



Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Perception of the Assessment of Historical Knowledge and Skills Based on Classroom Activities and Exercises

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The aim of this paper is to identify the most suitable activities and exercises for the development of historical knowledge and skills and their subsequent evaluation. On this basis, a quantitative study has been carried out among primary and secondary school teachers in several Spanish regions in which their perception of what types of exercises and activities (of those proposed in their History or Social Science classes) are most suitable for assessing the historical knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire has been extracted. The results show that exercises involving the interpretation of texts and images which require students to think about and apply the historical knowledge acquired are very useful, as are questions which seek historical explanation and causal reasoning; however, objective tests (multiple-choice tests, linking dates with events, etc.) or short questions about historical events or characters are not considered to be very suitable for the adequate development of historical knowledge and, therefore, of historical competences. Broadly speaking, it is recommended that this line of research be continued so that other authors can replicate these findings, deepening their knowledge of these instruments, whose didactic commitment could serve as an argument in the face of the excessive time pressure faced by today's teachers.

Keywords: assessment, competences, historical thinking, social sciences, teacher training, didactic commitment

INTRODUCTION

The didactics of the social sciences -understood as an area of knowledge- takes on special relevance in the current competency-based teaching model, in which it is made clear that learning lasts and helps the development of knowledge thanks to the putting into practice of different capacities, skills, strategies or resources leading to the development of reflective and critical thinking, capable of training autonomous people who are committed to society. Specifically, in our country, competences appear -for the first time- in national legislation through Organic Law 2/2006 (2006), of May 3, on Education (OLE) and, subsequently, they continued to be present in Organic Law 8/2013 (2013), of December 9, for the Improvement of Educational Quality (OLIEQ) and in the

current Organic Law 3/2020 (2020), of December 29, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006 (2006), of May 3, on Education (OLMOLE).

In Spain, these changes have been promoted not only at the curricular level, but also with regard to improvements in teaching models in history education and, therefore, the very practice of education professionals, teaching strategies and tasks, as well as the type of activities or exercises proposed to ascertain the learning outcomes of pupils in history, will enable progress to be made toward the development of competences specific to the field of history, as well as adequate historical knowledge. In order to achieve an improvement of the teaching-learning process through key competences, the European strategy 2006/962/EC [Recommendation of The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006) of December 18 on key competences for lifelong learning] comes into play, as well as the content of Royal Decree 1105/2014 (2015), of December 26, establishing the basic curriculum for compulsory secondary education and baccalaureate, which aims to favour learning by competences by including them among the different curricular elements in a progressive sequence and in accordance with European interests. In this sense, through Order ECD/65/2015 (2015), of January 21, which describes the relationships between competences, contents and assessment criteria for primary education, compulsory secondary education and baccalaureate; competences are defined as “what all people need for their personal fulfilment and development, as well as for active citizenship, social inclusion and employment” (p. 6,986).

So much so that knowledge is no longer based solely and exclusively on knowing; in order for the information received by students to generate the necessary learning to produce the desired historical knowledge and, therefore, to favour the much-needed competence learning, it is not only enough to know about something (or about something), but traditional knowledge must be accompanied by three other types of knowledge: knowing how to do, knowing how to be and knowing how to be: Knowing how to do, knowing how to be and knowing how to be, which obliges us to require students to demonstrate this knowledge with the most appropriate evidence -and their teachers to teach them the best way and procedure to achieve it- (Gómez et al., 2014; Álvarez et al., 2020).

From Conceptual Teaching to Historical Thinking. A Road Ahead

From this paradigm, it is therefore necessary to abandon the teaching of history from a merely conceptual approach in order to move toward a competence model in which students acquire historical thinking. Because knowing history does not consist only in memorising a past concretized in temporal elements or factual events. As long as the memory of past events and names continues to be reproduced as a closed knowledge that links history to the past, students will not understand the discipline as a useful and contemporary knowledge with which to address the problems of the present (Guerrero et al., 2019).

Specifically, this work is developed within the current of Canadian historical thinking based on the studies carried out by Seixas and Morton (Seixas, 2006; Seixas and Morton, 2013).

Based on the above, Seixas and Morton (2013) expose the six main characteristics of historical thinking that the student should acquire. The first of these is historical evidence (which makes the student understand that history is an interpretation based on inferences from primary sources -Sáiz, 2014-). In addition, they also highlight historical relevance (by virtue of which it is necessary to discriminate between historical events that have marked the evolution of society), change and continuity (which allows understanding change in the past as a process -with different rhythms and patterns-, and historical continuities such as the imitation of festivals, traditions and cultures-), cause and consequence (which questions the student about the justification for making decisions in the past and judging them in the present), the ethical dimension of history (making value judgments in light of the discernment granted by the present), together with the historical perspective (knowing how to occupy the place of those who lived in the present time our history). VanSledright (2014) also positions himself with this current, providing an approach that emphasises deep thinking and procedural and analytical concepts when posing historical questions.

