

# **The battle for the narrative of democratic historical memory in the educational system: when history hides the past**

## **La batalla por la narrativa de la memoria histórica democrática en el sistema educativo: cuando la historia oculta el pasado**

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**Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez**

*<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3399-5318>*

*Universidad de León*

**Mauro-Rafael Jarquín-Ramírez**

*<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0496-091X>*

*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

### **Abstract**

This article presents the results of research on the knowledge that young people who have completed secondary education in Spain currently have about the repression of the Civil War, Franco's repression and the anti-Franco struggle. A mixed methodology has been used, triangulating qualitative (interviews and discussion groups) and quantitative (questionnaire) instruments. The results show that these issues are not always dealt with or are glossed over, and that the contents developed in textbooks and curricular materials still maintain silences, distorted or equidistant versions and deliberate concealments. It is concluded that it is necessary to dispute the account of a democratic historical memory in a rigorous and extensive way in the school curriculum in the face of pressure from the ultra-right in its current "cultural battle" against memory and to help rebuild a counter-hegemonic curriculum, which takes into account the victims who have been left on the margins of history, so that "their name is not erased from the memory" of future generations.

*Keywords: Democratic Historical Memory; History of Spain; School Curriculum; Educational System; History Teaching.*

## Resumen

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de la investigación sobre el conocimiento que tienen actualmente los jóvenes que han terminado Educación Secundaria en España respecto a la represión de la Guerra Civil, la represión franquista y la lucha antifranquista. Se ha utilizado una metodología mixta, triangulando instrumentos cualitativos (entrevistas y grupos de discusión) y cuantitativos (cuestionario). Los resultados muestran que no siempre se llega a estos temas o se dan por encima, y que los contenidos desarrollados en los libros de texto y materiales curriculares aún mantienen silencios, versiones tergiversadas o equidistantes y ocultamientos deliberados. Se concluye que es necesario disputar el relato de una memoria histórica democrática de forma rigurosa y extensa en el currículum escolar frente a la presión de la ultraderecha en su actual “batalla cultural” contra la memoria y ayudar a reconstruir un currículo contrahegemónico, que tome en cuenta a las víctimas que han quedado en los márgenes de la historia, para que “su nombre no se borre de la memoria” de las futuras generaciones.

*Palabras clave: Memoria Histórica Democrática; Historia de España; Currículo escolar; Sistema Educativo; Enseñanza de la Historia*

## Introduction

In Spanish educational legislation, the study of History is considered a fundamental element of school activity. Both the Organic Law of Education (LOE) of 2007 and the current LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education) state that it serves to deepen the knowledge of personal and collective heritage, as well as to understand the historical phenomena and processes of the past and also provides relevant knowledge that influences the personal and collective vision of the present. In addition, we must take into account that the subject of History taught in educational centers is the only time for a large part of the population when they have direct contact with academic history (Marina, 2015).

The teaching of history during the time of the Franco regime allowed

the manipulation of historical events, both of the more distant past and of the events closer to it, i.e., the years of the Second Republic and the Spanish War, Franco's repression and the anti-Franco struggle (De la Cuesta and Odriozola-Gurrutxaga, 2018). This fact fostered the creation of an adulterated collective memory for many generations of Spaniards. In fact, Francoism silenced the democratic republican memory, both that of the defeated and that of the resisters, and reconstructed a narrative where the terms were radically inverted: the victims became guilty and the coup perpetrators and repressors appeared as the heroes, in order to consolidate a new collective memory akin to its purposes (Castillejo, 2008).

The death of the dictator and the transition to democracy brought the hope of a substantial change in the educational system and especially in the teaching of Spanish History. But the truth is that during the time of the so-called "Transition" it was avoided to focus many efforts on restoring the recognition and dignity of those who had fought to defend the democratic legality of the Second Republic and who were persecuted, repressed and shot during the Spanish War and postwar period and there was no process of condemnation of the fascist dictatorship of Francoism or those who had been participants in it (De la Cuesta and Odriozola-Gurrutxaga, 2018).

During practically the first three decades of Spanish democracy, the visibility of that memory hidden and distorted by Franco's regime was not questioned by the governments of the Transition. The pact of "not looking back to reopen wounds" was imposed, both in society and in education, with the excuse of the so-called "sabre rattling" (referring to a possible new fascist coup d'état) and alleging the need for a "philosophy" based on "overcoming the past". The "powers that be", linked to the Franco dictatorship, which continued to hold the positions of power, continued to impose their vision and their narrative in schools, despite the fact that in Spanish academia there were already solid studies questioning and denouncing this narrative, generating an abundant and consolidated historiography that was systematically ignored in academic content (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2022).

