



The Voices of Primary School Boys and Girls on Human Rights and Their Historical Agency

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The teaching of History in primary school must integrate education for active global citizenship in the face of inequalities and social injustice caused by the constant violation of human rights in the present. The transformative framework at school promotes global citizenship from a humanizing perspective and a respect for diversity. All of this comes in a context marked by the effects of the capitalist economic dimension of globalization, which translates into a crisis in the exercising of fundamental democratic values. Below, we show the first-phase results of educational research comprising a qualitative exploratory study that investigates what primary school students think about and know. The participants come from a public school in the city of Almería, south-eastern Spain. Given the volume of information obtained from the semi-structured group interviews conducted on a total of 126 students (male and female) and seven teachers at the school, a qualitative content analysis has been carried out to extract relevant meaning regarding the research objectives; these focused on what the students know and feel about human rights, social problems and injustices, and the role of girls and boys throughout history. Hearing, listening to and recognizing the voices of primary school boys and girls has provided us, first of all, with ethical cues to design professional teacher development experiences in line with the new times of change and uncertainty, from the framework of a critical teaching of the contents of school history. Secondly, it has guided us in the configuration of training opportunities to cover the weaknesses caused by the democratic deficit and strengthen democracy by increasing child citizen participation. In this way, we hope to contribute to the education of a global citizenry that is more critical and committed to the common good in collective decision-making in an interconnected world.

Keywords: global citizenship, agency, human rights, boys and girls, school history, primary education

INTRODUCTION

The school, as created by nation States in the 19th century, was used to support the process of forming patriotic citizens. For this reason, history and geography “are disciplines that have supported individual and collective identities and memories” (Pérez-Garzón, 2008, p. 39). From our point of view, a teaching of the Social Sciences (hereinafter, SS) and History has to prevail, both in childhood and in early life, in order to fulfill a transformative social function. With this orientation, the functioning of democracy and of lawful States would be reinforced (Gutiérrez and Pagès, 2018)

in a context conditioned by the Globalization of a model of life, anchored in the hegemony of the individualistic values of neoliberal ideology, based on immediacy and a superficial knowledge of social reality. The possibility of making children's voices heard more is the priority of this research. Girls and boys are capable of constructing their own discourses so that their opinions on social problems and their rights are more valued; in the same vein as the historiographical efforts to recover children's voices in history (Sosenski, 2016). With this work, we intend to contribute to the visibility and experimentation of children's participation (Trilla and Novella, 2001) in the face of social problems. At the same time, contributions from the sociology of childhood help us to generate spaces and times where their voices are heard; they can learn about the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter CRC) and they are recognized as active subjects of their present and past, capable of contributing to collective agency.

Below, we show the first-phase results of educational research comprising a qualitative exploratory study that investigates what primary school students think about and know. It should be made clear that the regulatory framework in which this first phase of research was carried out corresponds to the Order of January 15, 2021 which develops the curriculum corresponding to the stage of primary education in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. This is a curricular development that comes from the imprint left by the previous Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the improvement of educational quality (LOMCE).

Due to the continuous violation of human rights in our present time (Amnesty International Report, 2020/21, Human Rights Watch World Report, 2022), if we want the school to be the transforming engine of a collective citizen identity based on social justice (McCrary and Ross, 2016), the rights of children and global citizenship education deserve to be the backbone of SS and History teaching in Primary classrooms, as well as in initial teacher training programs. This idea arises when we face certain challenges encountered at the nation-state level despite the hesitant regional experiences in the EU in matters such as those of immigrants or the demands that have suddenly surfaced due to the first global pandemic we are witnessing. The dilemma presented in the teaching of History at school consists of looking the other way, maintaining the status inherited from the teaching model conditioned by "the turning of educational systems toward the logic of the market" (Mercado and Pinochet, 2021, p. 290), or, instead, embarking on the path of emancipatory and transformative knowledge (Freire, 2002), in a world where, as has been shown by the COVID-19 pandemic, all human beings are interdependent. In Freire (2002) critical pedagogy a liberating education is bet against the market-based education that oppresses. The latter understands the child as an object that is diluted by the teacher and not as an active subject. In this sense, Freire's effort was to make the subject the protagonist of their education, of their personal history in the context in which they forms their identity. The way to achieve this arises as a communicative act in the dialogic interaction between teacher and student within a symmetrical and non-hierarchical relationship (García Gómez, 2021).

In this scenario, marked by the effects of the capitalist economic dimension of Globalization, which translates into a crisis regarding the use of and respect for democratic values, concern emerges about the democratic citizenship deficit and the advance of non-democratic (populisms, technocratic elites) "shortcuts" that degrade "the standard set of rights and opportunities for political decision-making enjoyed by citizens in democratic societies [...]" (Lafont, 2021, p. 19). For this reason, it is necessary to contribute to the construction of a transformative educational framework that fosters the practice of global citizenship at school from a humanizing perspective and respect for diversity.

A Humanistic Historical Education With a Sociocultural Perspective

The revisions experienced in school History have not hidden the long shadow of National History and Universal History (Carretero et al., 2013) by continuing to "limit school historical knowledge to a predominantly political history, featuring men and with a Eurocentric periodization" (Ortega, 2020, p. 12). The basic problem underlying the Primary school classroom for a society in continuous change is, as (Cardoso et al., 2020, p. 21) state, "the persistence of the teaching of history as an element of acculturation and with scant identification of the collectives that have no traditional voice in historical discourses." In this sense, we are aware of the various research lines on what school history should teach. For García (2021, p. 40), there are four main lines in the debate concerning the contents of school History teaching:

- (1) The defense of history as a core subject to construct citizenship and critical thinking in students;
- (2) The questioning and criticism of national and universal history in schools;
- (3) The defense of interdiscipline in history within the social sciences framework; and
- (4) The inclusion of both old and new actors in the subject of history (women, sexual diversity, racial, and ethnic diversity, etc.).

This role of History in contributing to citizen training with critical thinking was highlighted by Dalongeville (2006) when he stated that:

"l'histoire a la charge, plus que toute autre discipline scolaire, d'aider à la formation d'un citoyen. En effet, nul ne conçoit un citoyen sans une mémoire collective forte. Mais le citoyen, c'est aussi celui qui apprend à penser librement, qui se forge un esprit critique."

We agree with Lévesque (2008) that the learning of historical knowledge and the practice of History itself, when adding the exercise of citizenship, will allow students to acquire a commitment to a democratic society that overcomes the patriotic spirit. The current scenario in which History is taught is complex and challenging (Carretero, 2019) due to the loss of political power by nation States in the context of Globalization and the presence of new political agents of culturally diverse ethnic and religious origin, which compete amongst one another to be recognized as emergent, national or global subjects by claiming historical rights based on their collective memory. We share

this radical line regarding the new developments that must confront historical education for a global citizenship. One of these developments must be embodied in an integrated model of thought and historical consciousness functioning in the classroom within a dialogical and multiperspectivist framework; another must be attentive to reviewing the past and present protagonists in school history, leaving behind androcentric and adultcentric approaches because, as Joan Pagès affirms, “the protagonism in the construction of the past, as in the construction of the present and future, has been, is and will be, of the group of people who integrated, integrate and will integrate societies” (Pagès, 2007, p. 25).

