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Article

Our space at the heart of the smallpox vaccine expedition: A service-learning project for social studies and citizenship education in Galicia (Spain)

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Keywords: citizenship education, service-learning, social studies, smallpox expedition, A Coruña.

- The study reports on, analyses and gives voice to the participants of a service-learning project involving students of education in a real educational context.
- The project was based on a historical event whose proximity to the students' local environment helped them to realise its relevance to their own lives.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the project approaches citizenship education from the perspective of historical issues and events.
- The preparation and delivery of teacher training activities in a real educational context proved a positive, effective and enriching experience for all of the agents involved.
- The Smallpox Vaccine Expedition offers a more historiographically inclusive approach to school history and is directly relatable to current social issues.

Purpose: The article reports on and analyses the creation, development and implementation of a service-learning project involving primary and secondary school pupils and students of education (bachelor's and master's level), carried out in a real educational setting over the course of two academic years.

Approach: The project was conducted within a social science didactics framework of issues-centred teaching for the study of socially acute questions and global citizenship.

Findings: The research yielded very positive results. The task for student teachers of contextualising their social studies learning in a real educational setting was found to be a motivating factor and provided useful lessons in relation to practical teacher training experiences of this kind.

Implications: Greater emphasis should be placed on teacher training projects that include direct experience in real educational settings, particularly in relation to service-learning methodologies involving community service.


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1 INTRODUCTION

Our Space at the Heart of the Smallpox Vaccine Expedition was a service-learning project run over two academic years (2017–2019). The project focused on an event of major local and global historical importance, the Royal Philanthropic Vaccine Expedition (RPVE), which set sail from the port of A Coruña (Spain) in 1803 with the mission of taking the smallpox vaccine to Spain's overseas colonies, where the disease was rampant. The expedition was the first international medical mission in history, and marked the first and most important step towards eradicating smallpox worldwide. Completed just prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, little did we realise then how relevant and topical this subject was to prove.

Apart from the obvious historical significance of the events surrounding the expedition, there are a number of factors that make this a topic of especial interest from an educational and community service point of view. The smallpox vaccine discovered by Edward Jenner at the end of the eighteenth century quickly came to the attention of the Spanish physician Francisco Xavier de Balmis. Just five years after Jenner's results were published, Balmis convinced the then Spanish king, Charles IV, to fund an expedition to vaccinate the populations of Spain's colonial possessions, led by Balmis himself and his second-in-command, the military surgeon Josef Salvany. Owing to the difficulty of preserving the vaccine in an active state over long distances, it was decided to use carrier children and arm-to-arm vaccination to keep the virus alive until they reached their destination. Twenty-two boys were selected for the journey from different orphanages in A Coruña and, in particular, from the city's foundling home. The rectress of the foundling home, Isabel Zendal, was the only woman to accompany the expedition and was active in both caring for the children on board and vaccinating populations in the colonies. She was officially recognised by the WHO in 1950 as the first nurse in history to take part in an international public healthcare mission.

The coordinates of time and space, which are essential to our understanding of human and social experience, are particularly pertinent in this case. As we know, the expedition departed from A Coruña and was assisted in its preparations by numerous local figures, such as the city doctor, Antonio Posse. More specifically, however, Ramón Menéndez Pidal High School, founded in 1972, now stands on the site of the city orphanage where most of the carrier children for the voyage were recruited, and it is with this school that we had the opportunity to create and implement a service-learning project in education for development and global citizenship, led by the University of A Coruña (UDC).

From a methodological point of view, the topic is a good fit for the social studies curriculum, as it allows for active, critical learning and an introduction for student teachers to researching social and historical topics, designing methodological strategies, and creating and implementing educational proposals. Simultaneously, however, the project fulfilled a service to the educational community and society at large by addressing and exploring a topic that relates directly to important social issues, such as vaccines, childhood, gender issues, humanitarian actions and poverty.

Two additional features of the project that should be mentioned are:

- the cross-sectional nature of the topic and the multiple viewpoints from which it may be addressed (as illustrated in Figure 1);
- the cross-sectoral nature of the participants: a university (University of A Coruña, UDC), an NGO (Architects Without Borders Galicia), a high school (IES Ramón Menéndez Pidal), a primary school (CEIP Rosalía de Castro), non-university-affiliated researchers, and other social agents.

A service-learning experience such as this, carried out in a real educational setting as part of the students' teacher training, has the ability to engage not just students but also a large section of the community. The aim of the article is to report on the project's conception and implementation, and to analyse two key questions: the impact of the project on the social studies teaching and learning process; and the pedagogical connections between history, local environment and current social issues.

2 CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SPAIN

Social science didactics links citizenship to issues-centred learning, both as content and by problematising social, historical and geographical issues. In Spain, experts in this area are increasingly calling for teaching and learning in history, geography and social studies to focus on relevant social problems (Oller 2011; Pagès & Santisteban, 2011; García Pérez, 2014; Santisteban, 2009, 2019; on the recent history of civic and citizenship education in Spain, see Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2020). This is in keeping with the tradition in English-language research, where the term “controversial social issues” is also used (Evans & Saxe, 1996; Hurst & Ross, 2000), and in research in French, which uses the term “socially acute questions” (Audigier 2001, Tutiaux-Guillon, 2011; Legardez, 2003, 2021; Simonneaux & Legardez, 2010).

Legardez (2003) defines the concept as social and historical questions that are “acute” in society, in specialist background knowledge and in knowledge learnt at school (Simonneaux & Legardez, 2010). Research on issues-centred education in Spain is a relatively recent area of inquiry, but is nonetheless a valuable new addition to the existing literature on democratic political education, citizenship education, the problems associated with everyday life, the development of historical consciousness, and teaching temporality, especially in relation to the future (Pagès & Santisteban, 2011). The association of social issues with social and citizenship competency is key, as illustrated by numerous proposals for how to focus and organise the curriculum around social problems (see, for example, Oller, 2001).

Despite growing academic interest in Spain in issues-centred education research and curriculum proposals, changes in the education system have been slow to follow. Improved teacher training is the key to unlocking this transformation and embracing what Pagès (2007) identifies as “a great opportunity for citizenship education because, in

line with Dewey's ideas, it connects young people with the world and prepares them for life" (p. 208).

The project reported in this article uses service-learning for teacher education based on the implementation of curriculum proposals in a real classroom setting. The student teacher participants were tasked with designing and implementing a project for a class of 14-year-old secondary school pupils. The experience required them to examine a major event from local and human history, reconceive its temporality, and problematise it in terms of a series of socially acute questions: social problems present in their environment and which both they and their future pupils should be more aware of.