In recent decades, it is worth highlighting the evolution of studies in educational innovation in the social sciences, and in particular those focused on the development of historical thinking. Such studies aim to change the memoristic and conceptual teaching of history for learning based on analysis, understanding and historical interpretation (Seixas and Morton, 2013). The aim is for students to be able to understand the past in a more complex way. As Santisteban (2010) indicates, the training of historical thinking aims to provide students with analytical tools to be able to interpret or understand history autonomously, being able to obtain their own representation of past events; and - in turn - to contextualise or judge these events, understanding the temporal distance between them and the present. In this way, the aim of this current is to change the memorisation and accumulation of information for the understanding of the construction of historical narratives, interrelating events, characters, contexts, etc. Demonstrating that historical discourse is not something closed, but something that is under permanent construction. This way of thinking, precisely, is justified by the need to know what happened in the past, but also raising questions to understand how the events occurred and the causes that fueled their actions; that is, to ensure a teaching that allows students to access knowledge from the investigation of historical sources, the deepening of the causes and consequences, and the evolutionary processes of a temporal nature (Domínguez, 2016).

Within cognitive studies on historical knowledge, some authors establish that two types of knowledge should be highlighted: conceptual and procedural. Among conceptual knowledge, in turn, they distinguish between first and second order, the latter being closely linked to the competences of historical thinking established by Seixas and Morton, given that they try to answer questions that require a historical interpretation going beyond the classics: what, who, how, or when. Historical knowledge is related to historian skills such as empathy, historical perspective, the search for and selection of information or the treatment of evidence (Gómez et al., 2017).

Assessment of Historical Thinking. A Pending Subject

For Santisteban (2010), the formation of historical thinking in students is a complex task. The didactics of history has to offer proposals that would not be expected from historiography, since it is something that - it could be said - does not fall within its remit. Therefore, the didactics of history must ask itself what has to be taught in order to form historical thinking. But starting from this question, it is also fundamental to ask oneself how to know if students have really acquired the competences of historical thinking and, from there, to analyse through which exercises or activities historical thinking can be assessed. In other words, which exercises or activities are the most appropriate for assessing certain specific competences related to historical thinking. These are undoubtedly questions that we will try to answer in this article.

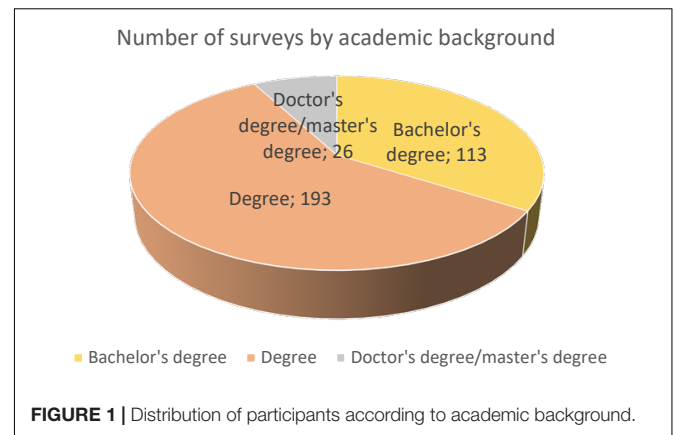
There are various research studies that have focused on the assessment of historical thinking; among them, we should highlight the study carried out by Gómez and Miralles (2015) in which they analysed 3,127 questions asked in exams in the Region of Murcia in the third cycle of primary education and in compulsory secondary education, with the supremacy of the exam as the main assessment instrument being evident. These authors carried out an analysis of the content and cognitive skills required in the exams, showing that most of the questions required memorised knowledge of a conceptual-factual nature, demonstrating a great lack of questions involving procedural concepts, more linked to the formation of historical thinking, given that this requires more varied instruments to be able to assess the different capacities of pupils in the interpretation of the past and the development of historical competences.

On the other hand, Domínguez (2016) highlights the importance of the correct assessment of history in order to improve the teaching of history, dividing this assessment into three main competences: explaining historically, using historical evidence and understanding the logic of historical knowledge. In addition, he establishes a series of cognitive skills to work on each competence of historical thinking, which he then sets out in tables specifying the skill, the concept and the competence to be assessed.

Likewise, González et al. (2011) evaluated the process of the formation of students' historical thinking through the design and implementation of didactic materials, relying mainly on the understanding of the past and causal explanation, in which students had to construct a historical narrative through evidence, obtaining positive results, hence the interest in carrying out our study and now presenting the interesting results obtained.

OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this research is to find out - through a comparative study - the importance given by teachers to different types of assessment activities for the acquisition of historical knowledge and skills. The following specific objectives emanate from this main objective:



Specific Objective 1: To find out the importance attached by teachers to different types of assessment activities for the acquisition of historical knowledge and skills.