Indeed, the teaching of History should be “useful to boys and girls, to young people, to construct their historicity and develop their thought and historical awareness” (Pagès, 2019, p. 27). The understanding of History therefore includes the development of cognitive skills and abilities, and a methodology to interpret data and information about the past (Domínguez, 2015). The results from various studies show that these skills are not being sufficiently promoted (Miralles et al., 2014; Gómez Carrasco et al., 2015), despite proposals suggesting progression in primary school boys and girls (Cooper, 2015), or research on improving storytelling and early childhood literacy (Arias et al., 2019). The research by van Boxtel and van Drie (2017) shows that, for training in historical thinking, dialogic activities should be encouraged where children and adolescents can evaluate historical sources, containing different points of view of the same historical theme. The idea is that, based on evidence, they use historical concepts in their deliberations to support claims with arguments. From all of the above, it follows that using a dialogical framework in the teaching and learning of historical thought or reasoning prepares primary school students to be participatory citizens in a democratic society. In this vein, we recognize the need to implement a humanistic vision of History teaching, and from a sociocultural perspective, as Miralles and Gómez (2017) mention, following the approach of Barton and Levstik (2004). Faced with the emphasis being placed on individualism, regarding certain historical protagonists, such as the **Figure 1** of the hero, it is necessary to pay attention to a collective agency (Arias and Egea, 2021) doing history for the common good, and giving boys and girls the message that they can join with others and make a difference, thus offering hope that they can be part of the change.

Children’s Rights as the Backbone of Training

A key aspect for achieving collective agency is children’s participation but it is mostly located in spaces controlled by paternalistic and protectionist hegemonic models (Lay-Lisboa and Montañez, 2018), which evidence childhoods subordinated to the power exercised by adults. In our democratic societies, strengthening children’s participation is a priority; however, the essential part is missing and that is to make it real (Novella and Trilla, 2014). As Esteban et al. (2021, p. 23) argue,

children’s participation is an object of study of great relevance for being a fundamental right whose development and articulation is

yet to be achieved, for being a value of democratic societies, for being a key to socialization and political development, and for being a key procedure for peaceful coexistence.

Observing the data, boys, girls, and adolescents between the ages of 0 and 17 constitute a little over 30% of the world population (Sanz Gimeno, 2020, p. 6). According to this author, if we look at the vital phases that this social sector goes through, three main stages can be distinguished (**Table 1**).

However, only with a greater awareness of the role bestowed on children from a social and political perspective will it be possible to visualize and experience children’s participation and rights in school. Formally, an adultcentric conception that conceives of minors as incomplete beings in transition would thus be overcome (Liebel, 2015) and there would be a tendency toward a more active, fair, and equitable approach in the so-called democratic states. As Bruck and Ben-Arieh (2020) argue, in recent years there have been a series of changes in the way children are viewed, that take into account the signing of the CRC. For these authors,

there have been some important advances in the understanding and study of children’s well-being, moving from *welfare* to *well-being* (feeling well) (Kamerma et al., 2009), and from child protection to child development (Bruck and Ben-Arieh, 2020, p. 36).

Undoubtedly, the most noted achievement when it comes to integrating the contents of the CRC into the formal educational field lies in implementing its principles in the life, organization and daily functioning of a school. Since 2010, UNICEF has promoted the integration of children’s rights and global citizenship in the organization of infant, primary and compulsory secondary schools, intending that the CRC comprises the driving force of school life. In addition, we have examples of efforts to convert the CRC articles into the cornerstones of the urban space and the school community. An example of the above is represented in our country by the educating cities movement started in Barcelona in the 90s, in the work carried out by Tonucci (2009), which has crystallized into the network of children’s cities, in the creation of the Childhood Friendly Cities (CAI), in the “We propose” project started in Portugal in 2011 (Rodríguez and Claudino, 2018), and also in the educational experiences in citizen participation developed in the STEP project among infant and primary school teachers in Italy, France and Spain (Estepa and García Perez, 2020). In Spain, we can highlight contributions such as that of Llana and Novella (2018) about child participation and childhood councils, or that of Del Moral-Espín et al. (2017), whose objective was to review and define, in the words of the boys and girls themselves, the relevant capacities for their own well-being in the context of Andalusia. In addition, the State Council for the Participation of Children and Adolescents has been created (Order DSA/1009/2021, of September 22; BOE number 231 of September 27, 2021).

Similarly, we are aware of the benefits of incorporating children’s rights and global citizenship into school institutions. According to Urrea et al. (2018), programs have been assessed in Canada [*Rights, Respect and Responsibility* (RRR) of 2011] and in

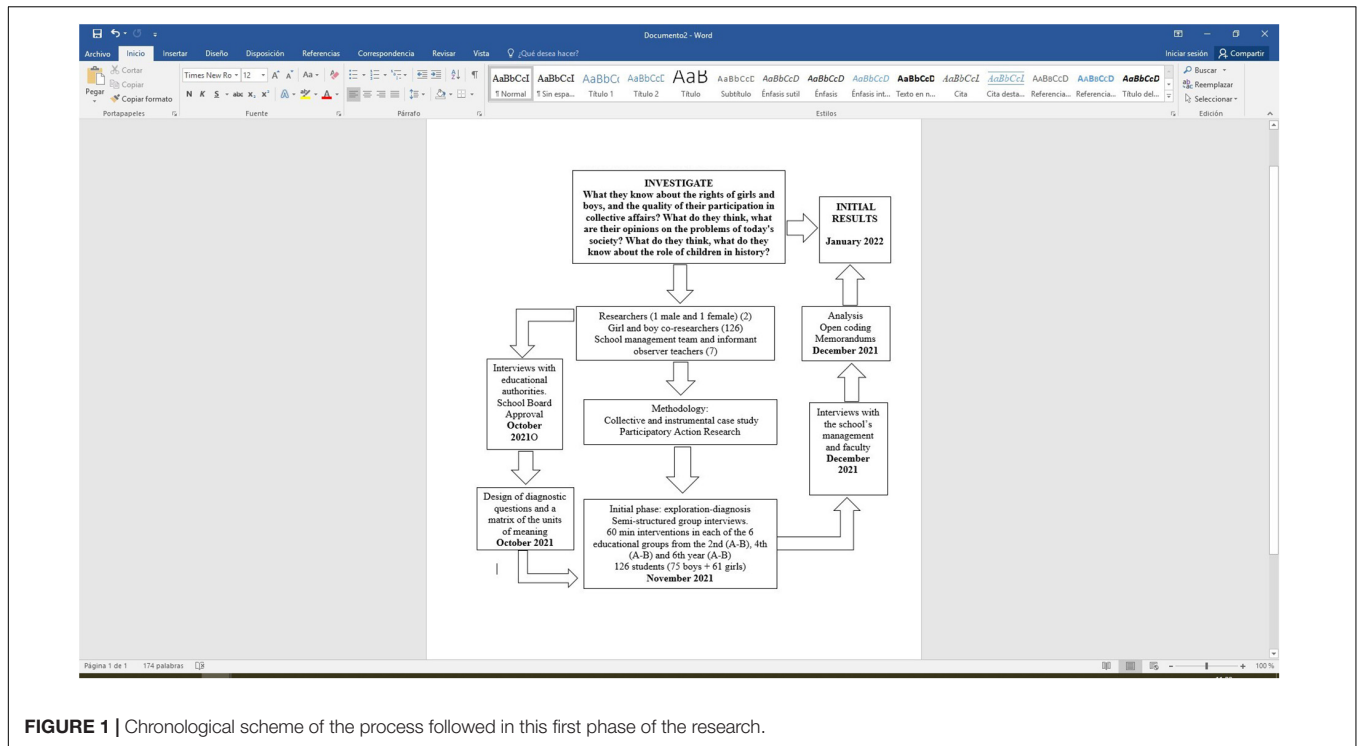


FIGURE 1 | Chronological scheme of the process followed in this first phase of the research.

TABLE 1 | Distribution of children between 0 and 17 years old.

Early childhood (0–6 years old)	11%
The school and pre-adolescent stage (between 6 and 11 years old)	10%
Adolescence (between 12 and 17 years old)	10%

Source: Own design based on Sanz Gimeno (2020, p. 9).

England [The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) of 2008], in which these positive consequences are appreciated. It has been proven that great benefits are obtained for the entire educational community and not only for some of its groups (Covell et al., 2009; Monclús et al., 2017, p. 1350), highlighting the following advances:

- (1) Improved self-esteem of students;
- (2) Prejudice reduction;
- (3) Improvement in the behavior and relations between the school members;
- (4) Satisfaction among the faculty;
- (5) Improved academic results;
- (6) Recognition of all members of the community [Sebba and Robinson, 2010, cited in Urrea et al. (2018), p. 130].