This conditioned the development of a memory policy in the educational system. The false memory of Franco's regime was not challenged by a memory policy based on republican democratic references, which would

really link the Second Republic with the democracy that emerged in the transition. A “policy of forgetting” was thus maintained in textbooks and curricular materials, which has maintained a vision of history that justifies the institutionally established “policy of forgetting” (Barreiro, 2017; Rina, 2019).

The first step to begin to dissipate the fog within the historical memory created around the Second Republic, the war and the fascist dictatorship took place in 2007 with the first Law of Historical Memory. But it arrived thirty years late and with many omissions, as memorialist movements repeatedly denounced, and had no real impact on the change in the educational system, where democratic historical memory continues to be a “pending subject” (Ardoiz *et al.*, 2020).

Subsequently, the different autonomous laws of historical memory and the recent Law of Democratic Memory of 2022 seemed to be aimed at repairing that forgetfulness, that “memoricide” that avoided, time and again, to apply clearly and directly the international human rights principles of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition also in education.

However, the current educational law, the LOMLOE, reduces the contents of democratic historical memory to a generic and diffuse study of the “history of democracy and its contribution to the strengthening of the democratic principles and values defined in the Spanish Constitution”, in its forty-first additional provision. This diluted approach is surprising, when however this same law obliges all Spanish students to study the Jewish holocaust; but nothing is expressly said about the “Spanish holocaust”, as Preston (2011) called it.

The above has led us to propose this research to try to study the level of knowledge that students have about Franco’s repression and the anti-Franco struggle. We consider that if any student who finishes his or her school period without having a minimum knowledge about such events in the history of Spain is a clear indicator that something must be modified in the educational system (Cano and Navarro-Medina, 2019).

## Method

The purpose of this research has been to investigate the knowledge that young people who have recently finished their non-university studies have about the consequences of Franco's dictatorship and repression and the anti-Franco struggle.

The research focuses on exploring the real knowledge that the Spanish students who have passed through school after having completed the 4th year of ESO, 2nd baccalaureate or similar courses corresponding to other previous educational laws have about the democratic historical memory. For the History of Spain is a subject that is taught in all schools, and also during two school years: 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education and 2nd year of Baccalaureate.

We want to know if young people really have access to a rigorous and solid knowledge of the current historiography on the Franco dictatorship and repression, and the anti-Francoist struggle, or if on the contrary, once they have gone through the educational system, they are not knowledgeable about certain events that occurred during the Civil War and the dictatorship such as, for example, the repression and the anti-Francoist struggle (Gutiérrez, 2019).

The complexity of the social reality under investigation favors the use of a qualitative and quantitative methodology in a complementary manner that helps to understand the phenomenon under study. This is what has come to be called "methodological triangulation" (Feria *et al.*, 2019). This triangulation implies that both methods invigorate each other, providing points of view and insights that they could not offer separately; contrasting results and forcing more refined rethinking and reasoning (Páramo, 2018).

## Instruments and procedure

As mentioned above, the triangulation of research instruments strengthens the results of the research by complementing the application of different techniques in the same research to gather information and contrast the results (Torres, 2021).

Three instruments were used to collect information:

- one of a more qualitative cut, the focus group (Chaverri, 2017).
- another one that is part of the quantitative methodology, the questionnaire, the
- and the interviews, which are also qualitative in nature and which helped us to deepen those aspects that had remained more ambiguous or to clarify them (Nadège and Bürki, 2022).

The survey “Democratic Historical Memory in education” was initially designed with Google Forms with 26 indicators, divided into six sections (variables, knowledge, repression, resistance, memory recovery, agreement with statements). To validate its content, a Delphi method of consultation with experts was applied (Ruiz, 2014). In this phase, six experts in this field of research analyzed the suitability of the indicators and proposed a set of changes, referring to the content and structure of the questionnaire: linguistic precision, closure of items, change of order of some questions and elimination of two questions because they considered that they did not fit the object of the research. Based on this revision, a second version of the instrument was elaborated.

This new version underwent a second validation process to test its reliability (Ruiz, 2014) by applying it, as a pilot test, to a group of 25 students, selected by convenience.

When analyzing the results of the pilot application, two aspects were found that facilitated the improvement of its final version and contributed to its comprehension. These changes were introduced in the final version of the questionnaire by making lexical corrections in two questions.

The final questionnaire was composed of six sections with 24 questions. 4 questions on demographic characterization; 4 questions on knowledge of the subject; 3 on the subject of repression; 4 on anti-Francoist resistance; 8 on the subject of the recovery of democratic historical memory; and a final one on the degree of agreement with a series of global statements.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked if they were

willing to be interviewed about the issues raised in the questionnaire, in greater depth and responding openly to those aspects that most concerned them about the issues addressed or about elements that had not been raised but were important to them.