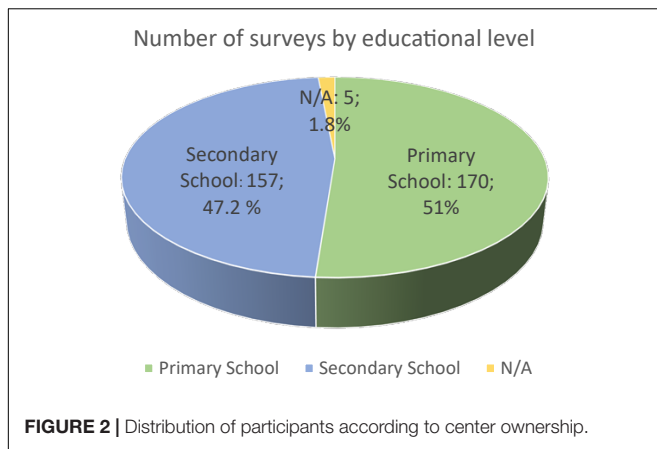
Specific Objective 2: To analyse the time commitment involved for students in responding to the types of activities and tasks set (depending on the type of response).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample

In order to constitute the sample, a non-probabilistic, accidental or casual national sampling process was used. Specifically, and in order to give it the maximum level of representativeness, 332 teachers who teach in the different autonomous communities of Spain ($n = 332$), including Andalusia, Asturias, the Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid, the Basque Country, the Region of Murcia, and Valencia, took part in the study. It is worth noting the balanced and balanced nature of the sample, as the number of women and men surveyed was similar (52% women and 48% men - cf. **Figure 1**). Similarly, a distinction was also made between the level of education at which they taught, with primary education being the most common stage of education (51% of respondents, and 47.2% at secondary education), minus the 1.8% who did not specify the level at which they taught (cf. **Figure 2**). Similarly, a distinction was also made between those teachers who - on at least one occasion during their entire career - participated in educational innovation projects (67%) and those who had never done so (33%).

The participants were also categorised according to their administrative situation: 67% were civil servants, 17% of the teachers belonged to private education (private initiative subsidised by the client) or subsidised education (private company that receives subsidies from the State and is paid by the client); and 16% of the sample corresponded to those teachers in one of the situations of temporary employment contemplated by the Administration. In line with this data, it was deemed necessary to know the ownership of the center in which the surveyed teachers worked, being the public centres (State-dependent and free education) the most representative (83%). Finally, and in relation to the level of studies of the participants



(Figure 1), 58% are graduates, 34% have only a diploma, slightly more than 5% have completed a master's degree (or have a Diploma of Advanced Studies -DEA-), and almost 3% have a doctorate degree.

Instrument

The instrument used for this research was a Likert-type scale with five response options, asking the teaching staff to indicate the one that best represented their opinion and teaching experience (with the following key: 1 = very irrelevant; 2 = not very relevant; 3 = neither relevant nor slightly relevant; 4 = somewhat relevant, and 5 = very relevant).

For the validation of this questionnaire, an expert validation process has been carried out, for which professionals of recognised prestige in the field of knowledge of this study have been consulted, being constituted - finally - by three university lecturers in the area of social sciences, three secondary education teachers of the subject of Geography and History, as well as three primary education teachers, giving this process - according to the specialised literature consulted (Hastad and Lacy, 1998; Hair et al., 2010)- a high degree of reliability and validity. Following this expert evaluation, the questionnaire is made up of a total of nine questions. In these, teachers were asked about the exercises and activities which - according to their training and teaching experience - they considered most suitable for assessing the historical knowledge and skills acquired by students. Specifically, the first item refers to exercises requiring the interpretation of texts and images which involve thinking about and applying the historical knowledge acquired. On the other hand, the second item deals with short questions referring to historical events or characters. The third and fourth items question teachers as to whether essays and developmental questions on historical processes; and fieldwork (gathering information, carrying out exercises) in the form of a visit to a museum or other place of historical interest were considered the most appropriate exercises for the assessment of students' historical thinking. The fifth item deals with empathy, simulation or historical perspective exercises, while the sixth item focuses on local and family history research. The seventh item refers to questions seeking historical explanation and causal reasoning; and finally, the eighth and

ninth items of the instrument deal with objective tests (multiple-choice tests, linking dates with events, etc.) and the definition of concepts, respectively.

Finally, it is important to point out that the instrument was applied in two ways: *via* the Internet and on paper (chosen by the participants), with an estimated completion time of 15 min.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, a descriptive and quantitative methodology was used, valid according to the specialised bibliography for a non-experimental cross-sectional study in which descriptive and relationship studies are combined. As we know, non-experimental research is based on the search for empirical and systematic information in which the scientist has no direct control over the independent variables, because their manifestations have already occurred or cannot be manipulated (Kerlinger et al., 2002). This type of design has been chosen because the survey technique allows us to learn about people's demographic characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, opinions, habits, ideas, values or desires (McMillan and Schumacher, 2005).