Furthermore, the celebration on November 20th of “International Children’s Day” has been the indicator used for qualitative research of an ethnographic nature (López Martínez, 2021), carried out in public and charter schools in the province of Almería (Andalusia) to check if children’s rights were worked on and how this work is carried out in the classroom. In this research, the teaching students prepared final reports (124) on their work placements with encouraging results, since the CRC was marked in 62% of the infant and primary schools,

although 38% did not carry out educational classroom activities to celebrate the day of the Convention’s signing.

Despite these advances, it has been confirmed that the CRC articles are not mentioned in compulsory education curricular developments (Urrea et al., 2018). Thus, in the study on the international situation regarding Children’s Rights in the educational systems of 26 countries, including Spain (Monclús et al., 2017, p. 1350), the following conclusions were reached:

- (1) In most of the participating countries, Children’s Rights are not mentioned in the official compulsory education curricula; and
- (2) none of the States ensure that teachers are trained in Children’s Rights or are familiar with the CRC.

Recently in Spain, with the approval of Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, (LOMLOE), mention of this international regulation has been included as a guiding principle of the education system. The new 3/2020 law, of 29 December (Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la LOE (LOMLOE), 2020) came into force in Spain on January 19, 2021. However, it is the January 15, 2021 Act that is currently in force in Andalusia for the official curriculum of this stage. The objectives of Primary Education in the Social Sciences have a direct and complementary relationship with those in the areas of Social and Civic Values, and Education for Citizenship and Human Rights. As stated on page 45 of the Official Gazette of the Junta de Andalucía (January 18, 2021), “students should strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as to lead a responsible life in a free and democratic society, with respect for the values enshrined in the Spanish Constitution and the

Statute of Autonomy for Andalusia.” It is only in the subject entitled Education for Citizenship and Human Rights, which is taught in the fourth year of Primary Education, where it is specified that both Human Rights and those expressed in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child should be treated in unison. However, in the Social Sciences subject this recognition is more generic, and the development of such capacities as to know, to value, and to respect human rights and democratic values are included as objectives. Let us remember that in Spain the CRC came into force on January 5, 1991, that is to say, more than 30 years ago. For all these reasons, we are convinced that children’s rights must be included and addressed in the initial training of education professionals.

The results from evaluative research projects on the presence of children’s rights in initial training plans, coordinated by the “Abel Martínez” University Chair of Education and Adolescence at the University of Lleida and supported by UNICEF, endorse this statement. The resulting analysis of this presence yields discouraging data, since it only appears explicitly in the teaching guidelines of 1.26% of the Teaching and Social Education degrees (Balsells et al., 2015). For this reason, UNICEF has encouraged a training plan for curricular integration of the CRC for undergraduate degrees in teaching and social education, and the design of teaching-learning activities on the rights of the child. This training plan has materialized in the creation of the guide entitled “The rights of children and global citizenship in education faculties. Training proposal for education degrees” (Urrea et al., 2016). Said guide was implemented from 2016 to 2018 in the four public universities in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, with the objectives of evaluating its design, and improving and expanding activities with the input of the participants. The first results indicate that progress has to be made in disseminating and learning about children’s rights and global citizenship in teacher training, as well as its use as a transversal resource for future professional practice, adapting activities and materials to infant and primary schools (Monclús et al., 2017).

Therefore, we maintain that both global citizenship and children’s rights deserve a more prominent attention space in the learning of SS and History in primary school classrooms, to reactivate an identity based on global collective citizenship (Levstik, 2008; Pineda-Alfonso et al., 2019). Having said this, we demand the participation of the minority social sectors in the hegemonic adultcentric society (Liebel, 2015; Gaitán, 2018), knowing that there is cultural resistance to child intervention in political decision-making, despite the obligation of the signatory States to comply with the CRC. It therefore seems necessary to research citizenship from a perspective of childhood, which favors training that recognizes, understands, thinks, and acts globally in the search for social justice (González-Monfort et al., forthcoming).

RESEARCH METHOD

As researchers at the University of Almería, we are part of the project “Education for the future and hope in democracy.

Rethinking the teaching of social sciences in times of change” (PID2019-107383RB-I00). The general objective is to investigate Democratic Education in Primary Education. The intention is to improve Democratic Education with new proposals following the guidelines of the Council of Europe on Democratic Culture Competencies. As a main objective, we intend to know what boys and girls know, what they think, what views they have, and what emotions they feel about the current problems in society, about children’s rights and citizenship, social injustice, and democracy. This study allows us to reflect on the SS teaching approach in primary education to form global citizens. The project methodology is part of a mixed, quantitative, and qualitative approach, which will be implemented sequentially based on the research objectives (González-Monfort et al., forthcoming). In this article, we present the first phase of the project’s research, characterized by an exploratory study of a qualitative nature through the use of semi-structured interviews, which has investigated what groups of primary school students in an urban environment think and know about children’s rights and responsibilities, social problems and injustices, and the role of girls and boys in history. In the second phase, a sequence of individual activities compiled in dossier format will be presented -the project’s main information-collection instrument- aimed at the students in each selected group, to collect more precise and comprehensive data on diversity and rights, critical literacy, participation, and hope in democracy. In the third phase, once the content of the information collected from the dossiers has been analyzed using the Atlas.ti software and descriptive and inferential statistics (González-Monfort et al., forthcoming), it will be contrasted with the students and teachers who participate in the research project through follow-up or development interviews (Massot et al., 2014). Finally, after triangulating the different sources of information with the techniques and instruments, a final consensus report will be prepared and made known to the school’s educational community.

The specific objectives of the first phase are:

1. To check if the students know the CRC and Human Rights, and to analyze if they are capable to compare the situation of children’s rights in the past and in the present.
2. To investigate and analyze the capacities of primary school boys and girls in second, fourth, and sixth grades to identify relevant social problems of the present from the perspective of human rights and social injustice.
3. To interpret the arguments that Primary students develop so that boys and girls can be included as protagonists of History.

RESEARCH DESIGN

It is known, as Esteban et al. (2021) argue, that research into children’s participation has been carried out without them. This is the main challenge for our research: employing a methodology using the participatory action of and with primary school children, to verify if we can hear their voices and thus elucidate their insights into the complex social reality. This is research on

and with girls and boys, taking as a reference the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) concept to carry out Science with and for Society (SwafS) (González-Ramírez et al., 2020). Hence, we are aware of the difficulty in activating research within the framework of dynamic educational spaces that allow the student body of a primary school to be recognized, listened to and become co-researchers, providing relevant information and knowledge.

Our position is to recognize the agency of girls and boys as producers of knowledge. Mason and Watson [2014, cited by Del Moral-Espín et al. (2017)] point out that boys and girls have traditionally been at the lowest point in the hierarchy of formal knowledge production, and their knowledge has been excluded or marginalized because they are outside dominant production forums. The reasons supporting this recognition are the following: one, incorporating and recognizing children as actors and agents in research contributes to the quality of the research process; two, their incorporation is an emerging need, respecting the guidelines of the ERIC Charter “Ethical Research Involving Children,” which is aligned with the 1989 CRC principles and articles. This represents an opportunity to consolidate an approach based on ethical symmetry (Liebel and Markowska-Manista, 2020, p. 1); three, it involves going beyond mere symbolic participation, assuming the difficulty that this action generates within the research team; four, with this inclusion, we intend to encourage the children’s participation in the research and thereby benefit them by recognizing the value of their contributions.

Being aware of the contradictions and the distancing of university research on childhood, we opted for a qualitative methodology through a case study, adopting techniques, instruments, and strategies that guarantee the participation of the boys and girls. Following Stake (1998), it is a collective instrumental case study that aims to achieve three types of objectives: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory-interpretative (Sabariego et al., 2014). The epistemological environment built by the research team is based on the contributions of the Imaginative Education (IE) approach proposed by Egan and Judson (2018), by which education provides students with cultural and cognitive tools to foster the creation of meaning in our society through the force of oral culture, emotions, images, stories, metaphors, mysteries, and games.

