ocampo & Valencia, 2019). Addressing socially relevant topics allows students at this educational stage to integrate multiple aspects of learning, thereby moving toward the globalized practices needed in Early Childhood Education. Nevertheless, the Socially Relevant Problems approach remains closely associated with the field of Social Sciences (Ocampo & Valencia, 2019).

The introduction of controversial topics such as the environmental crisis, war, xenophobia, or poverty into the classrooms of the second cycle of Early Childhood Education has been explored by various authors, yielding positive outcomes for students, teachers, and the broader community (López, 2019; López et al., 2022). In this regard, the proposed topic aligns with the premise of being controversial: immigration and the tensions it generates when students from diverse backgrounds encounter differing cultural patterns within the classroom.

#### **4. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING**

Initial teacher training in Spain, at both the primary and early childhood education levels (although not compulsory), has been shaped in accordance with the country's social, economic, and political realities across various historical periods (Luzón & Montes, 2018).

In this context, the training of future teachers at the Early Childhood Education stage across the various disciplines comprising the curriculum is essential for competently approaching teaching. In the case of Social Sciences, this training is crucial for understanding their role as agents of change and the perspective from which the teaching-learning process is approached. Initial university training is a critical period, particularly when preparing to teach in a world that is constantly evolving.

Pedagogical work with future teachers is essential for them to acquire the epistemological foundations that support the development of their critical thinking, making them receptive to the social and cultural diversity of contemporary society (Farias, 2009 in Pallares Jiménez & Lleida Añón, 2023).

From a critical perspective, the curriculum serves as a document that teachers rely on, adapted to the social context (Hernández, 2021). In this sense, we agree that university education equips future teachers with the necessary skills to design proposals that enable students to transform knowledge into an educational tool (Blanco Lozano et al., 2008).

Following the proposal put forth by various authors within the framework of the previous legislation, and while awaiting a new White Paper, it is crucial for students to recognize and work with key concepts related to the social environment. This experience emphasizes concepts such as identity/otherness and diversity/inequality (Benejam Arguimbau, 2002 in Blanco Lozano et al., 2008).

In the university setting, it is important not only to teach content but also to demonstrate how to apply it to the socio-educational context we currently face. To achieve this, students must be able to identify the Social Sciences content within the curriculum, taking into account the globalizing nature of the work in the Early Childhood Education stage. By doing so, diversity can be treated as a thematic core, addressing the need to incorporate other curricular elements. This enables students in training to acquire the necessary skills to plan and organize lessons around the environment as a central theme, helping children initially understand their immediate social surroundings, before integrating this knowledge into broader social systems (Blanco Lozano et al., 2008).

Among the various aspects that are covered in Social Sciences, both generally and within Early Childhood Education, we will focus on two key areas:

- Firstly, children's acquisition of social knowledge, which involves understanding both themselves and other individuals or groups, as well as the relationships that can be formed between them. This is a key aspect of their socialization process and is a fundamental objective of the Early Childhood Education stage (Blanco Lozano et al., 2008).
- Secondly, when addressing the social dimension, the importance of education in values cannot be overlooked. Values education is crucial not only for individual development but also for life in society. According to Blanco Lozano et al., modern society increasingly demands the formation of an integral, critical, participatory, tolerant, and supportive citizenry capable of meeting the challenges posed by globalization. From this perspective, the goal is to cultivate a society that promotes social justice, equity, inclusion, and interculturality. To achieve this, universities must identify and nurture



the factors that promote social and civic competence (Blanco Lozano et al., 2008).

As teachers, our commitment is to foster a society that advances democracy, equity, gender equality, tolerance, and respect for others. Schools are the ideal setting for facilitating these types of learning.

Despite this, recent research indicates that social content is not given the emphasis it deserves, and the same applies to Social Sciences within university curricula. This results in a gap in the preparation of newly graduated teachers. Studies point to several contributing factors, such as the globalizing approach to education at this stage, the prioritization of areas like literacy and numeracy, and deeply rooted conceptions about children's cognitive development. Additionally, the early childhood stage is often viewed more in terms of caregiving than as a period for civic education (Morales Hernández & López Martínez, 2022). Integrating education for sustainable development into teacher training is essential to meet current educational demands. While CRUE has already made plans to address this, research continues to highlight gaps in the training received by university students. However, project- and workshop-based learning has demonstrated a positive overall impact (Gómez Gómez & García Lázaro, 2023). In this context, it is crucial to consider both the discipline under discussion and the need to introduce active methodologies and competency-based learning approaches.