3 METHODOLOGY

Project-based learning dates back to the turn of the twentieth century, but still lies at the heart of educational innovation, in schools and teacher training programmes alike. The aim of this two-year project was to give student teachers the opportunity to experience this dynamic, student-centred pedagogy in both theory and practice.

As in all service-learning projects, ours required the collaboration of external agents to act as the recipients of the service. In this case, the target community was a group of second-year pupils from Ramón Menéndez Pidal High School in A Coruña. As mentioned previously, the school stands on the former site of the city orphanage, which is why it was decided to name the project *Our Space at the Heart of the Smallpox Vaccine Expedition*. The project was carried out as part of a third-year core subject (Social Science Didactics II) of the BA in Primary Education at the University of A Coruña.

Service-learning is an experiential, cooperative learning methodology that combines community service with specific course content; in this case, social science didactics. The community (represented by the pupils) is the target for what is conceptualised as a transformative learning activity. In preparation for the project, the pupils were surveyed to identify any educational weaknesses. The results revealed low reading motivation and low exposure to educational activities outside of the classroom, despite the school's city centre location and proximity to numerous cultural outlets and landmarks. The service dimension of the project consisted of creating experiences within the curriculum to address the lack of connection with the local environment observed among the target community, and was complemented by the learning benefits obtained by the student teacher participants. All planning and implementation was carried out collaboratively with the students, for whom the experience represented an opportunity to engage in a new form of learning practice in a real educational setting (see Table 1).

Table 1: Service-learning project characteristics, adapted from Ballesteros (2016)

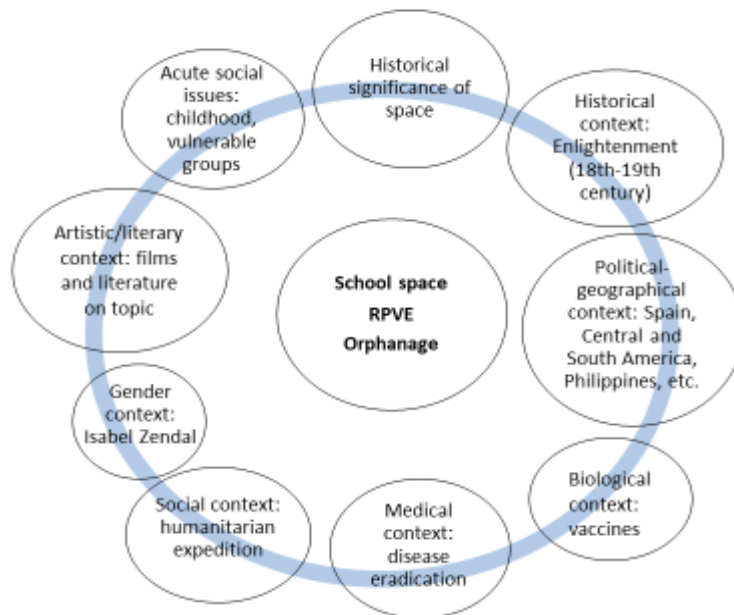
Service-learning teaching methodology	
Aim	Learn from service and analysis.
Learning	Systematic, institutionalised and curriculum-based. Should provide curriculum-based learning as well as service. Experiential and cooperative.
Community	The community is represented by the pupils in the class and is also the object of transformative change.
Service	Real, specific and meaningful.
Students	Main actors in the whole process: analysis, design, implementation and assessment.

The project comprised two main phases. During the first phase, the students focused on finding information about the smallpox expedition from different sources and familiarising themselves with the subject matter. Based on what they learned from their research, they then workshopped different didactic strategies in relation to the topic.

The main task for the second phase of the project was to design and implement a methodologically and educationally effective pedagogical trail around the city of A Coruña as a way of motivating the pupils in the target class. The challenge for the students was to connect the historical subject matter of the trail with the present and problematise it in terms of current social issues with the aim of enhancing the pupils' awareness, understanding, engagement and problem-solving performance. As an additional benefit, the topic selected gave the students the opportunity to approach school history from a more historiographically inclusive perspective (social history, women's history, children's history, etc.) than is usually the case.

The story of the RPVE also prompted the students to reflect on the importance of scientific and medical progress, such as vaccines, not knowing then how relevant such issues would soon become. Finally, it allowed them to contextualise the historical process within the local environment (Wass, 1992; Austin, 2009); and, more specifically, within a dynamic, collective urban environment (Rodrigo & Rodrigo, 2000), using heritage as a source of knowledge, city memory, enjoyment and citizen participation (González-Monfort, 2007) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Range of topics encompassed by the project



During the second year of the project, students of Social Science Didactics II from the BA in Primary Education were joined by students of Methodological and Professional Principles of Teaching Galician and Spanish Language and Literature at Secondary Level from the “Spanish Language and Literature” and “Galician Language and Literature” specialisations of the UDC master’s programme in Secondary Education (see Table 2).

Table 2: Participants

Participants	2017–2018	2018–2019	
Undergraduate students: BA in Primary Education (Social Science Didactics II)	62	48	LEARNING
Master’s students: MA in Secondary Education (Language and Literature)	-	23	
Secondary school pupils	75	90	SERVICE

To monitor and analyse the whole process, a dialogic, ethnographic research methodology was used. Though we ourselves formed part of the project, our role was secondary to that of the student teacher participants and the target community of pupils, which allowed us to observe the service-learning process from within. This was

particularly true of the service aspect of the project, where the main actors were the students (acting as teachers) and the pupils in the target class.

Ethnography is a fieldwork method of research, the setting for which in this case was a real classroom comprising pupils and students of different levels (i.e. secondary and university). It is also a personalised method, as reflected in our own role in the project, and multifactorial, owing to the use of different data collection methods, including the students' own work. Dialogic assessment of progress and performance was carried out on a periodic basis. Despite our personal involvement in the project, the ethnographic report was presented in a realistic narrative format based on a depersonalised, objective analysis (Angrosino, 2012), together with a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of all aspects of the service-learning experience (contextualisation of key theoretical concepts, description of the situation, contextualisation of the experience, process, activities, etc.). To complete the thick description, a post factum focus group was conducted with six of the primary education students involved in the main service-learning action, to discuss what the project meant to them and their thoughts about it two years on. Finally, we conducted a semi-structured interview with the two historical experts on the vaccine expedition, Antonio López Mariño and Joaquín Pedrido, to ask them for their assessment of the service-learning experience and, in particular, about developments in their research into Isabel Zandal and the children who travelled in her care.¹

4 THE PROJECT

4.1 Background and beginnings

The UDC Faculty of Education has a long-standing history of collaboration with external agents, including the NGO, Architects Without Borders-Galicia (ASF-G in its Galician initials). The relationship with ASF-G was established in the years prior to the service-learning project and focused primarily on disseminating information about the organisation and raising awareness among students about current social issues, vulnerable groups in society, participatory projects, etc. Building on this existing partnership, in 2017 we decided to combine forces and use our collective knowledge, experience and resources to create a joint teacher-training project for the benefit of our student teachers and of society as a whole.