Sample and Participants

The convenience sample selected comprises 126 primary school students ($n = 126$), (61 girls and 65 boys) from a public school, CEIP Los Millares (in Almería, a city in the southeast of Spain), which has a total of 329 students ($N = 329$) (167 boys and 162 girls). They are in the final courses of the three educational cycles, the second (40 students aged 6–7 years), the fourth (39 students aged 8–9 years), and the sixth course (47 students aged 11–12 years), guaranteeing sufficient heterogeneity and fluency of speech so that peer-to-peer content and controversies emerge. The reason for this intentional choice of final cycle courses is because the students complete a learning stage which is structured and defined in the curriculum. The students in the sample live in a coastal city in Andalusia that has great cultural

diversity due to the migratory movements experienced in the medium-sized cities of the peninsula’s Mediterranean arc since the beginning of the 21st century, coinciding with the explosive growth that took place between 2000 and the Great Recession of 2008, which lasted until 2017 (Martínez et al., 2020). The context of CEIP Los Millares is characterized by a great diversity of socio-economic and cultural situations. This public school is spatially located to the northwest of the city of Almería, close to the historic center and the neighborhood called Fuentecica-Quemadero, one of the four neighborhoods considered by the First Municipal Plan for Community Social Services (2018–2022), prepared by the Almería City Council, as a disadvantaged area of the municipality. The area presents notable levels of social exclusion that require a socio-community intervention. The basic social diagnosis for this neighborhood describes some indicators of the vulnerability profile that can be summarized as follows: immigration, multiculturalism, cultural gap, ethnic minorities, low and very low socioeconomic status, chronically unemployed population, high rate of unemployment, poverty, submerged economy, coexistence conflicts at the community and family level, lack of public participation.

The intentional selection of the school and its student sample as a research unit in this first phase is for several reasons. First of all, the school participates in the Municipal Council for Children and Adolescents (hereinafter CMIA) since Almería’s provincial capital was recognized in 2018 with the official seal of a Child-Friendly City (CAI). The function of these Councils is to give “a local response to the information and participation rights, as established in the CRC (arts. 12, 13, 15, and 17), offering, at least in theory, a possible laboratory for new forms of decision-making in municipalities, which include the values of participation, democracy, inclusion, transparency, and responsibility” (Del Moral-Espín et al., 2017, p. 206). Secondly, the real commitment of the school management, the educational team and other representative bodies to democratic education and values. This transversal axis is included in its School Plan (updated and approved by the School Council on 11/11/2021¹). As we have been able to verify from our field work, the school promotes plans and programs such as the Coexistence Plan, the School Mediation Program, the Plan for Equality between Men and Women, and the School Project: Space for Peace.² During the investigation process, we could confirm that the contents on childhood’s rights included in the Social Sciences textbooks in used in Los Millares school are minimal. However, we could see that the textbooks used in the subject Education for Citizenship and Human Rights do include them explicitly. Therefore, we understand that the contents referring to childhood’s rights are not highlighted by their historical relevance in the Social Sciences textbooks. For this reason, the different plans developed in the school under investigation fill the gap detected in the main source of written information in school culture, such as the textbook. Among the actions of the school are, on the one hand, the development of audiovisual resources in the school’s Mediation Plan and, and on

¹<http://ceiplosmillares.es/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/pcentro.peducativo.2013-14.pdf>

²<http://ceiplosmillares.es/>

the other hand, the discussion activities in the living together, or coexistence, Plan.

Selecting a school with experience in the CMIA serves as an indicator of its commitment to and practice of girls and boys being present in participation spaces. The management has also taken on the commitment that it be the participants themselves who disclose the content of their work to their classmates.

Instruments

The direct or interactive techniques used simultaneously in this first phase have been the semi-structured group interview (students), individual interviews (teachers and management team), participant observation in the classrooms and in the school, as well as content and discourse analysis. According to Kvale (2011, p. 30), “the qualitative research interview is a place where knowledge is built.” For this reason, we have considered the group interview conducted in the classroom as the “appropriate research technique to study the construction processes of the social world of childhood” (Rodríguez Pascual, 2006, p. 71) by sharing the same socialization space among equals. Starting from the questions, possibilities are opened up in this dynamic that enrich the analysis, taking into account, “the way in which the group faces these issues, the conflicts that arise at their core when it comes to finding an answer, the sense and meaning of the responses or the distribution of leadership in the group in producing children’s discourse” (Rodríguez Pascual, 2006, p. 75).

An initial script with open questions (Table 2) was designed for use in each of the interview groups, according to key aspects of the research.

Once the research has been presented and the aims have been outlined, we must reiterate that, in the six group interviews, we worked with the informed consent of the children, which was explained and elicited orally and voluntarily by the boys and girls themselves in the first few minutes of each of the interviews. It was decided that we work orally with electronic audio recording in each of the selected classrooms. It was verified that some boys and girls voluntarily decided not to participate, although they were a minority. Prior research approval had been obtained from the School Council on October 18, 2021.

To carry out the qualitative analysis, with the aim of extracting relevant meaning regarding the research issue focused on what primary students know, what they feel about social problems and injustices, rights, the role of boys and girls in history, and in accordance with some previously established criteria on what information should be taken into account, after transcribing the oral interviews, a first step of data reduction was carried out by classifying into basic units of meaning or categories (Table 3). Added to this are the contributions from the people who make up the school’s management (3) and the school’s teaching staff (4), who voluntarily participated in in this first phase of the project; their contributions were collected in seven formal and informal interviews.

Research Ethics

From an ethical standpoint, efforts have been made to maintain the principle of a symmetric dialogic relationship between the researchers/boys and girls. For this reason, care was taken

TABLE 2 | Semi-structured group interview script.

Human Rights. Children’s rights. Participation

Do you know what human rights are? And the rights of children? Do you know that you have some rights and also some responsibilities? What rights do you know? Can you mention some of them? What responsibilities? Do you know that soon you will celebrate your second anniversary on 20th November? Do you know what is celebrated on 20th November?

Are the rights that you have now the same as those your fathers and mothers had when they were like you? And what do you think of the ones your grandparents had? If they have changed, how have they changed? Do we now have more rights or less? Are they the same for all the girls and boys from different parts of our neighborhood, our city or the world?

Problems in your environment. Relevant social issues

What problems do you think the school has, and which have to be solved? And your neighborhood? Could you list which are the most serious or important? Are you considered when adults make decisions about a nearby problem? How do they do it so that you can give your opinion and offer your vision?

During the pandemic, schools were closed. Were children asked to make that decision? What do you think about that? Would you have made the same decision? And the parks? In your house, are you asked your opinion if you have to go out to a place or do anything related to home maintenance? What responsibilities do you have at home? And in class? How do you collect a petition that you would like to make to improve the school? Do you vote in the elections? Which ones? What would you think of voting in the city elections in the same way that adults over 18 years of age do? What would you think about voting earlier, for example, at 16 or 14 years old?

Do you know about the CMIA? Do you know that your school participates in it? Do you know your classmates who participate in it?

The childhood protagonist of the past-present-future

What do you think history is for? What you have learned about history, facts, people, have you used it in something concrete? In what? What is important to learn in history? What is relevant to you? If we think about history, what can we use it for?

If we told you that by learning history we can improve people’s lives, do you think that is possible? What would we have to learn in class for that?

Have children been taken into account in history? Why? Do they talk about they (male) and they (female) in your textbooks? If history were a movie, who would be the protagonists of the story? The boys, the girls? Or only the adults? What do you think about that? Do you think that children have been part of history? Why? What have they done in the past? And nowadays, what things do children do? Have they been taken into account? Have they been taken into account in the decisions that adults have made? Why? Have they contributed to improving the life we live?