## **5. SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN CANARY ISLANDS CLASSROOMS REGARDING MIGRATORY PROCESSES AND INTERCULTURALITY**

### **5.1. Current Socio-Educational Context**

Migrations are a phenomenon as old as humanity and continue to be present in today's societies. Migrations remain an unresolved issue in the global order, with migrant movements now more frequent than at any point in history. These migratory processes bring significant economic, social, cultural, and security changes, which are often heavily politicized, particularly with the involvement of the media (Muñoz Jumilla, 2002). The media tends to simplify global migration trends, their evolution, historical and contemporary contexts, and their contributions to both sending and receiving societies, often proliferating myths.

Thus, human movements, beyond the social issues they raise, have the power to bring different cultures closer together. However, the question of the other, the foreigner, or otherness, challenges our ability to coexist. In recent decades, migration

has become increasingly significant in Spain, particularly in the Canary Islands. In 2024, the number of residents in Spain born abroad reached its highest point, with 8.8 million people, according to data from the Continuous Population Statistics (INE, 2024). This figure represents 18.1% of the population, with uneven distribution across the autonomous communities. The highest percentages are found in the Balearic Islands (27%), Catalonia and Madrid (24%), and the Region of Valencia and the Canary Islands (both, 22%) (INE, 2024). This immigrant population, arriving from diverse regions such as Asia, Latin America, and Africa, enters Spanish territories through various means and with different life experiences. Regarding those arriving from Latin America (Domínguez et al., 2020), the following question was raised:

Following Spain's integration into the European Union, Latin American immigration has been interpreted within the framework of push-pull factors that arise from the differing economic levels of countries around the world, based on the theory of sociodemographic complementarity, as well as the favorable Spanish legal and institutional framework for the Latin American community (Prieto Rosas & López Gay, 2015). In this context, three elements have been highlighted to explain the rise of Latin American immigration: a) the increased intensity and diversification of destinations for Latin American international migration; b) changes in the demographic structure of both Spain and Latin American countries; and c) the educational expansion in Latin America. Additionally, these factors are complemented by the level of integration that this community has achieved in Spain (Izquierdo & Martínez, 2014, p. 39).

Moreover, Spain ranks among the top countries receiving immigrants by sea from Africa, alongside Italy and Greece. Its geographical proximity and lower travel costs, compared to countries like France, the United Kingdom, or the United States, make Spain an attractive destination for those seeking to emigrate illegally (Mbaye, 2014). Additionally, non-Spanish Europeans, including Italians, Germans, Russians, and Ukrainians, have a strong presence in Early Childhood Education classrooms.

This migration process has a direct impact on the educational system and immigrant students, who, like all children, must be educated under Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution (1978), which guarantees the right to education. However, the question arises: Are Spanish classrooms prepared to accommodate these students? Are teachers equipped to lead the education of children from different cultural backgrounds, sharing the same space?

These challenges must be handled with care and efficiency to avoid, as suggested: “The dichotomous vision between the group of “natives” and the group of “foreigners” arises because this discourse, originating from the political class, spreads, multiplies, and amplifies through the media, thereby colonizing the common thought of our societies” (Van Dijk, 2010, p. 84).

Although many Spaniards maintain that “others are racists” (Calvo Buezas, 1989, p. 53), there is clear evidence of “an increase in xenophobia and subtle, low-intensity racism. This type of racism is expressed in indirect ways, often characterized by cultural and symbolic elements and a hidden but persistent resistance to diversity” (Díez Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 84).

Therefore, the school must be equipped to address the diversity of its school community, particularly when the needs arise from social and cultural backgrounds and individual capacities. In this context, the diversification, personalization, and universal design of curricula and teaching processes are established as key strategies for managing the diversity present in classrooms (Casanova Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2009; UNESCO, 2017; Luis Rico, 2020).