Forty-four interviews were conducted, with an average duration of 90 minutes, most of them by telephone or videoconference (except those where it was feasible to travel to conduct them in person), and in which the same issues raised in the questionnaire were addressed, but giving the possibility to qualify the answers, argue them and expand on aspects that had not been addressed in the survey. This allowed us to complement some relevant aspects that we present in the results, quoting verbatim the answers collected in these interviews.

Finally, 5 discussion groups were conducted with 22 students that allowed contrasting different points of view through a debate in which all participants could communicate their opinion in a relatively equal way in terms of the possibility of expressing it and contrasting it in an argued way with the rest of the participants (Escobar & Escobar, 2023).

## **Sample**

The results obtained by means of the three instruments referred to above yielded the following sample of 3,591 persons: 44 persons interviewed in depth, 5 discussion groups in which 22 students participated and 3,591 persons who answered the questionnaire applied. The population that participated most in the survey was from Castilla y León (23.4%), but there is representation from all the autonomous communities, where the following stand out: Community of Madrid (16%), Catalonia (12.3%) and Andalusia (11.3%). As for the percentage of participation by sex: 58.4% women and 41.6% men. In terms of age, 70% of the participants were in the 16-30 age bracket and, in terms of education, almost 70% had completed their high school studies. In other words, the majority of the participating population (Rositas, 2014) are young people who, in theory, would have studied Spanish history during the years of democracy.

## Results

The following are the main results of the research according to the findings found through the research instruments applied, focusing on the categories extracted from the analysis of the responses collected, around the main thematic blocks or topics raised in the study:

- Time devoted to historical memory in the classroom.
- From what approach the Franco dictatorship was approached.
- How Franco's repression was dealt with in the classroom
- The anti-Franco struggle

The last question, referring to the general contents explained in the classrooms, dealt with how Francoism had been explained to them in a generic way, that is, how it had been defined. As in the other questions, there was still a percentage of people who had not reached or did not remember how it was explained to them (13.4% and 15.9% respectively). As for the definitions, the results obtained were as follows: a fascist dictatorship (28.2%), an authoritarian regime (27.1%), a totalitarian government (10%) and a period of autarchy (5.5%). That is to say, more than 80% do not qualify Franco's regime as either a dictatorship or a fascist regime, showing that they are not aware of the historical reality that has the consensus of the scientific community. Within this percentage, two data stand out:

- the first that the ratio of uninformed people (around 30%) remains the same.
- and secondly that 5% defines it as the regime saw itself, as a simple period of autarky.

Despite these results, almost 30% do qualify it as a fascist dictatorship, which means that we are making progress, albeit very slowly and with gaps, since this value should be at least the majority message of the sample.

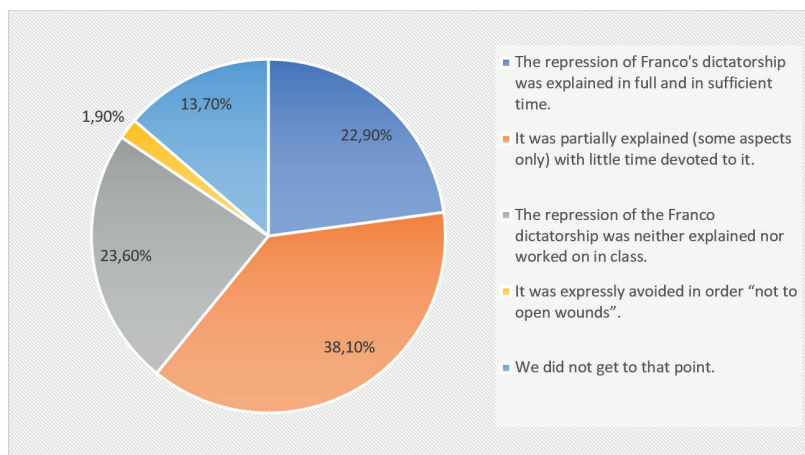
In the first part of the block of questions referring to Franco's repression that was asked to the participants in this research was whether they re-



membered having studied in class contents about the repression of Franco's dictatorship in their school. The data obtained graph I are as follows:

- Only 22.9% recalled that the repression of Franco's dictatorship had been explained in a complete way and that time had been devoted to it,
- 38.1% stated that it was partially explained (some aspects only), dedicating little time to it,
- 23.6% said that the repression of Franco's dictatorship was not explained or worked on in class,
- 1.9% explained that they expressly avoided addressing it "so as not to open wounds",
- 13.7% did not even reach that issue.

**GRAPH 1.** Do you remember having studied in class contents referring to the repression of Franco's dictatorship in your school?