Can you give us examples of boys and girls who have contributed to improving coexistence between people? Do you know the cases of Malala, Greta Thunberg, Francisco Javier Vera, or the children of La Cañada Real in Madrid?

on the path to follow in this first phase, offering transparent information on the research process to the management and teaching staff of the selected school and to the competent educational administration, the School Council and, above all, the girls and boys participating in the research. This information was shared with the school’s management and with the School Council so that it can be formally incorporated, as a school wishing to carry out an intervention in the field of innovation and educational research. Let us remember that, in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, the Ministry of Education and Sports has signed cooperation agreements with the 10 Andalusian public universities to develop interventions in the field of innovation and research in non-university public

TABLE 3 | Units of meaning matrix.

	Knowledge level scale	Source experience/opinions
A. Knowledge, experiences, and opinions about the object of study		
A.1 Knowledge of children's rights and responsibilities, and of the past through their family memories	0-1-2-3-4*	Fa-Ca-Ba-Pa-Eu-Mu**
A.2 Identification of relevant social problems in their environment and in other spaces		
A.3 Recognition of boys and girls as protagonists of History		
B. Attitudes of participation and collaboration as co-researchers		
B.1 Non-verbal language: attentive listening, posture, direct observation		0-1-2-3-4*
B.2. Open participation, intensity, freedom in expressing opinions		
B.3. Receptivity and collaboration on offering them the role of researchers. They question themselves and provide solutions		

*0 = None; 1 = Low; 2 = Medium; 3 = High; 4 = Very High. **Fa = Family; Co, College; Ba, Neighborhood; Eu, Europe; Mu, World. Source: Own design.

schools. In this environment, we must highlight the Instructions of February 14, 2017, from the General Directorate of Innovation for the participation of non-university education centers in innovative interventions and educational researchers carried out in collaboration with Andalusian universities. With this type of intervention, all the agents are involved in a common project, which starts from the same point of interest, and is approached through group dialogue and negotiation.

RESULTS

In this manuscript, we have put the main focus of attention on the first unit of meaning (A. Knowledge, experiences, and opinions about the object of study) and its three subunits (A.1, A.2, A.3) linked to the specific objectives described above. Taking this into account, we ask ourselves what the research findings have been and what the findings of this first phase of the research mean. Accordingly, we have condensed the meanings expressed by the interviewed groups, incorporating textual fragments of the participating students and teachers. Following Kvale (2011), with our interpretation, we recontextualize the statements of the groups, and the people who were interviewed, in three subunits, as reported below.

A.1 Knowledge of Children's Rights and Responsibilities, and of the Past Through Their Family Memories

Emerging from the content analysis is the broad knowledge that girls and boys possess regarding social rights linked to issues such as: medical care, education and school, basic food and clothing needs or the right to play. They describe their meaning with ease, in a rich and nuanced way, *in crescendo*, as the course progresses. This knowledge is more analytical and reflective in the sixth grade—when during the dialogue they insist on public and free medical care in Spain, one girl argues that “they do not charge us to go to the doctor” (sixth grade; Girl 1). Another of the girls (sixth grade; Girl 2) completes the information on countries where health is private, mentioning the case of the United States. To the question on how she knows that detail, she tells us: “I

heard it from my parents, and I've known it for a while, as my parents bring up the subject” (sixth grade; Girl 3). This indicates the impact that immediate and family experiences have on the interrelation between experiential and academic knowledge in constructing school social knowledge. Also, Vygotsky's socio-cultural or socio-historical approach highlights the social origin of learning and the development of people. Both processes occur through the interactions of the individual with their social and cultural environment in a given or situated context. Hence the importance of informal learning acquired in the family as an action mediated through language. According to Veraksa and Sheridan (2021, p. 21), “For Vygotsky, the child's development is a process of interaction between the child and culture, a two-sided process. On the one hand, the adult acts as a carrier of cultural tools and, on the other, the child learns to use these tools.”

Similarly, it is interesting to note that, when equal rights in the globalized world are questioned, making them think about whether all the children in the world have the same rights, in the fourth and sixth grades, they equate poverty with loss of rights. Another of the girls (fourth grade; Girl 1) resorts to family memory when she tells us what her father did in Colombia, giving clothes to the indigenous people who were on the street. Another boy relates it to his own experience, telling us that an impoverished person asked them for help when he was at the bus stop with his mother, and they gave it to him (fourth grade; Boy 1). The idea of the importance of experiential learning within the family environment (informal education) is reinforced again with the meanings that the students construct.

In the past-present comparison regarding the achievement of rights, when we asked them about their grandfathers and grandmothers, we observed a substantial difference between the first two cycles—the second and fourth grades—and the last cycle, the sixth grade, the latter having a clearer concept of the change and progress experienced. We have verified that there is an overlap in identifying poverty with loss of rights, but it is in the sixth grade when, in the debate on child labor and exploitation, all the children affirm that they know of its existence, locating it “in countries where there is more poverty” (sixth grade; Girl 4), and linking poverty with child labor. One boy states that “his father has told them that he was in need and had to go to work” (sixth

grade; Boy 1). Orally transmitted family memories have great potential as an educational resource in contexts of diversity, and in those where the collective identities present in the classroom enrich the exchange of experiences. By going a step further in the reflective dialogue, it becomes clear to them that there may be boys or girls who work in collaboration with their parents without being exploited. This circumstance creates opposition and a certain skepticism.

When investigating the rights of opinion, participation in the family, and socialization at school and in its environment, there is no agreement. Some feel that their opinion is heard, but others do not. In the fourth grade, they indicate that they also have the right to be heard. Hence, a boy mentions the case of children with hearing impairment. Another boy says verbatim, “they do not take us into account [because] we are good for nothing, at least I am” (sixth grade; Boy 2). Another girl says: “my parents, I think they ask my opinion, but sometimes they do not listen because I’m a child, and they do not think I’m mature enough” (sixth grade; Girl 5). Faced with these acquired beliefs about their lack of maturity in giving an opinion on “adult” matters, we insist on how valuable their opinions and points of view are, since we are all valuable because we are unique, the school being a space to expand our knowledge and be open to valuing who each one of us is within the social group in which we find ourselves. When we speak to the students about rights, we also ask them about their responsibilities. In the fourth and sixth grades, we perceive some confusion at first because they identify them with school tasks, due to the polysemy of the term, although they do immediately link them to cooperating in domestic activities, helping the elderly, or responding to the teachers’ requests. When we say to the children in sixth grade that they have a main right that they have not mentioned, the right to know their rights, they show some surprise. We have verified that values of respect for otherness are detected in all the groups, but they can argue about recognizing the relevance of diversity. At one point in the group interview, a girl wants to participate saying “you have to respect the opinion of others, even if they don’t think the same way,” another classmate points out that “not all opinions have to be the same” because, as highlighted by another boy, in that situation “we would be robots.”

In the strategy used to talk about the anniversary of November 20 and the meaning behind celebrating it, we involved them emotionally so that they felt it was their second birthday. Their knowledge of this question was exceptional in the second and fourth grades; out of the total of 80 students, only four (one per group) knew about it, and their reactions were those of surprise and strangeness. However, in the sixth grade, both in groups A and B, not only did a thorough knowledge emerge from the dialogue, but also the interrelation with other historical pasts, conflicting memories and controversial presents. The sixth graders did not hesitate in their answers to the question about the International Children’s Day anniversary. We used the blackboard to highlight the date 1989 next to the CRC acronym. When asked what happened on that date, one child quickly said, “the Berlin wall, the wall divided Germany” (sixth grade; Boy 3). We then reported that many families and friends were separated by the wall, and we mentioned the existing walls in the world

and those that have existed in the past—in Northern Ireland, Palestine or on the United States-Mexico border. By referring to the simultaneity of these historical events in 1989, a debate on the Holocaust arose, recalling the vexation suffered by the Jews, a debate that raised participatory interest and intensity. One boy participated by saying that “they took away their name,” to which another classmate added that “they took away their identity.” We related this thread to the loss of children’s rights today. Empathy and emotion arose when bringing up events such as the Holocaust, allowing us to reflect on the violation of rights and the importance of keeping memory alive. We challenged the students over the importance of not forgetting, and with the role of the school as a social laboratory where humanistic values can be learnt from the perspective of a historical education for the common good. When questioning them about how we can act, one child replied, “by talking” (sixth grade; Boy 4), thus positively reinforcing the path of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution.