The decision to undertake a joint project was based on a number of different variables. Firstly, our mutual experience has demonstrated the importance of teaching students about controversial social issues, particularly those which affect their local environment or settings perceived as unconnected to their interests. It was also decided that the project should focus on one main theme, the right to habitat, given the social relevance of the topic and the need for greater education in this area. In terms of contribution, ASF-G brought to the partnership its experience of working on different projects and programmes with secondary school pupils and vulnerable groups across the city of A Coruña,² while UDC

contributed its research and teacher training resources and expertise, both theoretical and practical. UDC's ability to involve teachers and students from different specialities (i.e. social, primary and secondary education) also provided the perfect scenario for a cross-disciplinary, multi-methodological project such as this. The plan for a service-learning project was completed by engaging the participation of Ramón Menéndez Pidal High School, whose pupils represented the target community.

Funding for the project was obtained under the Regional Government of Galicia *Education for Development and Global Citizenship* programme. The project was submitted by ASF-G, in partnership with UDC and Ramón Menéndez Pidal High School, under the title "Dissemination of the right to habitat from a gender-based, transdisciplinary approach based on training and awareness-raising among key multiplier agents and secondary school pupils in the city of A Coruña". The diverse nature of the partnership, comprising members from different organisations and institutions and different degree programmes within the university, allowed us to explore and promote the right to habitat from a variety of perspectives, approaches, specific aims and methodologies. The rich diversity of the project was reflected in initiatives such as a social mapping project involving lecturing staff and students from the UDC BA in Primary Education, designed to examine and raise critical awareness of the phenomenon of homelessness in A Coruña, and our own project, "Our Space at the Heart of the Smallpox Vaccine Expedition".

Funding was initially awarded for the 2017–2018 academic year and renewed for 2018–2019 following a favourable assessment of the project's progress and prospects. This extension allowed us to expand our objectives for the second year based on the results of the first, and to extend the project to student participants from other subjects within the primary education degree programme and target communities from other educational levels.

The planning and design of all initiatives within the "Right to Habitat" project were informed by the following general aims and principles:

- Defence of habitat as a human right.
- Education and awareness-raising in relation to the right to habitat in its different forms (physical, social, political, symbolic, cultural).
- A transdisciplinary approach to the teaching of rights and critical citizenship.
- Consideration of all groups within the project as a single team to enable and promote cross-sectional, transdisciplinary collaboration between university and NGO participants in the planning and creation of different initiatives within the project.

Within this framework, the specific aim and focus of the "Our Space" project was to promote greater awareness and appreciation of the space around us and to inspire reflection and debate about that space in the future. The convergence of the space now occupied by the participating high school and the historical space of the expedition presented the perfect opportunity to achieve both sets of goals.

4.2 Presentation, research, design and planning

The project was conceived and prepared as a field experience activity for third-year students of Social Science Didactics II. As part of the introduction to the module on the first day of class, students were asked if they knew what the smallpox expedition was. To our surprise, we discovered that the students were completely unaware of this major event in the city's history, had never heard of the expedition, its members or the A Coruña orphanage, and knew nothing about how people lived in A Coruña at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Having established the historical events behind the project, we moved on to discuss the methodology of service-learning, which the students were already aware of from their experience in other subjects. This was important since the service aspect of the project was to be a process of collaborative design and planning with the students from the outset.

The RPVE and all of the stories and circumstances surrounding it gave the students a specific historical frame of reference in which to interpret the theory and contents of their social science didactics module, such as the purpose of social studies, time and space, cultural heritage, citizenship education, designing educational resources and proposals, etc. and many of the interactive activities associated with the subject. In the process, the students acquired considerable knowledge of the topic, and had the opportunity to connect and apply their learning in a real educational setting subsequently.

As highlighted above, during the first phase of the project, the students focused on researching and familiarising themselves with the historical period, the expedition and its connections with the city and present-day social problems, in preparation for the service component of the project. The learning activities conducted during this initial phase were therefore aimed at helping the students to work both autonomously and collaboratively to reach a satisfactory understanding of the project topic and the service task.

Activity 1. Literary sources. The first of a wide range of information sources and resources availed of during the research phase of the project consisted of a historical novel for young people, entitled *Los niños de la viruela* [The Smallpox Children] (Solar, 2017), which was read by both the student teacher participants and the target class of secondary school pupils. Students read the book on their own outside of class hours, before engaging in an interesting class discussion about the expedition itself and the role of Isabel Zenda and the orphans who travelled on the voyage, and about the possibility of using the novel as an educational resource at primary and secondary school level.

Activity 2. Collaborative reading. While the first novel on the students' reading list tells the story of the expedition from the point of view of its origins in A Coruña at the end of the nineteenth century, the second, *A flor de piel* [Tensions Run High] (Moro, 2009), widens the lens to the rest of Spain and America, recounting the expedition from start to finish. Given the much denser nature of the novel in this case, a collaborative reading approach was used, whereby the book was divided into sections, read in groups, and then acted out and discussed in class.

Activity 3. External collaborators. The research process continued with an analysis of newspaper reports about the smallpox expedition by the journalists Antonio López Mariño and Joaquín Pedrido, who visited the class to discuss their work with the students. It was their investigations that uncovered the real surname and humble Galician origins of the only woman on the expedition, Isabel Zandal; these biographical details are reflected in the two novels cited above (López Mariño, 2018). Following this specific collaboration, both journalists were invited to participate as external agents in other activities throughout the process.