Source: Compiled by the authors

This means that 77% did not deal with the repression of Franco's dictatorship in the school contents of the corresponding subjects. A substantial gap referring to 40 years of dictatorship that is ignored by more than three quarters of the students who passed through the classrooms. This confirms

what was previously analyzed with respect to the preliminary study on how the beginning of the Spanish war and Franco's regime was studied, where approximately 80% of the students had not been trained and informed with the optimal and accepted terms within the scientific community.

Undoubtedly, the last three results are the most relevant in this block, since they point out three problems inherent to the educational system when exposing and working on these topics with students and, therefore, to the present and future society.

- The first problem would be to maintain the idea that dealing with the past reopens wounds, an idea that emanates directly from the discourse of the Transition.
- Secondly, not addressing the contents consciously, which indicates a lack of teacher preparation or the interference of certain political currents within the teaching staff dedicated to the teaching of history.
- Finally, not organizing the syllabus so that there is enough time to deal with this topic reflects a bad organizational design of the school contents on the part of the administrations and those responsible for education. At present, there are enough bibliographic resources available to make a complete approach to this subject, such as Paul Preston's publication *The Spanish Holocaust: hatred and extermination in the Spanish War and after*.

In the interviews we found similar responses. Above all, participants who, in a more expressive and developed way, indicate that it was explained to them above: *"sometimes it was mentioned as the typical list that you learn by heart about repression, but it is not explained from a perspective of explaining and dealing in detail"* (E2).

Others point out that the explanation of these contents was actually omitted: *"No! many aspects are omitted"* (E44) or *"no! not at all. General features are explained, such as perhaps the suppression of freedom of association, censorship, etc., but the most bloody aspects of Franco's repression are not detailed. I am the granddaughter of a political prisoner imprisoned under Process 1001, who we never even saw in class, for example..."* (E32).

In spite of the amount, in terms of volume and typology, of repression exercised by the regime against any person contrary to its ideology, we consider that the four best known, supposedly, would be: (a) “the walks” and the shootings (mass graves), (b) the systematic repression, (c) the triple repression of women and (c) the economic repression. Therefore, we decided to evaluate the repression by means of these four variables.

The first of these variables corresponds to “walks” where the results obtained were as follows:

- 27.3% recognized that they were told about them in class and remember what they are,
- 47.6% stated that it had not been discussed,
- 11.1% that it had been treated, but they did not remember what it referred to, they did not remember.
- Some 14% indicated that they did not provide this content.

That is to say, almost half of the students did not know what was behind the euphemism of “stroll” used to hide a dramatic and brutal reality: the extrajudicial executions by firing squad, after taking them for a “stroll”, of people who defended republican democracy or who were not sufficiently sympathetic to the fascist cause or to the instigators of the coup d’état.

Something similar is found when asking them about the ditches and graves where more than 100,000 victims of Franco’s repression lie (Etxeberria and Solé, 2019; Muñoz, 2019). Only 19.9% answered that it was discussed and analyzed within the contents addressed in their center. 32.4% referred that it had been alluded to, but without clarifying how, who and why and 38.2% that the topic was not addressed in class. Finally, 9.6% indicated that the topic had not been addressed.

As in previous questions, we observed that approximately 80% had not had any training related to the mass graves. This is significant because it endorses the message of 40 years of peace proclaimed by Franco’s regime during its period of validity and still maintained by current political parties.

Likewise, the fact that 32% were not explained the reasons for these graves is equally worrying and shows the lack of interest in knowing in depth this part of our history that influences so much our present and future. Finally,

we observe how almost 10% did not get to see this topic due to lack of time and a deficit in the planning of the educational program.

To complement the study with respect to mass graves, we asked a direct question in the personal interviews: *And, in addition, do you think that high school students should be taken to see in the field how the exhumations of mass graves of those repressed by the Franco regime are carried out? Why?* This was also addressed in the discussion groups.

The reason for this question was to evaluate the possibility of making visits as a complement to the explanation in the classroom. In the majority, the answer to the question was positive as a desire and willingness: *“to know the work that is being done, yes, but to see at the moment how they exhume reprisals is perhaps too hard”* (E10).

In the same line they expressed themselves in a discussion group where we extracted the following statement:

*“It seems to me a good idea to try to instill social responsibility and empathy for the families of the victims of Franco’s repression. We hear from some politicians that this is “reopening wounds”, that we must “let the dead rest”. They do not tell us about the pain of a family that was robbed of a member they never saw again, that could not mourn because they had nowhere to go to mourn. And there are thousands of people like that, who do not want nor deserve that society looks the other way, hides and forgets their loved ones murdered by a fascist dictator”* (E19).