We then move forward by investigating the students’ knowledge and opinions on the right to participate in collective affairs, the starting point being the election of their classroom delegate. They are aware of the election procedure and exercising the right to vote. In the fourth-grade classroom, they have a poster board on the wall with the names of those chosen. However, when we ask the children to describe and explain the functions of the position, it becomes clear that they are strictly linked to maintaining order in the classroom in the absence of the person in authority, the teacher: “when the teacher leaves the class, he/she writes on the blackboard who will speak” (fourth grade; Boy 2). In the fourth grade, when we presented them with a hypothetical situation of a problem in the classroom, to find out who they would delegate to resolve it, they continued to say that it was the teacher.

In the sixth grade of this school, the function is attributed to the mediators. The students in the group make it clear to us that, when they have a problem, they do not go to the delegates, but to the mediators. One student (sixth grade; Girl 6) intervenes to describe the mediation process. In this dialogue, the request to have individual lockers at the school emerges. Thus, as a significant result, we detect this lack of definition regarding the functions carried out by their representatives in the classroom, although we do confirm that the proper functioning of the mediation plan covers this deficiency. The coordinator of said Plan herself recognizes the need to work on this deficiency. During the debate about student representation we mentioned municipal representation in the fourth and sixth-grade groups. In the fourth grade, the children do not identify problems as being solved by the elected delegates but by the police authority, since the problems concerning them most are those of public order. We remind the students that their school participates in the CMIA of Almería, and that they can refer their problems to that consultative participation body. We found that they were unaware of the existence of a CMIA in the city, given that this representation is limited to the third cycle of primary education.

In the two sixth-grade groups, the students are questioned about the right to vote and the age at which to exercise it. They are told about the case of Austria, a country where you can vote from the age of 16, and the possibility that they too could do so.

The children express their desire to vote, but when questioned about the repercussion that this would have, a student says: “if they gave us the freedom to vote, we would be considered more because they would want to know our opinion” (sixth grade; Girl 7). The subsequent silence in the classroom shows this point makes them think about that option. The result that we detect is that the opinions expressed permeate the group, causing them to reflect on their agency. Hence, another boy argues: “before, you said that in Austria one can vote at 16 years of age, and I think this is because you are already trained to be able to understand that kind of thing and able to vote responsibly” (sixth grade; Boy 5). We gave feedback to this response, assessing his argument, but immediately a female classmate told us that this child would vote for the school to be burned down. We were surprised how this question generated controversy in the group. Going deeper into the reasons for that statement, they reply that it “because it is very boring,” or “because we do not like it.” We invited them to reflect, explaining that, from our point of view, this weariness may come from the boring lessons they may have experienced.

A.2 Identification of Relevant Social Problems in Their Environment and in Other Spaces

From analyzing their interventions, allusions emerge related to immediate problems linked to deficiencies in public services, transportation or keeping their neighborhood clean. Thus, they are aware of dirtiness due to rubbish tipping, and problems that affect their family economically, such as the rise in electricity prices or the lack of food to eat. In the fourth grade, a male student mentions drugs, and cholesterol from eating unhealthy foods.

As a significant finding, we verified that there was a common concern in all the groups regarding current socio-environmental problems such as coronavirus or climate change. In the fourth-grade groups, events that had great media impact were described, such as the eruption of the volcano on La Palma (Canary Islands) or natural disasters, such as floods. The knowledge and vocabulary used to identify problems such as deforestation, plastic waste, pollution, or the scarcity of fossil fuels are surprising. The variety and richness of their interpretations are evident, revealing their concern for the future. In the sixth grade, during the course of the debate, we reflect on the statements by the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, who denounced the inaction of the powers that be and predicted the image of the Earth turned into a landfill. At the same time, we show the importance of finding alternatives. We focus the dialogue on highlighting the actions of male and female scientists in seeking solutions to COVID-19, or the protests of “environmentalist” girls and boys at the Glasgow Summit (November 2021) demanding action from the powers that be, as exemplified by Greta Thunberg and Francisco Javier Vera.

In that description, the conflict and violence in the students’ immediate environment emerged, as when they said that “what worries us about what is happening on the streets are the shootings” (sixth grade; Girl 8). An intense debate was generated on the subject of street violence with a high level of participation; their gestural language reflected great interest, which forced

us to reiterate the rules for taking the floor, “There are many problems here. A week ago a boy our age started punching,” “There was a 17 or 18-year-old boy at the school gate with a weapon and the police came” (sixth grade; Girl 9, Boy 6). We tell them that coexistence problems can be resolved, and we highlight the role of mediators. One of the mediators intervenes, talking about the ways of resolving problems at the school. Coincidentally, this girl was also a representative, recently elected to the CMIA, and we urged them to collect requests for improvements at their school and in the neighborhood, with the intention that she takes them to the council. A petition arose to improve the school’s accessibility for girls, boys, and older people with mobility issues. With regard to this issue, the school’s director informed us that the refurbishments were suspended due to the pandemic.

The results of the interviews with the boys and girls in their last year included concerns highlighting sexism and gender inequality, “apart from the problems that we have to face with climate change, I think that the biggest problems that I perceive, so to speak, are those of machismo” (sixth grade; Boy 7). This statement was given nuance when experiences of micro-machismo surfaced in their environment and in the school itself: “once there was a demonstration here asking for women’s rights, when they were finishing, a man shouted: “Come on, finish it already! You have to go make dinner!”” (sixth grade; Girl 10). Another female student commented on a further example that occurred in the playground: “well, speaking of machismo, the other day [playing football in physical education class] a boy said, why do you put a girl as goalkeeper?” (sixth grade; Girl 11). To make them think, we asked them what would happen if those women who had to go make dinner went on strike. In a few seconds the answer came: “Well, women would be just as recognized as men” (sixth grade; Girl 12). The intervention of a boy reminded us of the importance of messages that are transmitted in families when he told us that, at a Christmas function, he had to make the presentation and it was his mother who corrected the text so that he used inclusive language.

A strength verified in these boys and girls is their ability to relate historical processes with new explanatory variables, “another problem that exists and has not yet been resolved is dictatorship and corruption” (sixth grade; Boy 8). We asked him to explain what a dictatorship was and if it was related to corruption, identifying dictatorship with someone who has more power, who believes himself superior. We question whether power is necessarily associated with dictatorship, that we must think of the use made of it. This dialogue led to the issue of gender inequality in the past, relating it to the power of dictatorships: “when Franco was in power, women could not work, they did not allow certain things” (sixth grade; Girl 13). This allowed us to reinforce the concept of social injustice with that of the loss of fundamental rights during dictatorships, describing specific examples of that inequality. A significant result is that the students have been able to explain social changes over time, how the evolution of women’s rights in the family has occurred, sharing testimonies of their grandmothers dropping out of school and recognizing the loss of their rights to go to school.

An unexpected research finding had to do with the conflicts that arise when respecting (or not) affective and sexual diversity in the classroom. An issue of affective-sexual orientation emerged that surpassed the hegemonic heterosexual sexist pattern -this we can only attribute to the atmosphere created in the classrooms, to our attitude of attentive listening and to recognizing their opinions. It all started with the comment of a boy from a fourth-grade group about the clothing of a classmate, saying that she dressed like a boy (fourth grade; Boy 3). At that moment, we explained to the group that we are people who have the right to choose and be what we want to be. That comment caused quite a stir in the classroom. Another girl intervened saying: “they pick on me because I like girls, I’m bisexual.” We insisted on the right to be and express what we want to be, and to make them see the school as a place where one learns the values of respect for diversity. At the end of the intervention, this girl came up to us to thank us for our help because our presence had “allowed [me] to speak aloud about [my] problem” (fourth grade; Girl 2).