However, the reception processes differ significantly depending on the educational stage. In compulsory education, different personal and administrative resources are mobilized to ensure that students meet stage objectives appropriately.

Nevertheless, as Luis Rico (2020, p. 72) asks: “What happens in the Early Childhood Education stage? Due to its non-compulsory nature and the developmental level of students, this stage generates ideas that directly shape how Early Childhood Education students are received”.

The number of foreign-born children living in Spain is notably significant within the school system. Over the last decade, this figure has increased by 45%, surpassing one million for the first time during the 2023-2024 academic year. Specifically, according to statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training, and Sport, 1,066,875 students were enrolled in Early Childhood Education, with 16.6% in Spain and 12.5% in the Canary Islands. Socio-political and demographic indicators suggest that in the coming years, thousands of people from groups, countries, and cultures outside Europe will settle in Spain, seeking a better quality of life and a more secure future for themselves and their families. It is essential to recognize that they are undoubtedly part of our community. Immigrant students present a variety of needs (Fernández, 2004), making it crucial to train teachers who will be responsible for their education in Spanish classrooms and particularly in the Canary Islands.

## **5.2. Current Intercultural Context**

Spanish society, and specifically Canarian society, has undergone significant structural changes over the past thirty years, which have had profound effects on cultural management, a responsibility shared between the State and the Self-Governing Regions. As Briones Gómez (2007, n.p.) observes, “We have transitioned from a culturally and religiously almost homogeneous and monochromatic society to a plural or multicultural one. Moreover, this transformation is evident in all aspects of the Spanish socio-cultural system”. This shift has had a strong impact on the

teaching-learning process, where children from various socio-cultural backgrounds now share educational spaces.

As a result, educational centers have become contexts where highly dynamic social interactions take place, requiring that institutions and educators implement strategies to effectively address cultural diversity. In light of this scenario, it is essential to reflect on the educational implications and take proactive steps to manage diversity, fostering values rooted in equality and the acceptance of multiculturalism in future generations. Rodríguez et al. emphasize the importance of this approach:

The justification for intercultural education today, and the consequent development of intercultural competence, is strongly supported by the historical gaps that have been imposed upon us, as the many acts committed over time have resulted in deep sources of exclusion and social marginalization (2019, p. 63).

Interculturalism goes beyond a mere multicultural perspective, as it “proposes a proactive model of relationships between cultures, where cultural interaction is viewed as an educational process in itself” (Fernández, 2004, p. 42). Expanding on this idea, other authors argue that “interculturality is founded on interdependence, reciprocity, and symmetry between cultures, which require dialogue and communication” (Ávila Dávalos, 2022, p. 12), with a focus on the acceptance and recognition of cultural differences (Alavés Ruíz, 2014). This framework calls for the establishment of cultural relations and the integration of diverse cultures. Thus, intercultural education must be embedded within the overall educational framework, specifically the school project, which must take into account the particular context of each educational center. Likewise, the autonomy afforded to schools in the design and implementation of programs allows for the creation of initiatives tailored to the needs of both the center and its students, ensuring intentional and effective attention to diversity in intercultural education (Fernández, 2004; Tebár Cuesta, 2018; Mansilla Sepúlveda et al., 2022).

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY**

The early childhood stage (0-6 years) is crucial for children's development. It is essential to provide motivating experiences that promote meaningful and innovative learning. Through this kind of educational approach, children can engage with important content and values related to culture, equality, tolerance, and solidarity in a playful, natural, and engaging manner (Rodríguez-García et al., 2019).

Taking this into account and recognizing the critical role teachers play in the formative experiences of young children, this educational strategy has been designed to convey knowledge to students in a more practical and effective manner, particularly on contemporary and controversial issues such as migration and interculturality.

## 6.1. Methodological Proposal

This strategy will be implemented as an educational experience within the course Didactics of Social Sciences in the Early Childhood Education Degree at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC). This is the only course on Social Sciences taught in the degree, and it is a compulsory course offered during the first semester of the fourth year, with a workload of 4.5 credits (45 contact hours and 66.5 non-contact hours).