The pattern is practically repeated, in a quite similar way, in other aspects related to Franco’s repression:

- 15.9% considered that the systematic and organized repression of those “suspected” of being disaffected with the regime was analyzed in class.
- 42.4% stated that it had not been discussed in class.
- 29.4% that had been mentioned without further explanation.
- 12.3% indicated that they had not been able to explain this topic.

- 80% were unaware of this type of repression.

The above shows the normalization of a vision of the dictatorship as a period of “peace and calm” that the dictatorship itself was responsible for disseminating, but which has not been sufficiently countered even in the classroom using recent historiography. Likewise, we observe that there is still a high percentage of people who never got to know these contents during their schooling.

The fourth section to analyze the repression was the aspects referred to the specific triple repression exercised on women: for being left-wing and “red”; for breaking molds and stereotypes during the second republic; and for being family or linked to republicans:

- 56.4% indicated that it was not explained to them nor did they see it in the textbooks,
- 3.6% indicated that it was not explained, but it did appear in the books,
- 29% indicated that it was seen, but did not go into further explanation,
- only 6% indicated that they dealt with this topic in class and in depth,
- 15% stated that it did not happen because it was not reached.

Undoubtedly, the results obtained in the study leave us with very worrying data. The first is that more than half of those surveyed were not given any explanation of this type of repression. Secondly, only 6% received full training. Finally, 3.6% were not told about it, nor did it even appear in textbooks. In other words, more than 90% did not know that the regime provided women with “special and specific treatment” because they were women in terms of repression. Therefore, the data show something recurrent in history and in history textbooks: the permanent and systematic invisibilization of women as a social actor.

Regarding the economic repression exercised by the dictatorial regime, the last point discussed focused on asking about the seizure of assets, which has been the origin of so many of today’s great fortunes.

- 15.6% said that the laws of seizure of property of repressed republican

- families had been discussed in the classroom,
- 52.8% said they had not been treated,
  - 18.2% which, although it had been mentioned, had not been explained,
  - The remaining 13.4% said that this issue had not been addressed.
  - more than 80% did not have clear and contrasted information regarding the figure of seizures and the laws of seizure of assets of the dictatorial regime.

Of that percentage, it stands out that more than 50% were not even provided with knowledge of this type of repression, which allows us to make an assessment in a current key because not knowing this type of repression obviates how a part of the families with greater purchasing power today obtained their fortune through forced expropriation of reprisals or through the exploitation of Republican families (Maestre, 2019).

Likewise, we also observe that the pattern of lack of knowledge is maintained, with 10-15% of the students not having had the opportunity to learn about this topic in class “due to lack of time”. Only 15% had the opportunity to know and work on the plundering of Franco’s property in an accurate and relevant way the laws of seizure of property to Republican families.

The lack of knowledge reflected in the data regarding repression confirms the answers obtained in the personal interviews: *“because of my experience in high school and high school, these types of topics were not addressed”* (E30), or *“they are mentioned in a very general way”* (E20). However, in the discussion groups there were also responses that contrasted with the above: *“it is also necessary to explain what the Republicans did, not only what Franco’s side did”* (GD-1).

### Anti-Franco struggle

Something similar occurs with the subject of the anti-Francoist struggle. When asked if they remembered having studied in class contents referring to the anti-Franco struggle against the dictatorship in their school, the percentages of distribution of the answers were similar. Thus, the “memoricide” with respect to the struggle for the return of democracy and the opposition to the continuity of Franco’s dictatorship, which continued in some cases until the

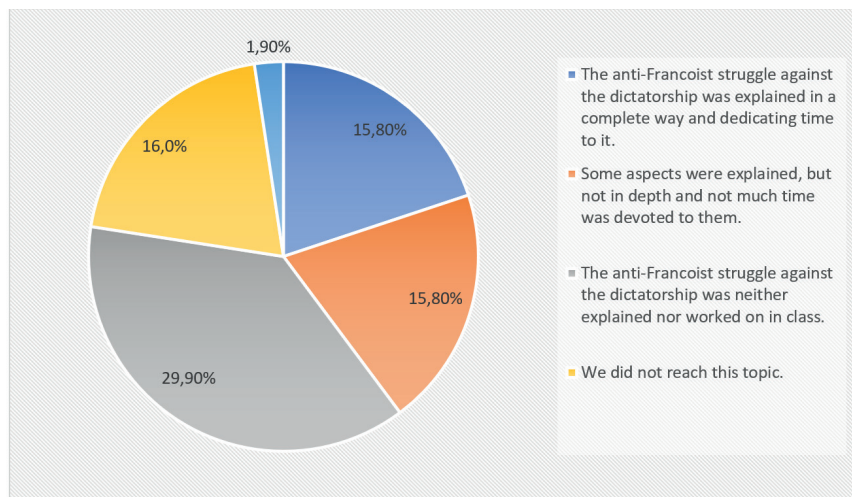
sixties of the twentieth century, was evident. The mantle of oblivion seems to have left in the gutter of history also so many women and men who largely gave their lives for the ideals of social justice, freedom, coexistence and democracy that had brought the Second Republic and whose memory seems to have been forgotten in the transmission to future generations in school.