A.3 Recognition of Girls and Boys as Protagonists of History

The next focus of analysis was to investigate views concerning the historical narratives of the textbooks, in order to verify if they were aware of the adultcentrism in the stories, and how they evaluated the presence of childhood in their books. In the second-grade groups, the boys and girls affirmed that their peers were present. We asked for their SS books and, at that moment, one of the boys told us that “with the books we can investigate” (second grade; Boy 1). We emphasized the importance of using sources to know reality. When we asked them this in the classroom, we informed them that most images in the textbook featured adults. We picked up the thread by asking them again: “why do not children appear in the books?” There was a surprised reaction to the evidence.

In another encounter, we were able to verify that sixth-grade children express a feeling of “boredom” with the contents of the SS and History subjects: “I find it boring because I’m not interested in what happened thousands of years ago” (sixth grade; Boy 8). We wanted them to think about the reasons for this and we asked them what history they would like to study. We raised the idea that the lives of boys and girls who lived thousands of years ago could appear in books: would they be interested in such content? They responded affirmatively and a boy added that “wars, conquests, and reconquests appear in history books, only those things appear” (sixth grade; Boy 9). If that were the case, we asked them if there was also content about peace, to which they replied, “very little.” One boy made a case for the perspective of history that he would like to learn: “I would like to see how people lived years ago with very few things and had to go to fetch water from the well, or from far away. Now that we live so well, are so comfortable at home, people do not value what they have. Some people do not value what they have” (sixth grade; Boy 10). With this intervention we invite them to think about the concept of inequality in the distribution of services and we ask if we have made progress in that direction or not. The group’s response is again negative, although a child tells us that “in some things yes

and in others no” (sixth grade; Boy 11). To reinforce the concept of inequality, we explain the case of the children of the Sahara and their difficulties in accessing water. A boy tells us that he knows, “they have to walk miles and miles” (sixth grade; Boy 12). We present the case of the villages in which formerly there were no washing machines but outside laundries (*lavaderos*), this activity being exclusively female, to which the students nod, thus demonstrating that they know about it despite the time that has passed. Next, we use the light switch in the classroom to show them that light is a resource that we have within reach, and they compare. Hence, a girl states: “before, people took sticks, they did this, and warmed up.” We asked them what life was like in the past, and they answered that it was “bad,” “difficult,” “complicated,” “because they did not have the technology we have now” (sixth grade; Girl 14).

Progress in women’s rights is another example to consider in terms of fulfilling children’s rights and their visibility in history textbooks. When speaking about the absence of boys and girls in their textbooks, we were corrected in one of the groups by a boy who said: “you have talked about children who are not in history; and there is at least one girl: Anne Frank” (sixth grade; Boy 13). His contribution demonstrates the importance of listening to children and valuing their knowledge. During the interventions in the different groups, we looked at the role of children from the past to the present. For this, we use various child role models, such as Malala and her defense of the right of girls to go to school, along with the aforementioned Greta Thunberg and Francisco Javier Vera in their fight to protect the environment. We use images and videos to support the story of their lives and their actions. We begin with Malala as a child, and as an adult collecting the Nobel Peace Prize. We continue with the protagonists of environmental activism, and we incorporate the collective activism of girls and boys from the Madrid neighborhood of La Cañada Real over the lack of electricity service. In the second grade, we helped identify Malala with a game to guess the letters of her name. They did not know her, only one boy said her name. In the fourth grade, we intervene with the same approach, and encounter greater interest as a result of their previous knowledge. We greatly emphasize the astonishment shown in both fourth-grade groups, followed by interest about the attack against Malala. We explained the ethical principles that motivated Malala to defend the rights of all girls, risking her own life. Some boys wondered “Why would she risk her life to go to school?” (fourth grade; Boy 4), “Why can boys go to school and girls cannot?” (fourth grade; Boy 5). Through these questions, we verify that they have internalized the concepts of injustice and social inequality.

On the other hand, regarding the issues raised about energy, we showed them images of boys and girls from La Cañada Real in Madrid who demonstrated in public spaces demanding their right to go to school, because school activity had been interrupted as a result of the power blackout caused by the Filomena storm in early January 2021. In the second grade, a boy read out the banner carried by these children: “We have the same rights as all the children in the world” (second grade; Boy 2). We were able to verify their attentive listening and the strangeness they felt that these children did not have heating at school, and we

asked them if they knew at whom the protest was directed. They knew immediately that they were targeting adults, who “did not care and did not do anything about it” (second grade; Girl 1). When questioned about names of child activists, a student said: “I do not remember well, but I think that some time ago in the United States there was a girl, about our age, who was demonstrating against global warming. It seems that the previous president, Trump, did not pay much attention to her” (sixth grade; Girl 15). In this same group, we used a video from a newsreel about the actions of the Colombian boy Francisco Javier Vera and his movement “Guardians for Life,” linking it with the actions of the children of Madrid. We asked for their opinion on whether they believed it was necessary to include these children in the SS books because their actions were just as important as those of adults. The majority response was positive.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To conclude, we believe that we should not lose sight of the fact that we investigate issues concerning the well-being and interest of children (Bruck and Ben-Arieh, 2020) and to recognize their real participation in society (Novella and Trilla, 2014; Esteban et al., 2021). Having carried out the content analysis and taking into account the research objectives, we have been able to verify that it is possible to amass scientific knowledge from the views that children have regarding their social reality, while also fulfilling their role as co-researchers. In the presented results, we have been able to build knowledge of, with, about and for children. Below, we present our assessments of this first research phase, which lasted until December 2021, and which can contribute to broadening the field of knowledge regarding the practice of teaching History in Primary Schools, having as foundational supports the rights of the children and education for global citizenship.

First of all, we consider it relevant to highlight the facilitating attitude of the students of the three primary cycles as informants and researchers, allowing us to have a fluid dialogue with them despite being in a formal educational framework. A bond of trust was created between the researchers and the students in this time period prior to applying the main information gathering instrument, which will be carried out in January 2022 with the dossiers validated and adapted to each of the Primary cycles.

Subsequently, we should highlight the findings of our research, based on the humanistic teaching approach to School History (Barton and Levstik, 2004; Miralles and Gómez, 2017). This initial exploration has allowed us to detect the expository richness of some of the children who have not been afraid or cautious when expressing their opinions on relevant social issues. We have verified that this investigative-educational orientation, supported by various cognitive and cultural tools typical of Imaginative Education (Egan and Judson, 2018), has provided us with broad-based initial knowledge about the object of study.

The contributions of these Primary school students have been remarkable from all points of view, both in quantity and quality, being presented with great coherence based on their personal and family experiences. Their agency as individual and social

subjects contributes to social knowledge, clearly demonstrated in the six group interviews, recognizing their individual skills from “the logic of scaffolding” (Di Iorio et al., 2020, p. 130). We highlight the deluge of information that was provided to us, establishing an open, spontaneous, and dynamic communication channel with the groups spanning the three cycles. We have verified that the majority of the students interviewed have a great communicative capacity, to which a relaxed and trusting epistemological environment (Liebel and Markowska-Manista, 2020) was able to contribute at all times, with the students showing a high level of attention and responsiveness to the questions (see **Table 1**) and to problematizing the contents proposed in the interviews.

A predisposition to collaborate and participate in the research was evidenced, taking into account the diversity of the children in this city of Almería school. Since the first offering, there was a constant affirmation to collaborate in the project. The level of empathy was very high, reflected in the volume of feedback offered by each group and recorded in the field work. We also verified that they have extensive knowledge of social rights linked to issues such as medical care, education and schooling, basic food and clothing needs, or the right to play. They describe what they mean with ease, in a rich and nuanced way, increasing as the school grade progresses, with this knowledge becoming more analytical and reflective in the sixth grade. At the same time, the students relate the loss of rights with poverty and child labor. The ability to interrelate knowledge was corroborated and evaluated as satisfactory by all the teachers interviewed from the school, who were present during the various classroom interventions (Urrea et al., 2018).