In this sense, for the analysis of the objectives set for this study, the tasks have been grouped according to the students' time dedication for their resolution and the commitment to the cognitive skills required, which leads to a greater or lesser didactic commitment on the part of the students. Furthermore, in the analysis of this study, we have taken into account the time required by students to respond to each of the types of tasks that teachers may ask them, understanding this time in two ways (in terms of temporal organisation and spatial organisation), and grouping the questions into three areas:

- Longer time and extensive response: items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.
- Medium time and short response: items 2 and 9.
- Use of little time and space for response (choosing one of the given options, linking with arrows, etc.): item 8.

RESULTS

In order to follow a logic that ensures the coherence of this research, the results are presented as a direct response to the specific objectives set out:

In order to respond to this first specific objective (SO1), teachers individually answered the questionnaire described above, specifically the construct related to those exercises and activities most suitable for assessing the historical knowledge and skills acquired by students. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample's responses, according to frequencies and percentages, as well as the indices of central tendency.

According to the data obtained (Tables 1, 2), teachers believe that the activity that most contributes to assessing historical competences are exercises in interpreting texts and images that require them to think about and apply the historical knowledge acquired (item 1). In this item, 91.5% of respondents state that this activity is somewhat relevant or very relevant for

TABLE 1 | Importance given by the teacher to different types of assessment activities.

N	Min	Max	Average	Median	%1	%2	%3	%4	%5	Sd	
Item 1	330	1	5	4.46	5.00	0.30	0.91	7.27	35.50	56.10	0.70
Item 2	329	1	5	3.63	4.00	3.65	11.60	25.20	37.40	22.20	1.06
Item 3	328	1	5	3.76	4.00	1.52	4.57	24.70	54.90	14.30	0.81
Item 4	328	1	5	4.24	4.00	2.13	3.35	11.60	34.50	48.50	0.93
Item 5	331	1	5	3,92	4.00	1.81	8.76	17.80	39.30	32.30	1.01
Item 6	331	1	5	4.05	4.00	1.51	5.44	20.20	32.00	40.80	0.98
Item 7	329	1	5	4.30	4.00	0.30	1.22	13.10	38.60	46.80	0.76
Item 8	331	1	5	3.31	3.00	9.06	15.10	26.30	35.00	14.50	1.16
Item 9	330	1	5	3.73	4.00	3.03	8.79	25.50	37.90	24.80	1.03
Total items	329	1	5	3,93	4.00	2.59	6.64	19.07	38.34	33.37	0.94

N: Sample; Min: Minimum; Max: Maximum; %1: Very little relevant; %2: Little relevant; %3: Neither relevant nor little relevant; %4: Somewhat relevant; %5: Very relevant.

TABLE 2 | Importance given by the teacher to different types of assessment activities according to time and length of response.

		%1	%2	%3	%4	%5	Sd	Response time	Extent of the response
Item 1	330	0.30	0.91	7.27	35.50	56.10	0.70	1	1
Item 2	329	3.65	11.60	25.20	37.40	22.20	1.06	2	3
Item 3	328	1.52	4.57	24.70	54.90	14.30	0.81	1	1
Item 4	328	2.13	3.35	11.60	34.50	48.50	0.93	1	1
Item 5	331	1.81	8.76	17.80	39.30	32.30	1.01	1	1
Item 6	331	1.51	5.44	20.20	32.00	40.80	0.98	1	1
Item 7	329	0.30	1.22	13.10	38.60	46.80	0.76	1	2
Item 8	331	9.06	15.10	26.30	35.00	14.50	1.16	3	3
Item 9	330	3.03	8.79	25.50	37.90	24.80	1.03	2	3

N: Sample; %1: Very little relevant; %2: Little relevant; %3: Neither relevant nor little relevant; %4: Somewhat relevant; %5: Very relevant.

the assessment of historical knowledge or training in historical competences. Other well rated items are item 4 - referring to fieldwork during a visit to a museum or other place of historical interest - where 83% of teachers state that this activity can be used to observe the acquisition of historical knowledge and skills, and item 7 - referring to working with questions seeking historical explanation and causal reasoning - where 85.4% of cases report a favourable opinion of the contribution of this type of questions in assessing historical skills. In fact, historical explanation and causal reasoning, embodied in the concept of cause and consequence, is one of the six Anglo-Saxon historical thinking skills (Seixas and Morton, 2013).

On the negative - or less positive - side, item 8, which refers to the use of objective tests (test type, linking arrows with events, etc.), should be noted. In particular, 24.2% of the sample consider this activity to be of little or very little relevance if the aim is to assess historical knowledge or analyse the historical competences acquired, with 26.3% in a medium position (neither relevant nor not very relevant).