In addition to the general and transversal competencies, the course includes the following specific competencies:

- ED2: Understand the scientific, mathematical, and technological foundations of the curriculum for this stage, along with the theories of acquisition and development of relevant learning.
- ED3: Foster interest in and respect for the natural, social, and cultural environment through suitable educational projects.
- ED4: Acquire knowledge about the evolution of thought, customs, beliefs, and social and political movements throughout history.

As for these competencies, this experience allows us to address all three specific competencies. First, students must base their proposals on the curriculum of the Self-Governing Region of the Canary Islands (ED2). Secondly, the experience encourages students to reflect on their surrounding social and cultural environment and learn how to develop suitable educational projects rooted in that context (ED3). Lastly, through this proposal, students will gain an understanding of how society, thought, and related elements have evolved over time within this particular subject (ED4).

According to the *Verifica* teaching project, the objectives to be met are:

1. To prepare future Early Childhood Education graduates from a professional perspective in relevant subject areas.
2. To introduce basic ideas that should be included in the Early Childhood Education curriculum related to Social Sciences.
3. To provide tools, methods, and techniques for the effective implementation of teaching practices.

As with the competencies, we can affirm that this experience will contribute to achieving the course's objectives, as it will be approached from both an innovative and professional perspective for teachers in initial training in the field of Social Sciences education. It will address a highly relevant topic, immigration, which is

particularly significant in Spain and the Canary Islands, offering novel methodologies to engage with this issue.

Finally, we must focus on the content outlined in the teaching project. This project includes five topics, and we believe that the most appropriate for this experience is Topic 4: First contact with the social world, the development of social knowledge, and the understanding of society and its elements. Elements of representation of the social world. The construction of economic, political, artistic, and philosophical notions. Procedures and resources for their teaching.

Upon completing the course, students are expected to achieve the following Learning Results (RA):

- RA1: Understand and apply the scientific and methodological foundations necessary to address the curriculum for this stage, designing experiences related to natural and social sciences using a scientific methodology.
- RA2: Place relevant scientific and social events in their historical context and assess their impact on social progress.
- RA3: Design teaching proposals that are integrated into the school curriculum and connect classroom activities with various perspectives of the natural, social, and cultural environment, with a focus on respect for the environment and sustainable development.

The proposed experience will contribute to achieving the learning outcomes, as it requires students to approach the curriculum from a Social Sciences perspective (RA1). They will need to contextualize the phenomena to be integrated into the curriculum within the sociocultural environment in which they occur (RA2), and design proposals that fit into the curriculum with a focus on contributing to sustainable development. The objectives of this experience include:

- To bring Early Childhood Education students closer to practical and real-world experiences with second-cycle Early Childhood Education students (4-5 years old).
- To propose an innovative strategy that incorporates quality education initiatives focusing on values such as equality and gender.
- To identify cultural diversity as a key element of 21st-century society in the Canary Islands.

### 6.1.1. Methodology

The proposed work methodology is project-based learning (PBL), an alternative methodology to articulate the content addressed in the designed educational strategy. This methodology is selected because research indicates that PBL tends to increase motivation and improve learning outcomes. It achieves this by allowing students to apply the knowledge they have gained to specific products or processes, putting their conceptual frameworks into practice to solve tangible problems (Medina-Nicolalde, & Tapia-Calvopina, 2017; Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Parreño Castellano, 2023). This approach enhances the relevance of the subject matter for students. Additionally, PBL is expected to contribute to greater thematic coherence by organizing the course content around a project. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of PBL encourages students to work in teams, fostering a questioning of individualism in the classroom while promoting respect for diversity.

## 6.2. Development of Strategies

As mentioned in previous sections, our proposal is included in Topic 4, titled “First contacts with the social world: the development of social knowledge, the understanding of society and its elements. Elements of representation of the social world. The construction of economic, political, artistic, and philosophical notions.” According to the teaching plan, this unit comprises ten hours—four hours dedicated to theoretical content and six hours focused on practical work, which includes the presentation of the final projects by the student groups.