Activity 4. Availing of learning opportunities. The gradual development and collaborative nature of the project allowed us to take advantage of learning opportunities and new partnerships as and when they presented themselves during the course of the project. One example of this was a conference organised by the UDC Research and Cultural Dissemination Office to mark the second edition of the UDC Expociencia Awards. The event included a lecture entitled “Isabel Zandal: moitos nomes, unha muller” [Isabel Zandal: many names, one woman] by Susana María Ramírez Martín from the Complutense University in Madrid, and a short play about the smallpox expedition performed by a group of children from Labarta Pose Primary School (Baio), whom we approached subsequently to discuss the possibility of a collaboration between ourselves and the school in the context of the “Our Space” project.

Activity 5. Training sessions with Architects Without Borders (NGO). The class was also visited by representatives of ASF-G, the lead partner in the “Right to Habitat” umbrella project. During these visits, the students learnt about the right to habitat, which is directly linked to our own project’s focus on space and, more specifically, on the relationship between space and history. The training also helped the students to understand the connection between the right to habitat and citizen participation in the immediate and wider city environment.

Activity 6. Educational trail. The students were taken on a literary trail designed for the general public by the journalist collaborators mentioned above. The trail explored different locations around the city related to the events surrounding the departure of the smallpox expedition in 1803. The students were informed in advance that they would be required to pass on what they learnt to a class of secondary school pupils, not in the form of a didactic transposition, but through the creation of teaching strategies to place the pupils at the centre of the trail and help them to see the connections between the history of the expedition, the novel they had read in class, their city (viewed from different angles and perspectives), and the study of current social problems.

Activity 7. Design and planning of didactic activities. It was made clear to the students that the immersive learning involved in this initial research phase would be essential later on, when they would be required to bring their knowledge to bear as teachers in a real classroom setting. The design and planning of didactic activities was one of the most important parts of the whole process, and acted as a bridge stage between the research and service phases. Scheduling implementation of the educational service within the

school timetable required a considerable amount of coordination and consultation between the different groups to accommodate a total of three contact sessions with the pupils: two in the classroom and one class outing. As well as the timing of the sessions, the students also discussed and agreed on the activities and resources they would need for each encounter.

4.3 Implementation in the classroom

The second phase of the project was organised into four sessions, and focused on implementing the proposed educational service in a real classroom setting. Session 0 took place in the second year of the project, several weeks before the rest of the sessions, and was carried out by students from the UDC MA in Secondary Education. This was just the first of several instances in which the project was extended to students and lecturers from subjects, degrees and even institutions other than those of the main participants (i.e. Social Science Didactics II and the UDC BA in Primary Education)

Session 0. Literary education and citizenship education in secondary schools: interdisciplinarity

The activity was carried out by students of Methodological and Professional Principles of Teaching Galician and Spanish Language and Literature at Secondary Level from the “Spanish Language and Literature” and “Galician Language and Literature” specialisations of the UDC MA in Secondary Education, and involved the prescribed novel, *Los niños de la viruela*, a work of young adult fiction in which the main characters are children. The session consisted of finding ways to motivate pupils to read the novel and recognise its relevance to their own lives. The activity took place prior to the educational trail.

Based on their background reading on the subject (Jover, 2007; Colomer et al., 2009; Pennac, 1992) and bearing in mind the target group of pupils, the students were told to think about the concept of “adolescent reading” and encouraged to share and debate their ideas about the following questions: What do teenagers read? What do we give them to read at school? What is the purpose of the books we “make” them read? And, most importantly: Do these practices help to improve their literary education? The conclusions reached by the students were clear: as Jover (2007) observes, teaching at secondary level requires not just a good knowledge of literature, but “a certain understanding of the life stage of the pupils at whom this reading material is aimed, and a reflection regarding the issues of interest and concern of this age group” (p. 65). The students were thus made aware from the outset of the need to design activities that “connect” in a meaningful way with the pupils, use active learning techniques such as gamification, and promote collaborative learning and critical thinking. For the design and implementation of teaching activities, both students and pupils were divided into four groups.

To begin with, the students were told to read the novel *Los niños de la viruela* by themselves, bearing in mind the following suggestions: to focus on a character they found particularly interesting (not necessarily a main character) and explain the reasons for

their choice; to choose an extract to read to the other students and exchange opinions about; to give an overall assessment of the narrative construction of the events of the novel, etc. This activity was followed up by a group session in the Reading Corner of the Faculty of Education library to compare ideas and impressions about the book. The choice of space was a deliberate and effective way of encouraging discussion and interaction between the students outside of the classroom, in keeping with the dialogic approach to reading (Valls, Soler & Flecha, 2008). Collectively, they identified the main features of the novel and made a critical assessment of the work as a whole, and individually, voiced their ideas about the pedagogical potential the book. Finally, back in the classroom, they agreed on what activities to put into practice with the class of secondary school pupils and how to make them as attractive as possible for their age group (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Students from the MA in secondary education preparing activities for their school visit



One of the most successful activities implemented by the students was the reading and subsequent discussion of Roald Dahl's short pro-vaccination letter, *Measles: A Dangerous Illness* (1980), in which the author recalls the death of his daughter from measles and attempts to persuade parents to vaccinate their children. The success of this activity illustrated the essential role of literature in critical citizenship education and why literature and society, literature and history, and literature and life are the cornerstones of this project.

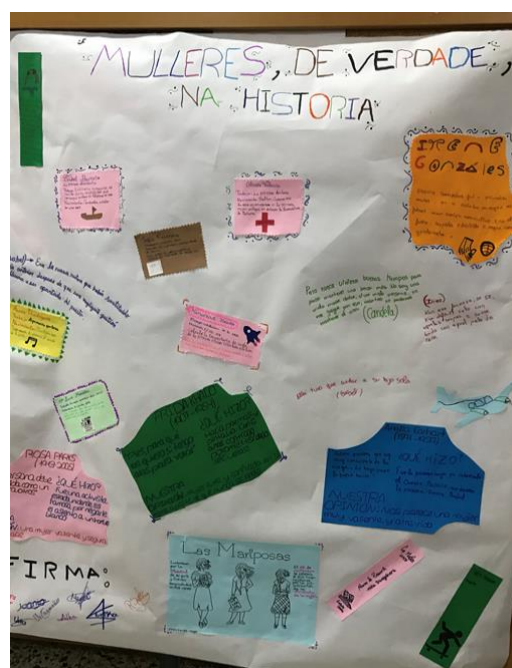
The multipurpose classroom at the school was the setting for a series of activities based on a selection of non-fiction books about women in history. The aim of the tasks was to highlight the role of women in history and to link that role to the specific case of the heroine of the smallpox expedition, Isabel Zendal. The reading material provided for the activity included books such as *Pioneiras* [Pioneer Women] (Rodríguez, 2018), *Cuentos de buenas noches para niñas rebeldes* [Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls] (Favilli, 2017), and *Valerosas* [Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World] (Bagieu, 2017) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Scene from an activity about women in history



Working in groups, one section of the class was invited to choose an extract from *Los niños de la viruela* that they found especially meaningful, explain their choice to the rest of the group and then write the text on a paper mural under the heading “Mujeres, de verdad, en la historia” [Real Women in History] (see Figure 4). The task for the rest of the class was to choose one of the women featured in the books and create a bookmark containing details of her biography and a portrait (in whatever medium they chose). The initial plan was to distribute the bookmarks among the rest of the pupils at the school; however, it was subsequently decided by the pupils themselves to include them in the mural with the other groups’ work. The completed mural was displayed at the entrance to the school.