Figure 3 shows in graphical terms the mean, median, and standard deviation of the answers given, in order to be able to visualise better and more clearly the answers described by the teachers surveyed.

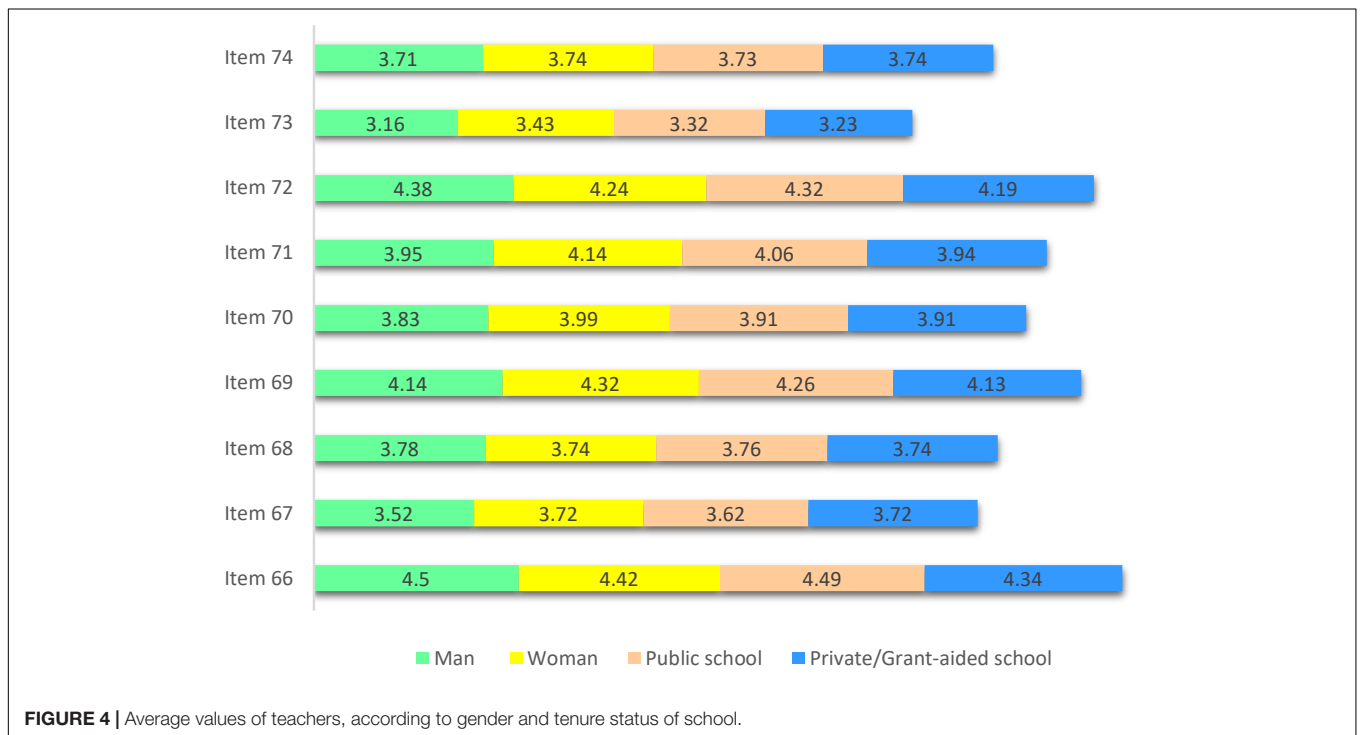
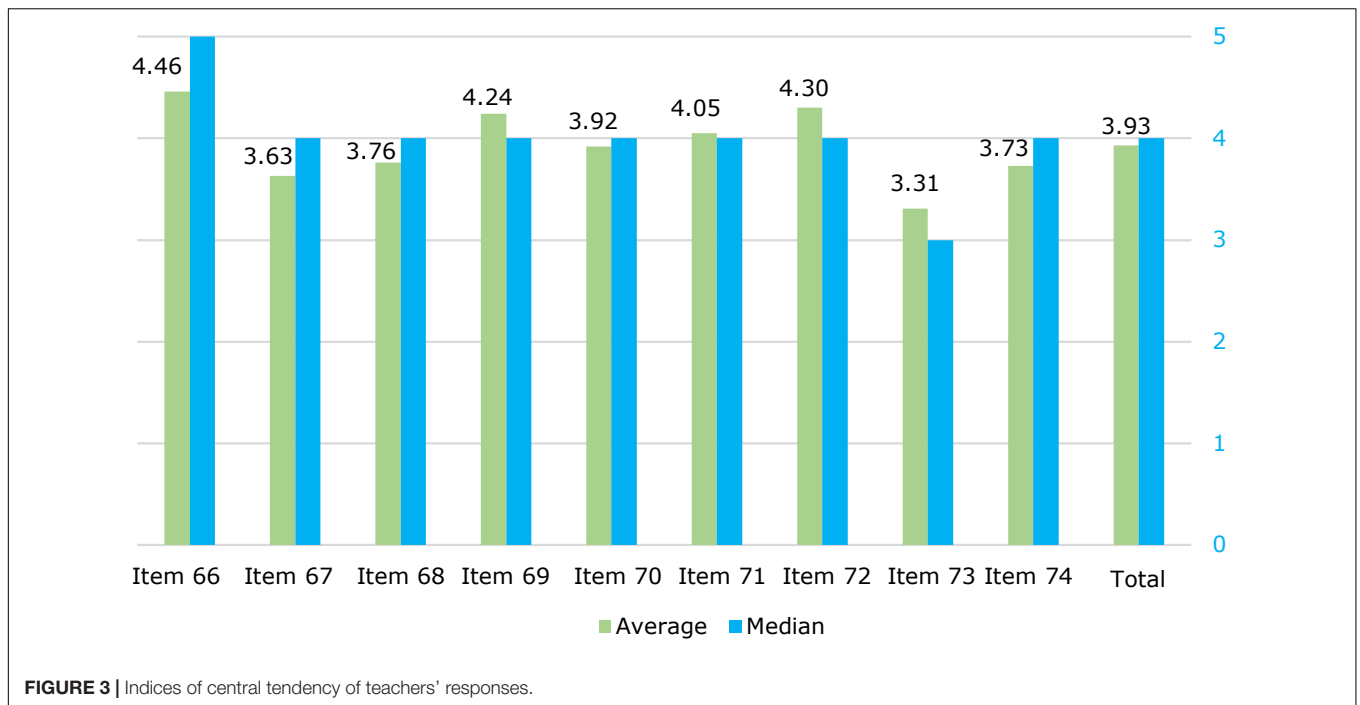
As shown in **Figure 3**, item 1 is the item with the highest mean trend ($M = 4.46$; $Sd = 0.70$), followed by item 7 ($M = 4.30$; $Sd = 0.76$), and item 4 ($M = 4.24$; $Sd = 0.93$), which means that in global terms these are the three items whose activities have been best rated for assessing historical knowledge and competence acquisition. With regard to the median, a value of 4.00 points