As can be seen in graph II in the results obtained in the questionnaire it is shown that:

- Only 15.8% recalled that the anti-Francoist struggle against the dictatorship had been explained in a complete way and that time had been devoted to it,
- 36.4% stated that some aspect was explained, but not in depth and with little time devoted to it,
- 29.9% stated that the anti-Francoist struggle against the dictatorship was neither explained nor worked on in class,
- 1.9% explain that the anti-Francoist struggle against the dictatorship was expressly avoided “so as not to open wounds”, and
- 16% did not even reach that issue.



## GRAPH II. Do you remember having studied in class contents referring to the anti-Francoist struggle against the dictatorship?



Source: Compiled by the authors

An 84.2% did not deal with the anti-Francoist struggle against the dictatorship in the school contents of the corresponding subjects. Another incomprehensible gap that is ignored, in this case, by more than four fifths of the students who passed through the classrooms.

In this sense this “forgetting” or “forgetfulness” questions the learning in school of essential values related to truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, which even from the UN have pointed out and reminded the Spanish government, on repeated occasions (2014, 2020), warning it that knowing the truth of Franco’s repression and the anti-Franco struggle is an inalienable right of the Spanish people (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2022).

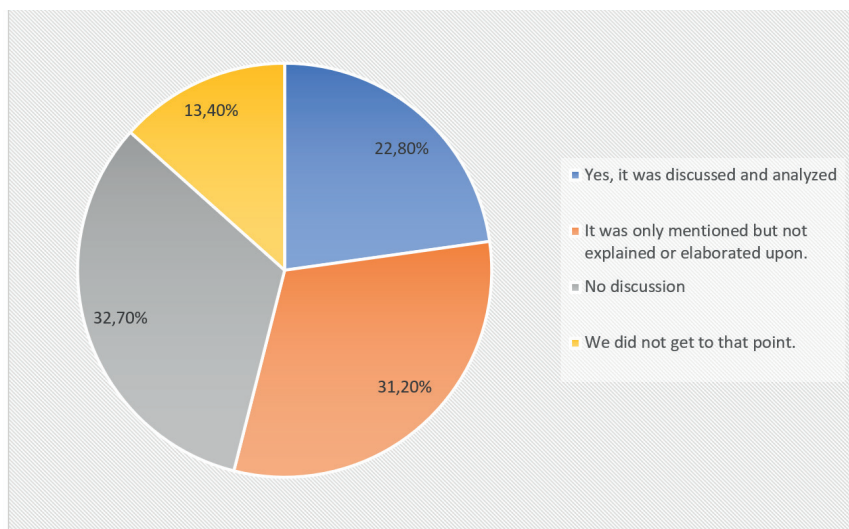
Within the resistance that opposed Franco’s regime, in spite of having several nuclei such as the students or the workers, we made special emphasis on asking about the resistance and the anti-Francoist guerrilla, since we had the hypothesis that at least this could be one of the aspects dealt with in the classrooms.



By observing the graph III we realize that this subject is also unknown by the students, as shown by the results obtained:

- 22.8% stated that content on resistance and guerrilla warfare was discussed and explained,
- 31.2% were only mentioned,
- 32.7% did not talk about it, which is serious because it indicates that the subject was discussed, but for various reasons it was not addressed,
- 13.4% did not reach this issue. Based on the results obtained, the hypothesis proved to be correct.

**GRAPH III.** Explanation of the guerrilla and the anti-Francoist resistance



Source: Compiled by the authors

Almost 80% of the surveyed population is unaware of the opposition that was exercised against the regime during its term. This high degree of ignorance confirms once again the same story of forgetting the repression. It seems as if during the 40 years of Franco's regime in Spain "social peace" and

the rules of a bloody dictatorship had reigned.

Within this high degree of ignorance, we observed differences related to the way this type of content is approached in the classroom. On the one hand, deliberate omission or succinct explanation, only mentioning it. On the other hand, the failure to even mention this type of content, corresponding to almost 15% of the sample.

The results regarding the schoolchildren's knowledge of the role of the "maquis" in the anti-Francoist struggle differ slightly from the previous ones, where 20.2% openly acknowledged that their role and the struggle they sustained had been explained, a percentage that agrees with the previous question.