Figure 4: Real women in history mural



Session 1. In-class educational activities by students of Social Science Didactics. Following on from the Session 0 activities carried out by students from the MA in Secondary Education, Session 1 marked the end of the preparatory phase of the project for students of Social Science Didactics and their first contact with the target community of pupils. The sessions were held on Wednesday mornings over three consecutive weeks, as illustrated in Table 3 below. The table also outlines some of the general implementation ideas agreed by the students and worked on in class.

Table 3: Implementation plan for educational activities

Educational activities with 2 nd year pupils (2017/2018)	
Session	Plan
Session 1 11 April Group A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduction -Vaccine: <i>Have you been vaccinated? Why? Do all children get vaccinated?</i> -Childhood: <i>Think about the orphanage: Do children still get abandoned? Where are they?</i> -Expedition: <i>Remembering the adventure: What was it?</i>
Session 2 18 April Group A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Themed trail about the expedition (out-of-class activity) -Games and participation strategies -Knowledge about the city -Using trails as a didactic resource
Session 3 25 April Group A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review -Assessment? -Pupils should work in groups -Assessment by students -Assessment method? -Extra credit: maximum 0.5/10 in Spanish Language

The multipurpose classroom allocated for the first session allowed the students to divide the space and organise the pupils into teams. The session began with a review of the main details of the expedition, before moving on to highlight the links between the past and the present and problematise certain aspects of that historical past in terms of the social problems of the present, in line with the critical curriculum approach common in social studies (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: Scene from Session 1

Note: The students began the session by showing the pupils a selection of old photographs. The photograph featured in Figure 5 (enlarged below in Figure 6) shows a group of girls from the orphanage over a century after the vaccine expedition and includes the grandmother of one of the students. The life story methodology of visual testimony and personal family history helped to create a connection between the teacher-students and the pupils in the class.

Figure 6: Photograph of Genoveva, the grandmother of one of the students, at the orphanage

Note: Genoveva is pictured standing in the middle at the back. According to her granddaughter, Mariña: “The nuns called her Bernardina Díaz Otero, but she preferred Genoveva. We think she was born in 1918, but we’re not sure because the date on her ID doesn’t match the date on her birth certificate, so we think the photo was taken around 1933. She was left at the orphanage when she was a few days old and she remained there until she married my grandfather. When she was a bit older, she started to help the nuns

with the children, and that's all we know. She never wanted to talk about it much, but it's definitely something that influenced who she was and how she lived.”

Details of the different group work activities, the problematisation of school history content and the association of historical content with current social questions were recounted in the end-of-project report submitted by the students. Participatory strategies were used by some of the teacher-students as a way of prompting the pupils to draw connections between the past and the present by themselves. In the following example, for instance, the students recall how it was the pupils who identified the parallels between issues present in society today and the events of the novel and the history on which it is based:

We started by asking the students to brainstorm all of the current issues found in the book. The themes they suggested included vaccines, pregnancy and parental loss, which were later discussed in class (Group 8–18).³

The recurrent nature of these themes in the novel and the immediate proximity of the city orphanage in the physical memory of the school itself led the pupils to make connections between unwanted pregnancy and issues such as child abandonment and abortion. This gave rise to an interesting debate and an exploration of possible solutions:

The first topic we discussed was pregnancy. We began by projecting images of a selection of tweets about unwanted pregnancy and young people. To our surprise, the pupils knew a lot about the subject and got very involved in the discussion. They talked about hidden pregnancy, the different standards of healthcare and hygiene in the past and the present, and the importance of taking measures to avoid it. Finally, they talked about abortion and each expressed their views on the subject, while respecting the opinions of the others (Group 8–18).

We expanded this discussion with a news item which reported that nearly 20,000 Spanish orphans miss out on adoption owing to excessive bureaucracy. This prompted much reaction and together we came up with a number of solutions, such as increased orphans' pensions, subsidies for parents who want to adopt, etc. (Group 8–19).

Other groups in the session discussed issues related to scientific progress, vaccines and opposition from anti-vaccine movements:

As demonstrated by our work with the class of second-year pupils, the theme of vaccines and vaccination has an obvious tie-in with current social problems. The controversy surrounding vaccination has been around for many years, but in recent times the debate on both sides has become increasingly heated (Group 2–19).

Although the project was implemented prior to the emergence of the current Covid-19 pandemic, parallels were drawn with other major diseases in the world today:

At that time, they did not have the technological capacity or resources that we have today. Happily, [the smallpox virus] has now been completely eradicated. Nevertheless, today we face a similar situation with HIV, one of the biggest epidemics affecting the third world (Group 2–18).

As well as addressing socially controversial issues, as these examples illustrate, the teaching activities designed by the students also focused on problematising school history content, most notably by highlighting the role of women and children as socially important historical subjects in their own right:

It is also important to talk about women and children as historical subjects. School history usually focuses on the role of men, while women and children are eternally overlooked. They must be rescued from the silence of the history books, receive the attention they deserve and have their role in history acknowledged (Group 3–19).

Session 2. Our space in the city: the sites and scenes of the RPVE (playful, participatory educational trail and activities for secondary school pupils, designed and led by students of Social Science Didactics)

Given the overarching aim of the project to explore and promote the right to habitat and the specific aim of learning about our space and its history, the students were set the task of designing a fieldwork activity to help to situate the school and its pupils within the spatial context of the city and the historical-temporal context of the different sites and scenes of the RPVE. Field outings are increasingly recognised as contributing added value to the curriculum at all levels of education. In this instance, the activity proved doubly beneficial, as it served to highlight the direct relation between the RPVE, the school and the city of A Coruña, while giving our university students agency over their learning and training as teachers by making them responsible for the design and implementation of the trail.