out of 5.00 is observed for all the items of the construct, except for item 1 ($Md = 5.00$) and item 8 ($Md = 3.00$), which means that more than half of the teachers surveyed were above these values, as the median is a distribution axis that divides the sample into two halves. **Figure 4** shows the mean values of the teachers' responses according to gender and school title.

As can be seen in the graph (**Figure 4**), the results are homogeneous, and no significant differences are found between the sexes or according to the ownership of the centres investigated. The highest values for men ($M = 4.5$; $Sd = 0.63$) and women (4.42 ; $Sd = 0.75$) are found in item 1, referring to exercises in interpreting texts and images, among which the contribution of public school teachers ($M = 4.49$; $Sd = 0.66$) stands out, compared to those of private or subsidised schools ($M = 4.34$; $Sd = 0.83$), with slightly lower values. The rest of the items scored over three points, thus confirming the high value of the teaching staff.

In order to analyse the time required by students to respond to the types of activities and tasks posed (SO2), the items have been classified according to the time commitment involved in each of the activities presented in the items, categorising the questions into three areas of didactic commitment:

1. High didactic commitment: long time and extensive response 2.
2. Medium didactic commitment: Medium time and response.
3. Low didactic commitment: Short time and short response.



In the light of the results, the three highest rated items (item 1, item 4, and item 7) show a high didactic commitment in terms of response time, as they represent complex activities which usually take a long time to complete. In relation to the length of the response, it is high in item 1 (exercises involving the interpretation of texts and images which require thinking and applying the historical knowledge acquired) and in item 4 (fieldwork during a visit to a museum or other place of

historical interest), but not in item 7 (questions seeking historical explanation and causal reasoning), where it is average. For items 68 and 71 (which refer to essays and developmental questions on historical processes, as well as local or family history research, respectively), the level of didactic engagement is high in terms of time and also in terms of length. However, this is not the case for items 67 (short questions on historical events and personalities) and 74 (definition of concepts), where the response time implies

a medium didactic engagement and the length of both activities is short. To this must be added the values of indecision found on the evaluative function of these activities, since 25.20% (item 2) and 26.30% (item 9) considered them to be neither relevant nor not very relevant, thus showing the coherence between the answers provided by the teachers and the commitment to the task. On the low side, item 8 (objective tests) stands out, with a low degree of didactic commitment, both in terms of response time and in relation to the length of the response. This is confirmed by the fact that it is the lowest rated item (24.16% disapproval of the statement). It is evident, therefore, that objective tests involving multiple-choice questions, exercises involving matching with arrows, filling in gaps, true or false, etc. do not involve a great didactic commitment and can hardly develop knowledge in full or contribute to training in historical competences as do the rest of the activities described, particularly the exercises involving the interpretation of texts and images of thought, fieldwork or causal reasoning questions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Having analysed and described the objectives set out in this study, it is necessary to discuss and conclude the most interesting findings, as well as to try to justify the contributions of the teachers surveyed.