### 6.2.1. First Part

Before starting the PBL, a two-hour classroom activity is proposed, focusing on family geographies, based on Bale’s (2012) proposal. The task will involve students mapping their place of birth, as well as the birthplaces and residences of their parents and grandparents, including their current places of residence. The activity will be prepared in advance through family investigation, and students will then work on it in class. The objective of this activity is to analyze geographical mobility within families, examining why populations move from one place to another, and to raise awareness of the factors driving migration. Initially, students will complete the task individually, using information gathered at home, and later they will share their findings in class. This sharing phase is intended to foster reflection on their personal migration stories and those happening in the broader context of their environment. Bale suggests two actions for this activity:

- **Worksheet:** Students will record the various places of residence in a table, listing them from most recent to oldest.
- **Geography Tree:** Instead of a traditional family tree that focuses on names, this geography tree will focus on the places of birth of family members.

This activity aims to identify the history of mobility or lack thereof within each student's family and to draw a parallel between "immigrant Spain" and "new emigration." Through this process, students will gain an awareness of mobility patterns, whether from their own personal experience or that of their classmates. They will come to understand that migration is often more prevalent than initially perceived. For instance, approximately 4 out of 10 Canarian students in the Early Childhood Education Degree at ULPGC have family migration histories, with key destinations being the Americas, particularly Cuba, Venezuela, and Argentina (Domínguez et al., 2002; Monzón, 2022).

In the second part of the work, students are guided to undertake a collaborative project, which they will develop in teams. The project's objectives and expected competencies are introduced and discussed in class, along with the various stages involved in the project. This includes a collaborative approach, the level of commitment required, and the evaluation method, including the use of rubrics. A key point is the importance of the materials prepared for the final presentation. These materials will not only be used for the project presentation but will also play a role in the Practicum III course, which takes place in Early Childhood Education classrooms during the second semester of the 4th year. The materials will contribute to the final evaluation in that phase, as there will be coordination among the teachers evaluating the different subjects. The presentation phase is critical because, without a solid understanding and commitment from the students at the outset, it will be difficult to achieve satisfactory results.

The students will form work groups, with a maximum of five students per group, creating six teams in the classroom. The central theme of the project—interculturality and migration in the Canary Islands—will be defined with the teacher's guidance. Each team will explore this topic from the perspective of a specific territory assigned to them. The overarching project has been titled "Equal and Different," although each team will approach it from the territory it is to defend. These two adjectives, according to Hegel, represent opposing concepts, and from their conflict, a third arises: the synthesis. This synthesis, as Gadamer (2020) notes, holds more truth than either of the original opposing terms.

At this preparatory stage, the teacher selected a Peters map, which was divided based on the number of groups (6) and the regions that send immigrants to the Canary Islands: North and Central America (isthmian and insular), South America, Europe (excluding Spain), Asia, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa. Each



group was assigned a section of the map, which would serve as the focus of their analysis. The groups were tasked with analyzing their assigned region from various perspectives, including its geographical location, sociodemographic and economic characteristics, cultural features, historical context, and migratory connections with the Canary Islands. These aspects would be incorporated into the final report that each group would submit as part of their project work.

The project was organized into several phases following this initial stage, which focused on information, organization, and motivation (Table 2). The first phase aimed to help the groups explore different perspectives on the topic they were assigned, based on bibliographic and electronic resources. This allowed them to more accurately define the project's objectives and, in some cases, identify key hypotheses for analysis. In this phase, guiding questions were formulated, and the necessary tools to carry out the tasks were identified.