By this stage of the project, both student and pupil participants had acquired a good knowledge of the historical subject matter, and a good understanding of each other following the learning experiences and activities of the previous session. The students were therefore competent at this point to take on the complex task of creating an educational trail and putting it into practice. The factors to be taken into account included: selection of RPVE sites and scenes; organisation of pupils into groups; design and coordination of activities between the groups, and activity aims and content. Additional challenges included the large number of pupils involved in the activity, the different individual pupil needs and characteristics to be addressed, the presence of the pupils' teachers and members of ASF-G, etc.

To complicate the students' task even more, they were presented with the (deliberately sought) opportunity to schedule the field outing for the same day as two important events in the city and accompany the class of secondary school pupils to both: a street sign unveiling ceremony for the newly renamed Calle Isabel Zandal Gómez (initially misnamed

Isabel López Gandalia), organised by Coruña City Council (Figure 7); and a performance of the play *Os nenos da variola* [The Smallpox Children] by a group of sixth class children from Labarta Pose Primary School (Baio), who also took part in the unveiling (Figure 8). The play was performed in the university auditorium at the end of the trail.⁴

Figure 7: Street sign unveiling by the Mayor of A Coruña of the renamed Calle Isabel Zendal Gómez



Figure 8: Scene from the play that marked the end of the day's activities



The session comprised a series of playful, participatory activities based on the main themes of the project: vaccines, childhood, gender, etc. The activities were designed by the students and discussed between the pupils prior to beginning, as illustrated by the following extract from the end-of-project report:

We divided class 2D into five small groups (by alphabetical order) and randomly assigned each one a group activity and a specific topic, which were as

follows: Debate → Vaccination. Theatre → Relationship between poverty and parental loss. Interview/Press conference → Disease, poverty and differences between countries. Song/Poem → Alternative family models. Comparison between periods → Role of women (Group 5–19).

To avoid groups overlapping at the different sites while at the same time ensuring that pupils received a complete experience and understanding of the topic, two versions of the trail were prepared. What we refer to as the sites and scenes of the RPVE consisted of real locations around the city related to the expedition and the people who took part in it, and additional locations designed to enhance the pupils' understanding of the space and historical time of the city, and, by extension, their critical awareness of geographically distant but socially connected problems in the world today.

The class was divided into a series of teams, each comprising 6–8 pupils and 2–3 student teacher leaders. Preliminary activities took place at the school, which was also the starting point for the trail. Owing to limitations of space, we will not list all of the sites featured in the activity or the selection visited by each of the groups. Broadly speaking, however, the stopping points covered: locations related to the members of the expedition, such as the houses of Antonio Posse, the city doctor, Manuel Díez Tabanares, the owner of the *María Pita*, and Teresa Herrera, patroness of the charity hospital and orphanage; memorial spaces in honour of the expedition, such as the sculpture situated in the marina area of the city, near the old docks; the area around the convent of the enclosed Order of St Clare, which, while not directly related to the expedition, does have an important place in the story of the children left at the orphanage; and the Military Museum, which houses a scale model of the ship on which the expedition set sail from A Coruña.

As part of the trail activities, some of the groups were required to engage with local people they encountered in the street, either to interview them about their knowledge about the RPVE and figures such as Isabel Zandal, or to persuade them to take part in one of their games. Most of the groups also performed activities designed to help the pupils to understand how the children might have felt during the expedition and in the orphanage (see Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9: Scene from pupil-centred educational trail



Note: The pupils in the group were assigned different roles: asking questions, formulating questions, and giving instructions about how to play.

Figure 10: Student teachers in action during the educational trail



Note: The trail activities at each of the stopping points were designed to stimulate the pupils' desire to know more about the expedition and offer them a more meaningful understanding of the topic.

All of the activities were designed to be playful and participatory to make this a learning experience from which the pupils could draw the following conclusions: the spaces around us have history and meaning; our space played an important role in the history of the city and humanity; we are the descendants of the children and other members of the expedition; and, finally, we had fun learning all of this.

Session 3: In-class review: what we knew and what we have learnt about the main themes. For the final session at the school, the pupils were once again divided into four groups and further subdivided into their teams from the previous sessions. The session focused on revisiting the themes discussed and workshopped in the previous sessions, particularly in relation to the meaning of the space in which we live (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: In-class review activities following the educational trail



Note: During the in-class review, the pupils reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the trail sites, activities and content, and their relationship with the student teacher leaders, and discussed what they had learnt about the vaccine expedition and, in particular, about the spaces around them.

The tracing of connections with the local environment and the problems of our time was seen as especially positive by the students, for whom the experience led them to reconsider how social studies could – or should – be taught:

We have also learnt a lot, not just about what resources to use in the future, but about the different ways of approaching a social studies class and putting it into practice; for example, by drawing connections between the past, the present and the future, doing projects based on the pupils' lives, where they live, etc., teaching them history they can relate to, allowing them to be more involved and putting the focus on them (Group 5–19).

The session was also used as an opportunity to ask the pupils for their opinions about the project, particularly regarding their understanding of space and its relevance to the course content, and about the city as a site of memory and transformation. Almost all of the pupils found the project a valuable experience, and highlighted the importance of knowing the history of the space on which their school now stands and the history behind the street names in the locality. Their answers regarding their favourite part of the field outing revealed increased knowledge and awareness of the expedition spaces within their local environment. The project demonstrated that, when helped to find new meaning in the spaces of their everyday lives, children begin to realise the value of what they have, to see it from a different perspective, and to think more critically about the world around them.⁵

4.4 Inclusion of students from other subjects

In the second year of the project (2018–2019), the project was expanded to include students from a different subject of the BA in Primary Education: the fourth-year elective, Teaching Galician History and Geography. As before, the students were instructed to read the novel, *Os nenos da variola*, outside of class hours and took part in some of the preliminary activities described above for their peers in Social Science Didactics. What was most interesting about this development, from a teacher-training point of view, was that two of the main preliminary activities were delivered by student participants from the previous year, who volunteered to present the project and recount their experience in relation to the educational trail as a pupil-led teaching activity.

On this occasion, a partner primary school was sought in which to implement the project, as a truer training scenario for our primary education degree students. The activities were designed following the same methodology and approach as before, though the RPVE was less central to the module in this instance than in the case of Social Science Didactics.