One of the aims of the subject of History is to provide students with an insight into history and, at the same time, to provide them with the necessary tools so that they can analyse and interpret the past. The aim is that both teachers and students should be able to free themselves from the excessive preponderance of learning which only enables the accumulation of knowledge (dates, historical figures, biographical data, events, etc.), with a lack of concern for the past, with the nonchalance of relating -only- what has happened throughout history (of course, this is closer to historiography than to the didactics of history), but with the setback of not giving value to that knowledge which allows students to interpret and manage -based on the knowledge of history- their own historical thinking. This thinking is that which – consciously – should provide an overview of historical reality, giving young people (in the words of Santisteban, 2010) social models and social representations related to democratic values (p. 5). And it is only in this way (by promoting meaningful teaching for students) that a transfer of knowledge based on learning by competences would be favoured.

In this sense, finding out the importance given by teachers to the different types of assessment activities has allowed us to find that exercises involving the interpretation of texts and images that require thinking and applying the historical knowledge acquired are highly valued by the teachers surveyed. It is clear that they are part of activities whose complexity is beyond doubt, since they involve a greater cognitive load. Likewise, after analysing the didactic commitment of these exercises, we found the relationship between this task and the length of time and extension involved in their appropriate development, a reason which could serve to justify the fact that teachers value them as relevant or very relevant, making it clear that the traditional assessment tests given to pupils (generally adjusted to

the knowledge which the teacher imparts in class and which is contained in a textbook) are not representative of that know-how which – as far as competences are concerned – they are intended to transmit and consolidate.

Consequently, the assessment systems selected by teachers should make it possible to measure the knowledge that students have managed to be able to transfer, concentrating on what they are able to achieve procedurally through their learning. Moreover, these assessments should also be carried out longitudinally; that is to say, they should be carried out in different contexts and at different times in order to know faithfully (and give continuity) to what the student has been able to learn.

On a second level, although with very high scores, are also the exercises on fieldwork or the questions that seek to work on causal reasoning or historical explanation. Firstly, fieldwork involves collecting information and carrying out complex exercises, either during visits to museums or in other places of tourist interest. Teachers have understood the cognitive complexity of this task, which involves several phases and, consequently, carries a greater time burden and a longer response time, since most of the time it involves complex tasks lasting several days, weeks or even months. Secondly, the high evaluation of historical explanation and causal reasoning means that teachers see it as feasible to learn competences and improve students' historical knowledge through the development of this activity. It is worth remembering, as Seixas (2017) points out, that the articulation of competences and the response to conflicts allow historical knowledge to be shaped, and for this reason they are defined as generative. Moreover, to the extent that events are connected by articulating causes and consequences, the chronological gap between two historical stages disappears significantly (if not completely), and this could be seen in this research.

The main point of this study that should be highlighted is that the importance given by the teacher to the activities included in the items decreases as the degree of didactic commitment decreases, since the shorter the time it takes to complete the exercise or activity, and the shorter the length of the exercise or activity, the less time it takes to complete it, The shorter the time taken to complete the exercise or activity, and the shorter the length of the written response, the lower the percentage values obtained by the group of teachers surveyed, until the lowest value was obtained in relation to the objective tests, which in parallel are the ones that involve less response time and less length in terms of content when answering. It is clear that this reality affects the way of assessing, so that, with the exceptions mentioned above, the degree of importance given by teachers to all the activities is sufficiently positive to affirm that, with the exception of the objective tests (where the results show greater variability), all the other activities can contribute to the assessment of historical knowledge and the assimilation of historical competences.

Undoubtedly, studies such as the one cited above by Gómez and Miralles (2015) show that, sadly, assessment continues to be reduced to a numerical result with which students and their families do not know what has happened in the process, how much they have managed to learn or how they could improve (Álvarez et al., 2021a,b,c). Simply put, it is being said that learning will be competency-based as long as students know how to be, learn to learn, and know how to do; and yet, all of this is not

assessed, as no one seems to have taught teachers (in their initial or ongoing training) to assess all of this through an indicator: how is it possible to measure through a common indicator -for all-knowing how to be when it is a particular and specific fact of each student? We are definitely faced with an administrative stance in which the superficial continues to be evaluated. As an example, the quote from Álvarez et al. (2021a) is useful here when - from the perspective of didactics - they make this interesting reflection on this issue:

Because in the end (...) the following question gravitates in our mind: if in the end for the Administration everything must be reduced to a numerical expression, if that is the only important thing, why entertain -and bother- the teaching staff with all that tangle of sterile conceptualisations, inconsistent rubrics and procedures as exhausting as they are empty, if in the end what -unhappily- everyone is waiting for (Administration, parents and -even- children) is a ridiculous numerical grade? If this is the case (and we are very much afraid that it is), then for such a journey there was no need for so many saddlebags. Undoubtedly, teachers deserve greater respect (for their time) and sublime consideration (for their dedication, for their training, and because in their hands rests our greatest treasure: our children) (p. 55).