Table 2. Phases of the project-based learning model

Nº	Description of the phases of PBL	Observations
1	<p>After assigning the territory to each team, they will work on the topic of migration and interculturality using the PBL methodology and will address different aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conducting a bibliographic search and developing the theoretical framework of the topic, with each team highlighting the sociodemographic, historical, and economic aspects of its assigned territory.</li> <li>● Each team will create a database of Early Childhood Education students born outside the Canary Islands and enrolled in the last three academic years. Each team will focus on their assigned territory. For example, teams working on South America will select children born in countries from that region.</li> <li>● Justification of the interest in the topic to be investigated.</li> <li>● Development of the guiding questions to be posed to the interviewees.</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare and design a semi-structured interview guide in the classroom, with each team contributing ideas to create a unified model.</li> <li>● Selection of experts to be interviewed. These experts will include staff from NGOs that work with immigrants in the Canary Islands and those managing reception centers for unaccompanied migrant minors. Proposed organizations include the International Red Cross, the Coliseum Association, and Quorum Social 77, among others. Additionally, one team must interview representatives from the Island Council or Town Councils involved in addressing migrant issues in the Canary Islands. Experts will also include a primary school director and an early childhood education teacher who works in classrooms with migrants from various nationalities. Each team is required to conduct at least three interviews, with one interview being the teacher.</li> </ul>	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare and implement a discussion group for each project (one per work team). Example: "Equal and Different: Latin American Students in Early Childhood Education Classrooms in Gran Canaria."</li> </ul>	<p>The course teachers monitored and facilitated the development of the various phases throughout the face-to-face practical activity sessions. Also, as the project progressed, the workgroups were required to prepare evaluative materials.</p>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher will observe each discussion group using an observation guide. Additionally, the discussion group will be recorded and later analyzed to gather information.</li> </ul>	<p>In this way, no group was left behind, and continuous work was guaranteed.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finally, each team will then give an oral presentation of the results obtained, supported by a written presentation highlighting the key findings and proposing personalized strategies tailored to the needs identified by each group.</li> <li>● During the final presentation, a roundtable will be organized, with each team's moderator and representative participating.</li> <li>● The moderator will offer a general conclusion, summarizing the most relevant results and the most effective strategies developed by the teams.</li> </ul>	<p>This phase consisted of two stages: the first took place in the classroom during the practical sessions and tutorials with the various groups, and the second occurred when the results were presented in a plenary session. During this session, the subject teachers served as a panel, and each student participated in assessing the work of their classmates.</p>

Source: Own elaboration

The activities will be conducted both in person, utilizing a computer room or classroom, and remotely, including fieldwork. The use of the virtual classroom and ICT tools within the course will be highly beneficial for ensuring coordination and adherence to the planned schedule. The teaching staff will serve as facilitators throughout all phases, providing resources and assisting in problem-solving. The final phase of the project will involve the preparation and presentation of the main results to the class. A conference will be organized to showcase these presentations, coinciding with the Educational Innovation Week held annually at ULPGC, which typically takes place in the second half of November. The conference will be open for registration, with special invitations extended to Early Childhood Education teachers and organizations working with migrant children to support their integration into Canarian society.

This final phase also includes tutoring for the face-to-face activities and culminates in the continuous assessment of this part of the course. Students will present how they developed their projects, outlining the steps they followed, the challenges they encountered, how they resolved them, and the key results achieved.

### **6.3. Expected Results**

The Project-Based Learning strategy offers an alternative and a key opportunity to implement experiences that strengthen civic education within educational communities, particularly through the lens of Critical Didactics of Geography, History, and Social Sciences (Abarca, 2017). This approach was chosen in this research with the goal of fostering civic education and developing 21st-century thinking skills in Early Childhood Education degree students, who are future teachers. The strategy aims to help students connect real-world experiences and outcomes with the school community and the local social environment. A fundamental principle of this approach is the presentation of results to public audiences beyond the classroom and the teacher, thus broadening the impact of the students' work (Abarca, 2017).

The application of the PBL methodology is expected to contribute to the development of various general and specific competencies within the degree program and the course. Among the general competencies, the didactic approach directly stimulates the ability to apply the scientific method, as well as skills in analysis and synthesis, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, information management, and the application of theoretical knowledge in practice (Parreño & Rodríguez, 2021). Additionally, it fosters autonomous learning and promotes awareness of human rights and the reduction of all forms of inequality, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As for specific competencies, studies have demonstrated the

effectiveness of this didactic approach (Abarca Salina, 2017; Parreño-Castellano & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2021) in developing knowledge in areas such as human geography, particularly social geography. It enhances the ability to use geographic information to address social issues, integrate temporal and spatial dimensions in the analysis of socio-territorial processes, and relate and synthesize cross-sectional territorial information (Parreño, 2021).