The teaching sessions were held at the partner school, Rosalía de Castro Primary School (Coruña), with groups of infant, first, second and third class children. The students devoted one session to each of the groups, and were aided in their task of engaging and motivating the pupils by the fact that they had already received information about the expedition and Isabel Zendal from their teacher. Given the age of the pupils, a play-based approach was used for all of the activities, which included a puppet show, short participatory plays and a selection of different learning level-appropriate toys (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Puppet show activity with infant class about Isabel Zendal



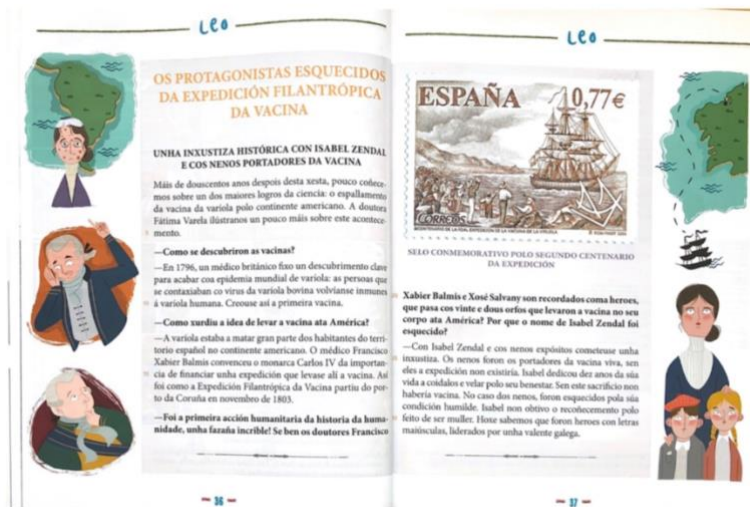
5 REVISITING OUR SPACE TWO YEARS ON

To complete our analysis of the students' learning outcomes and experience, we invited six members of the group most closely involved in the project (i.e. former primary education students of Social Science Didactics II) to meet with us and share their memories and insights. The focus group consisted of three students from the first year of the project (Mariña, Carolina and Jorge) and three from the second (Noemí, Silvia and Mario), all now graduated and embarked on their own respective teaching journeys. The participants' names have been included in order to highlight their individual voices, which offer the additional perspective of time, since the focus group took place in July 2021, nearly three years after the project first began.

For all of the participants in the focus group, the opportunity to work in a real educational setting was seen as one of the most positive aspects of the service-learning experience. Carolina pointed out that the project gave her the chance to put her learning into practice, "to create a proper lesson plan and find out what a real classroom environment is like, discovering that some things work as you expect them to and others less so", noting that content is more effective when it is taught with passion and has a common thread. The contextualisation of the historical process within the participants' own local environment was found to be a key factor of the project's success. As Mariña observed, "in a way, what most grabbed them, and us, was that we felt like it was something personal, that here was something that had happened in Coruña that almost none of us had ever heard of, and we gradually got more and more into it until it became a part of us". In reference to the importance of learning about one's own history and the educational potential of the city as a historical setting in its own right, Carolina recalled that one of the students' key aims was to "connect our experiences as citizens with the events of the past and demonstrate the educational importance of the space, of the city itself".

The project also represented a chance to "start a conversation they hadn't had before", as the students put it, and, in some cases, to bring that conversation home with them. Mariña, for instance, spoke of when she showed the pupils in the class a photo of her grandmother and told them that she had lived in the same orphanage: "when they saw the photograph and I explained that this was the place, this was where it happened, they realised that it was real. [...] This was a super important aspect of the activity, of the fact that it worked so well, that they could relate to it". Carolina brought the story of Isabel Zandal home to her family: "my mother, at that time, was preparing a textbook for Xerais (a Galician publisher) and decided to include the subject in one of the chapters [...] This year, when they started working with the book, with the whole vaccine issue in all of the schools, it was the unit that generated the most debate and discussion".

Figure 13: Teaching unit inspired by transmission of the story from the project to the participants' home life



Note: “The unsung heroes of the Philanthropic Vaccine Expedition” (Añón Montes et al., 2020: 36–37).

Looking back, Mario remembered *Our Space* as “one of the best teaching and project experiences” of his whole university career, while Silvia reported an enduring feeling since then that “[history] is everywhere, all the time”. Noemí admitted that, despite her previous dislike for history and social studies, the project’s focus on a local history topic helped her to realise the value of both subjects and kept her motivated throughout.

When asked about the preparatory phase of the project, Mario highlighted his satisfaction with the collaborative reading approach used: “in my case, I never felt any sense of boredom with the topic because you could feel the progression, like you were moving towards something”. Jorge added approvingly that “you could plan a whole year of classes around the subject”, while, for Carolina, the use of games and other activities was “a major improvement” on more traditional reading methodologies.

Given the importance of citizenship education as part of the teaching of history, in terms of highlighting the role of women and children as historical subjects in their own right and the persistence of socially controversial issues from the past, we were interested to know the participants’ views on the subject. For Jorge, the current pandemic was the best example of history repeating itself: “Back then, there was a smallpox pandemic and now we have a pandemic with the coronavirus [...] I saw a news report last year that said that Spain was going to send vaccines to South America; it reminded me a lot of the story of Isabel Zendal”. In his mind, therefore, both experiences are linked to our civic responsibility as citizens for the health, welfare and safety of our fellow citizens.

Gender equality was another recurrent theme among many of the participants. Mario, for example, reflected on the different ways in which men and women experience the city in terms of safety (and the frequent lack thereof). He related his comments to the recent

murder of a young man in A Coruña, which is currently being investigated by the police as a possible homophobic attack. Citizenship education, in his view, is about learning to live together peacefully in society and should, therefore, be “cross-sectional, interdisciplinary, something that is part of all subjects in the curriculum”. He concluded by adding that “one of the focuses should be on how to improve the inequality exemplified by the situation of the smallpox children [...] because everybody, regardless of their status or gender, has rights... It’s what’s most important: respect, human rights and raising awareness of inequality so that things like this don’t keep happening”.

Silvia raised the issue of differences between social classes and the role of a group of disadvantaged children in bringing the vaccine to America. The topic, in her opinion, shows the connections “between all of the periods and events in history and virtually all of the social issues we face today and will, unfortunately, continue to face in the future”.

Carolina, for her part, highlighted the “invisibility of women, the devaluing of their work just because it’s done by a woman, and their pigeonholing as caregivers with no recognition of the value of the work they do”, adding that both these and other social inequalities are still “fully present” in society today. In particular, she spoke of how distressing she had found the story of the children: “they were the heroes who brought the vaccine, but nobody defended them, nobody looked out for their well being. There were no parents, no relatives to protect their interests or their health. Let’s not forget that one of them ended up drowned. So yeah, they were heroes, but not by choice, they didn’t decide to be heroes. And that was one of the parts that I found most distressing when I thought about the story”.