Likewise, the knowledge expressed about the various current and recent issues, both in their immediate and distant environment, related to problems of community coexistence, conflict in family settings and in their lived space, was received positively by the teaching staff and by the research team. In the different groups, experiences related to the violence perceived in the public space around them have surfaced, which have repercussions on the daily life of the school itself and on that which the children are aware. It caught our attention how the sixth-grade students have shown a high degree of awareness toward the problem of inequality between men and women despite the fact that the majority, as a teacher told us, “come from very sexist family structures” (Teacher P). Despite the conflicts and limitations of the sociocultural environment in which this school is located, we have verified the positive effects of the equality and coexistence plans put in place by the teaching staff over several years, and which continue to be in force in the school.

Simultaneously, the communicative capacity of the boys and girls, their reasoning and their maturity in argumentation surprised the schoolteachers. The coordinator of the school’s educational plans recognizes the strengths they show in their oral skills, but indicates that their weaknesses lie in the lack of tolerance and respect for the opinions of others, arguing that “they do not have empathy, they are not capable of putting themselves in the place of others, they know how to defend themselves perfectly, but they greatly lack this empathy, that’s why we work a lot with mediation” (Teacher 1). The

school thus becomes a space where experiential knowledge, that is, communicative situations based on survival in contexts of conflict, are used to generate collective learning about conflict resolution. Consequently, from the school project Space for Peace, an action entitled “Debate is written with D for dialogue” was initiated this year to develop these capacities.

As for the CRC anniversary, we have established that it is not celebrated at the school, and its historical significance is not known to the first- and second-cycle students, unlike the sixth-grade groups, in which knowledge of it was evident. Nevertheless, following their intervention and participation in the research project, the teachers are interested in including this celebration in the curriculum. One of the teachers’ contributions was that the proximity of anniversaries in the school calendar puts pressure on the curriculum—Flamenco Day (November 16), International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (November 25), Universal Children’s Day (November 20), Functional Diversity Day (December 3) and Constitution Day (December 6). This may be a reason for the school and its teachers having to ignore some of these events. In any case, we value that the initiatives are carried out, such as the one by this school connecting plans and programs, coordinating anniversaries in a common project of education in democratic values. In this way, they have brought together the Day of Functional Diversity (December 3) and the Day of the Constitution (December 6), revising the Constitution’s Article 49, whereby the denomination of “diminished” is replaced by that of “Person with Disability.”

On the other hand, when we have investigated the ideas of children as active protagonists of their present and past, girls and boys express the desire to be visible. In this sense, when presenting images of active childhood models, the students welcomed and positively valued the performances of Malala, Greta Thunberg and Francisco Javier Vera, or the children of La Cañada Real in the face of social and environmental problems. We interpret this as a need for them to be recognized in the face of hegemonic narratives that hide identities (Ortega, 2020). In this way, the power of their collective agency is made visible (Arias and Egea, 2021), easily recognizing social injustice as regards girls not being allowed to exercise their right to go to school, and with them being able to relate this to their families’ pasts. The students identify the violation of rights in the past, bringing up family recollections of grandmothers who did not go to school when they were little because they needed to work to survive. We have been able to verify that the voices of girls and boys are required in academic school life since, with these, one can be made aware of their role in the past and present as active and participatory subjects (Pinochet, 2015; Sosenski, 2015).

Let us also remember that studies on curricula and school textbooks in different countries have revealed the invisibility of children as protagonists in school history (Pagès and Villalón, 2013; Villalón and Pagès, 2013; Pinochet and Pagès, 2016). In the historical discourses of the textbooks, participation is exclusively that of adults. Therefore, we agree with Sosenski (2015) in recognizing the benefits of actively incorporating children into school history and in the curriculum, because this would facilitate processes of empathy and improve the participation of young

people in social development. As seen in this research, if boys and girls do not see themselves reflected in predominantly adultcentric school discourses and narratives, they will not be able to trust their ability to be agents of social transformation (Freire, 2002). Therefore, there is hope of recovering minors as participatory social actors in the school narrative.

Interestingly, we have the opportunity to follow a line of work in children’s studies and in the teaching of History and SS following the path initiated by social and historical education from a gender perspective (Díez-Bedmar, 2019; Díez-Bedmar and Fernández-Valencia, 2019). The idea of introducing children as active protagonists of their present and past generates a very positive response in all the teachers interviewed, because, for them, “everything that is within the child’s universe, which is equal to it, is going to attract attention” (Teacher I). Developing historical thought by searching for genealogies of their equals, and the use of historical sources in the curriculum, can mean changing to a historical education that contributes to more active participation of citizens in their present and their future.

As trainers of future teachers, we would like to highlight the need to elucidate a broad vision of school knowledge that is emancipatory in nature. We believe that university classrooms are a space for critical reflection on social reality, using SS to encourage collective action that cares for the proper functioning of democracy (Pagès, 2019). We maintain, therefore, that the selection of content and the construction of teaching and learning experiences need to be rethought from an epistemological and methodological perspective using the cognitive and cultural tools of Imaginative Education, as set out by Egan and Judson (2018). The results presented on how the boys and girls at CEIP Los Millares see rights/responsibilities and social injustices encourage us to invigorate this more open outlook of adult teachers toward the capacities of children.

Viewed from this radical approach, we understand that one of the purposes of public schools is to foment a critical and transformative reading of the social fabric, thus promoting a broader intervention of children’s citizenship in their environment. In line with that stated by Ayuste and Trilla (2020), educational institutions have the opportunity to become public spaces for critical reflection on how power issues are managed between different age groups. This has been the case for the CEIP Los Millares students, being aware of the complex socio-economic and cultural environment in which they find themselves in the city of Almería.

We think that it is imperative that the teaching profession make a determined effort to strengthen real democracy, with teachers in an intermediary scenario where they have to take sides, despite the aforementioned obstacles and resistance expressed by the teachers of this Almería school in the individual interviews. This is what we verified in the field work when assessing, for example, the annual “Debate is written with the D for dialogue” program mentioned above. Thus, the impossibility of teacher neutrality is demonstrated (Santisteban, 2019) in the face of problems generated by social and political inequality. However, research tells us that the SS content taught and learnt can help consolidate a democratic and social-justice education

(Gutiérrez and Pagès, 2018), overcoming historical school knowledge predominantly protagonized by adults, men, and eminently ethnocentric in character (Ortega, 2020). The above point was verified in the group interviews when the students were offered a different approach to SS and History, analyzing the models of girl and boy activists, and recognizing the collective agency of the children at CEIP Los Millares as participants in the Mediation Plan and in the CMIA. Accordingly, we are convinced that the contributions from New History, showing, as Pinochet (2015) pointed out, the possibilities of History from below, can help in an epistemological and ontological reflection on the History content to be taught.

To conclude, it should be noted that the rights of children not only have to be recognized by celebrating them annually, but also have to be lived and practiced in daily school life, as Novella and Trilla (2014) advocate. We have sufficient innovative experiences and research (Urrea et al., 2018) showing us the way forward. That is why initial training must influence the thought processes, beliefs, and pedagogical conceptions of future teachers to internalize their role as agents of social and cultural transformation (Freire, 2002), considering the content of the CRC as a fundamental axis in the construction of the Primary teaching identity.

From the perspective of critically teaching the contents of school History, and creating opportunities so that the voices of Primary school boys and girls can be heard, listened to and recognized, we think that this research process provides us with sufficient knowledge to, first of all, explore ethical keys that allow us to design professional teacher development experiences in line with the new postmodern times of change and uncertainty. Secondly, to guide the configuration of training models to cover the weaknesses caused by the democratic deficit and to strengthen inclusive

democracy by increasing child citizen participation in a globalized world.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Consejo Escolar. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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