But 14.6% said that they had only been mentioned, but that the role they played in the dictatorship was not explained in depth. And 20.2% declared that "it was the first time they had heard that term". In addition, a majority percentage (28.3%), almost a third of the students mentioned knowing the term and the reference to the "maquis" on their own initiative, not because they had studied it in the classroom. It is not unreasonable to think that this may be the case, since there are currently numerous studies of the maquis and opposition to the regime (Serrano, 1998; Serrano, 2001; Hernández, *et al.*, 2007; Andrés, 2019). Finally, 16.6% again insisted on a recurring topic throughout the research: they had not reached that part of the agenda.

The results concerning the maquis leave us with two very interesting readings. First, knowledge of the figure and role of the maquis is quite balanced (48.5% know about it vs. 51.5% who do not know about it). This result contrasts with those seen in other contents. However, this percentage of people who do know the maquis should be qualified, which leads us to the second reflection. The knowledge of the maquis is largely due to a personal interest in the figure of the anti-Franco fighters, but not because it has been worked on in the contents of the classes.

The same can be seen in the statistical analysis carried out, according to the autonomous communities (Table I). We observe how the distribution of the percentages is equitable, since the results show that in no community is the value of "yes, the maquis was explained" higher than the others. It also stands out that in almost all the autonomous communities the highest value

corresponds to students knowing about the maquis on their own initiative, not because it was explained to them in the classroom. Furthermore, in the communities with the highest participation, the second option corresponds to the statement that they did not know this term.

**TABLE I.** Study of the maquis according to Autonomous Communities

Communities	<i>No</i>	<i>First time I hear it</i>	<i>I know for my own interest</i>	<i>The term was used, but not explained in depth.</i>	<i>Their role and struggle was explained, and what it meant for them.</i>
Andalucía	54	60	61	34	57
Aragon	9	12	11	18	33
Principality of Asturias	19	21	11	22	49
Canary Islands	10	8	0	4	11
Cantabria	5	6	0	2	8
Castilla-La Mancha	17	34	13	20	29
Castilla y León	98	103	184	64	94
Catalonia	45	49	112	39	44
Community of Madrid	48	73	144	58	54
Valencian Community	23	34	47	20	32
Extremadura	21	18	26	15	13
Outside Spain	0	3	3	0	1
Galicia	25	26	14	12	11
Balearic Islands	4	0	1	4	0
La Rioja	2	5	4	2	16
Region of Murcia	6	14	19	14	14
Community of Navarra	2	2	3	4	3
Basque Country	0	4	12	8	3

Source: Compiled by the authors

Similar results also appear with the interviews, where most of them show a lack of knowledge of the figure of the maquis. However, some of the people interviewed provided us with some motivations as to the reason for

this situation with respect to the explanation of the maquis. A student who had recently finished high school explained: *“because of the way in which Francoism is conceived in the social narrative, as a victorious regime where peace was maintained for almost 40 years. When the reality was quite different, the regime was maintained with high levels of violence and fierce opposition from the beginning”* (E6).

Another student was more critical: *“I guess many are not trained on the subject or are not interested in giving a topic that can cause controversy with parents”* (GD3).

## Conclusions and discussion

The first finding of this research is that this topic is not always addressed in high schools or, sometimes, it is overlooked, either because of the length of the syllabus, the way in which the subjects are taught, or the fact that certain historical topics continue to be taboo.

As a second conclusion, it can be observed that the majority of the respondents showed that what was dealt with in the classrooms focused especially on the Spanish war (59.4%) and only 5% mentioned that emphasis was placed on Franco's repression and the anti-Franco struggle. This conclusion is directly linked to the third in relation to deliberate silences and cover-ups.

A third conclusion is that the contents developed still maintain the silences about Franco's repression and the anti-Franco struggle. “Omissions that could be understood as a discourse (by omission) legitimizing the dictatorship, minimizing its consequences and contributing to the adoption of an uncritical perspective in a student body that finishes education” (Mancha, 2019).

Moreover, it seems that in the analysis of this historical period and in the explanation of the Civil War, the so-called theory of equidistance or equalization (Erice, 2009) still persists, in which the Civil War is presented as a confrontation between two sides, a fratricidal struggle between brothers,

where the two opposing parties are to blame for the events that occurred in it.

The block on Franco's repression left more significant conclusions. Practically half of the sample that participated in the research stated that the repression carried out against people "suspected" of being disaffected with the regime had not been explained in class (42.4%), that the specific and triple repression of women had not been addressed (56.4%) and that the economic repression through the seizure of goods had not been dealt with in any way (52.8%). With these data, it is not surprising that the majority of society is not able to visualize the consequences of the Franco regime in today's society nor the so-called "non-accountable effects" of repression (fear, trauma and humiliation), also suffered by the social and family environment of the repressed persons (Ranz, 2019).