Continuing on the subject of child protection, Silvia observed that, despite the broader definition of the term today, the action of the public authorities is still mostly confined to guaranteeing children’s most basic upkeep: “nobody guarantees their participation or their privacy or loads of other aspects that weren’t considered important before but are now”. Mario, in support of her point, recalled that issues such as “the right to education, to right to decent housing, the right to clothing and a family [...] are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Spanish Constitution”.

For all members of the focus group, social history represents a “much more relatable, more everyday” form of history, qualities that make it especially important at primary school level. In Mario’s opinion, it comes down to a question of visibility. While acknowledging the importance of teaching key historical events, he felt that a more balanced approach should be sought: “to devote much more attention to how people lived down through history, to the sectors of society that have been ignored by history”. Mariña agreed, remarking that while we study the main events in history, “we never know where the children were, for example. The children studying history don’t know what children their age were doing; they don’t know anything about what childhood was like at that time.” In her view, therefore, one of the most positive features of the story of the expedition is that “it focuses on the people we don’t usually see and the children see the characters as their peers”. Reflecting on the importance of society and citizenship as the

basis for social change, Silvia agreed that “if we want to teach children to become good citizens and change-makers, we also have to give them role models and show them that ‘change really does come from you’”.

The final subject covered by the focus group was the use of the two novels as part of the project. Carolina made the general point that “literature allows us to experience new realities, explore new worlds, connect with others, find models to carry over into real life. By counterbalancing inequalities, literature becomes a starting point for change”. For Mario, this was an essential feature of the novel, *Los niños de la viruela*: “it was our starting point. And that is really important for teaching: to have a starting point”. Not alone that but reading the novel made him more aware of the city around him: “you read the book and you become aware of history through the novel, you realise that it’s always been there and you ask yourself, ‘how can I be in third year of college, have lived in this city for twenty years, and never have heard this story before?’”

Overall, our former students showed a strong awareness and appreciation of the cross-sectional nature of the project, the educational potential of the city space, and the importance of problematising history in terms of the present, current social issues and citizenship development. Considering the timing of the focus group, conducted two or three years after the participants’ experience, it is extremely encouraging to hear of the deep, lasting impact of the project’s critical approach to social studies teaching and learning. Their keen sense of the importance of education for citizenship and human rights is a source of satisfaction and hope for the future of teacher training and society as a whole.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The experience of working cross-sectorally with different external agents and in a real educational setting had a profoundly enriching effect on the process of teaching and learning in the subjects involved in the project, for pupils and trainee teachers alike. Students were more motivated, more engaged, and more effective in designing and implementing educational resources and proposals in comparison with previous years, when didactic planning was taught without a project or the chance to put their learning into practice. In addition, the students were introduced to the possibility of creating interdisciplinary proposals for the teaching of social issues and citizenship education across a range of subjects, including social studies, geography, history and literature.

The service-learning methodology allowed us to achieve our combined learning and community service goals of generating participatory educational experiences for pupils within their local urban environment linked to historical, geographical and literary aspects of the curriculum. This represented an interesting innovation not just for the student teachers, but also for the primary and secondary pupils who participated in the project. Collaborations of this kind between schools and universities require careful cross-level coordination of knowledge, practice and curricular content. While still uncommon,

they should nonetheless be regarded as an essential part of the education process, particularly in relation to teacher training.

Another vital aspect of the project was the role of the city as a learning environment, from both a current and a historical perspective. Field activities that make connections between pupils' lessons in the classroom and their local environment have a positive impact on pupil motivation and curriculum delivery, while reading about the city was also found to be an effective way of making pupils more aware of its past and that of their own neighbourhoods.

In order to achieve a more critical, global citizenship-based model of education, we have to rethink how we train our teachers. Practical training in developing and delivering curriculum proposals, in which students are required to problematise educational content in terms of controversial social issues, is one key way to foster the skills and resources students need to become the critical educators of the future.

The vaccine expedition proved not just a fascinating event from history, but one directly relatable to current social issues and an opportunity to highlight the role of those traditionally overlooked by history. The same methodology could and should be applied to other historical events to develop critical educational proposals and promote collaboration between student teachers and pupils at all levels of education.

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ENDNOTES

¹ In our interview with López Mariño and Pedrido, both journalists expressed their satisfaction with the project, particularly with regard to its role in bringing together young people and historical experts, to ensure the effective transmission and dissemination of the history of the RPVE. They also viewed as positive factors for reception both the element of adventure involved in the story and the fact that the pupils in the target group were the same age as the children who travelled on the *María Pita*.

According to López Mariño, the last record of Isabel Zandal dates to 1811, when she retired on a life pension of half of the salary she received on the expedition. Recent evidence suggests that she may be buried in the church of San Pedro in Puebla de los Ángeles in Mexico (originally founded as the Royal Hospital of San Pedro). Records of investments in Puebla in Zandal's name could support this theory and represent a promising new line of inquiry, as do the search for her son, Benito Vélez, and his marriage certificate.

Of the children who travelled on the expedition, nothing more is known after 1809 (Smith, 1974): some died, some entered institutions in Mexico, and other were given in adoption. One of the boys is known to have gone on to become a lawyer; however, his surviving relatives' refusal to acknowledge his origins as the son of a "single mother" from A Coruña has prevented any further investigation into his life.

Describing the RPVE as one of Spain's most important contributions to the history of medicine, López Mariño stressed that this was an achievement made possible by a group of young children from the most underprivileged sector of society and the single mother of humble origins charged with their care. Pedrido, meanwhile, highlighted López Mariño's own role in telling Zandal's story, recognising her historical importance and putting her name on the street map of A Coruña.

² <https://criticaurbana.com/cartografia-social-do-dereito-ao-habitat-na-cidade-da-coruna>

³ Class groups were divided into smaller groups for the purposes of the project. The reference "8-18" refers to Team 8 from the class of 2017-2018.

⁴ A video of the children's performance is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AIqJRwEVMQ>.

⁵ A podcast by ASF-G with contributions from members of the first edition of the project, including feedback from pupils during the educational trail (49:31-52:48), is available at the following link: <https://podtail.com/es/podcast/habitando/ep-23-a-expedicion-balmis/>.

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