The active nature of PBL facilitates the achievement of additional learning outcomes that may not be explicitly expressed through competencies or objectives, such as the development of self-esteem, self-recognition, (partial) social immersion, and leadership skills. While these competencies are not formally included in the course curriculum, they will become evident through the work students engage in. It is common for these types of skills to emerge in PBL environments (Vergara Ramírez, 2016; Rodríguez & Parreño, 2023).

In addition, it is important to note that the development of transversal competencies is closely linked to this applied methodology. It enables students to communicate with diverse audiences, effectively utilize media and communication channels—particularly those related to new information and communication technologies—and apply their professional skills and knowledge to address the interests, needs, and concerns of their specific communities or regions.

## 7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Through the design and future implementation of the project “Equals and Different,” students of the Degree in Early Childhood Education will have the opportunity to engage in a practical teaching experience, one that they initiate themselves, while working with second-cycle Early Childhood Education students on content related to intercultural education and migration.

The training of future teachers presents a challenge that must be addressed. Although many professionals have expressed disappointment with the current study plans, particularly due to the omission of Social Sciences content, this should not be an obstacle. We must continue working with the necessary responsibility and determination to produce highly qualified Early Childhood Education professionals. Social Geography phenomena deserve a prominent place in teacher training, and therefore, introducing current social issues into the subject content is a priority task.

There is a stark contradiction between the significant value attributed to geographical knowledge and Social Sciences in children's education and the limited number of credits allocated to these subjects in teacher training programs. This is particularly concerning when considering that the Early Childhood Curriculum includes an area dedicated to “Discovering and exploring the environment,” which

could serve as an integrating core for the other two areas (growth in harmony and communication, and representation of reality).

It is now essential to consider how to integrate and sustain the learning of young children within the cultures of educational centers. These are the environments where our future Early Childhood and Primary Education teachers will complete their practicum and, eventually, perform professionally. This commitment to blending academic and practical knowledge reflects the ongoing effort to dismantle the traditional hierarchy between university learning and social issues, aiming to form “a more equal and dialectical relationship between academic and practical knowledge” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 132).

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Equity:** A principle that ensures fair treatment for all individuals, acknowledging and respecting differences, diversity, and specific needs. Unlike equality, which gives everyone the same resources, equity provides individuals with what they need to achieve the same outcomes, considering their unique circumstances.

**Interculturality:** A process of interaction, coexistence, and dialogue between different cultures, rooted in mutual respect and recognition of cultural diversity. Unlike multiculturalism, which simply acknowledges the presence of multiple cultures in the same space, interculturality encourages active, equitable relationships where cultures exchange ideas, knowledge, and values, leading to mutual enrichment.

**Migrations:** The movement of people from one location to another, either within the same country (internal migration) or across borders (international migration), to settle temporarily or permanently. Migration has been a continuous phenomenon throughout history, driven by economic, social, political, and environmental factors. People arriving in a new location are called immigrants, while those leaving are emigrants.

**Second cycle of early childhood education:** This educational stage covers ages 3 to 6, focusing on promoting the comprehensive development of children in cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects. It is considered one of the most critical phases in a person's life, fostering the development of language, personal autonomy, creativity, and foundational cognitive skills such as problem-solving and artistic expression. Children engage in more structured activities, such as learning numbers, letters, and social skills, through playful and participatory methods.

**Social geography:** A branch of geography that examines how human societies organize, structure, and experience space. It explores interactions between people and their environments, focusing on social, cultural, economic, and political factors that shape how human groups occupy and modify geographic spaces. Social geography aims to understand the relationship between social dynamics and territory, and how these affect the spatial distribution of populations, resources, and cultural phenomena.

**Social justice:** This term refers to the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights across society, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or abilities, can live dignified and fulfilled lives. It is rooted in equality, equity, respect for diversity, and solidarity, and it aims to eliminate structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty, exclusion, and discrimination.

**Spatial justice:** This concerns the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and services across geographic spaces, ensuring that all communities, regardless of location, have access to what they need to thrive. This concept focuses on how decisions about space usage and territorial planning affect different social groups, and how these decisions can either perpetuate or reduce inequalities.