Undoubtedly, studies such as the one cited above by Gómez and Miralles (2015) show that -sadly- assessment continues to be reduced to a numerical result with which students and their families do not know what has happened in the process, how much they have managed to learn or how they could improve (Álvarez et al., 2021b). Simply put, it is being said that learning will be competency-based as long as students know how to be, learn to learn, and know how to do; and -however- all this is not evaluated, since no one seems to have taught teachers (in their initial or ongoing training) to evaluate all this through an indicator: how is it possible to measure through a common indicator -to all- knowing how to be when it is a particular and specific fact of each student? Definitely, we are faced with an administrative posture in which the superficial continues to be evaluated. As an example, the reflection of Álvarez et al. (2021a) is useful here when -from didactics- they reflect on the reality that occurs in the Administration that everything is reduced to a numerical expression. In this sense, if that is the only important thing, why entertain -and bother- teachers with all that tangle of sterile conceptualizations, inconsistent rubrics and exhausting and empty procedures. If what everyone (administration, parents, and even children) subsequently -and unhappily- expects is an empty numerical grade, there is no need to allude to so many saddlebags and absurd detours. We believe that professionals dedicated to teaching deserve more respect (in their own time) and their perspectives should be taken into account, given the dedication, training and epistemological tenacity they await, as a formative guide for the development of our children (Martínez et al., 2019).

In short, and as we have seen, the teacher becomes a key figure in carrying out all of the above. For this reason, it is essential to underline that the functions that teachers must carry out in order to achieve -successfully- a quality education, involve facing a continuous debate, since through this, learning spaces will be projected with which to give value to the teaching processes, thanks to the constant - and necessary - educational innovation.

Of course, when we try to delve into how teachers should carry out their work, we can conclude that there are many and very varied characteristics (or particularities) that they are expected to be able to put into practice in their daily work, but they will only be truly effective if - in the end - they foster historical thinking (Álvarez et al., 2021c).

As can be seen, it is surprising that although those activities which involve a lower degree of didactic commitment also achieve a greater understanding -among the teaching staff- that such tools are not the most suitable for the development of competences in this area, if we take into consideration the example of objective tests (which would fall into this category), analysing the frequency of their use -as extensive and exorbitantly generalised among the teaching staff-, it would be feasible to venture the conclusion that they are not the most suitable tools for the development of competences in this area, it would be feasible to venture to conclude that it is probably the time variable (implied in these instruments and referred to above) which could be making the difference in the choice of this type of instrument to the detriment of others which, although it is true that they involve a greater time commitment, also ensure the development of those much-vaunted competences which, supposedly, we should raise to the altars of all curriculum design processes (Lévesque, 2011).

Broadly speaking, this article has room for improvement, such as its statistical structure, from which more complex analyses should be considered, or the allusion to a qualitative approach that would enhance the value of the results found. Likewise, enlarging the research sample should be a major objective in order to contrast and discuss the results of this study with a greater degree of specificity.

In other words, it would be very interesting to continue this line of research so that other authors can try to replicate this approach with the aim of finding out whether the use of these instruments (which involve a low didactic commitment) is really used in the face of the excessive time pressure to which teachers are subjected (due to a lack of time to develop a delirious amount of content), or if in addition -or on the contrary- there are other variables that could be installed at the frontier of the justification of this use, and that would open the door to a rigorous approach to certain aspects related to the use and design of these instruments; among them, initial teacher training, training of trainers, and in-service training. Undoubtedly, these elements are of great value in trying to delimit the most beneficial path for teachers who dedicate their professional lives to the development of this branch of knowledge, and who - apparently - seem to need specialised training in general assessment (from the point of view of didactics), and in specific assessment (on the use of effective instruments in this area). This is the subject of our forthcoming work, which we hope will again be of interest to teachers.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee University of Murcia. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JÁ-M-I and JM-S: conceptualization and formal analysis. JÁ-M-I: data curation. FT-C and AL-G: funding acquisition and methodology. FT-C, JÁ-M-I, and JM-S: investigation. AL-G: project administration. FT-C: resources. JÁ-M-I, AL-G, and JM-S: writing—review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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