Regarding the repression of women, both in the interviews and in the survey we could see that this repression has not only not been sufficiently addressed in education and curricular materials, but that they were so surprised by this topic that it seemed as if they had never been able to imagine it. This we consider to be the responsibility not only of maintaining the silence of the repression on them -which they share with their male peers- but they have also suffered oblivion by much of the official historiography (Ferrer, 2019; López, 2017) and this is reflected in education. The interviews also revealed that most of the participants were unaware of the role of the anti-Franco guerrilla women, either by omission in the classroom or by not showing that there were people, and very many women, who opposed the dictatorship or by trying to show that the Franco regime was a period of peace where there were no altercations.

In conclusion, the research seems to show a lack of will on the part of the educational administration, a lack of time for the development of the entire agenda and a poor structuring and planning of the same. Which is causing the invisibilization or minimization not only of the tragedy of those who were shot on walls or thrown into chasms or precipices, but also of the tragedy of those who survived as "losers" and their descendants, and of the struggles of those who maintained the rebellion against the dictatorship, may explain in part the "normalization of the dismemory" (Fuentes, 2018).

Pereyra (2005, p.13) states that "there is no historical discourse whose

efficacy is purely cognitive; all historical discourse intervenes in a given social reality, where it is more or less useful for the different forces in conflict". Indeed, as we have shown in this article, it is possible to identify a fundamental conflict between two tendencies of historical education in Spain with respect to the Franco dictatorship. The first seeks to hide the past, often under a supposedly good intention of not opening wounds that have taken a long time to heal. It opts for the social peace that allows ignorance, thus being useful to those actors who benefited from terror, repression and plundering. In this regard, the bet by the ultra-right to find in history and its narration a space in which to wage a "cultural battle" (Ballester, 2023) based on the promotion of questionable and non-rigorous stories about different processes such as European colonial expansion or Franco's dictatorship itself is outstanding. In short, what such groups seek is to attack the democratic historical memory and thus hinder the possibilities of such memory to enable substantial changes in the present, either through a rhetoric that seeks to "whitewash" Francoism (Bono, 2024) or the open denial of the past through the removal of plaques in tribute to the victims of Francoism (Martí, 2024).

In the face of this, there persists a position that, by dint of fighting against the current of oblivion, has sought to unravel the past, thus also illustrating the contradictions of the present, seeking to build a complex argument as to why it is important to promote changes in the judicial, military or administrative structures, as well as substantial legal changes with mechanisms that prevent access to information and thus, hinder the possibility that new generations can dispute the historical narrative, such as the law of official secrets, in force since 1968 and modified in 1978. To achieve this, it is necessary to strengthen historical awareness (Ortega *et al.*, 2024) in the educational system, and in this, teachers are a central actor (Sánchez, 2024).

The aforementioned trends are not *phantasmagorical* figures without material substratum or context. They are the product of a set of social and political forces that operate on a daily basis and that find in history a field of dispute.

Although history has been considered as the field of the objective as opposed to memory as the field of the subjective, sometimes taking both concepts and both realities as incompatible and assuming that the history told by

specialists assumes a plus of veracity, which memory, whether collective or individual, does not have, we consider that democratic historical memory can help to reconstruct a counter-hegemonic curriculum (Connel, 2009) in which the lived experiences and points of view of the least favored sectors in history are recovered, taking into account the victims, although the accounts of their suffering are often presented as “conflictive” topics (Carrasco, *et al.*, 2024).

Recovering democratic historical memory in education means rebalancing a historical narrative that has been distorted for too long. But it also means transmitting a collective imaginary in defense of truth, justice and reparation as fundamental values in any democracy. Therefore, in this context, it is more necessary than ever to recover historical memory as the basis of democratic citizenship and teacher training (De la Cruz & Milla, 2024). Without knowledge there is no historical memory, no truth, justice or reparation possible. There is no possibility of disputing the historical narrative, nor of finding in history elements that allow us to build, collectively, a more democratic future.

For this reason, adequate disciplinary training is necessary in the Degree in History and in the Faculties of Teacher Training, as well as the dissemination and transfer of knowledge in the continuing education of teachers or through updated syntheses in accessible formats, such as videos, websites, social networks, textbooks, didactic guides or synthesis books (Fuertes & Banderas, 2024). In addition, the gradual inclusion of methodologies such as oral history, visits to places of memory or democratic memory projects in different educational centers contribute, with the incorporation of new voices and perspectives, to an epistemological change and the incorporation of new perspectives that allow us to point to a direction of change (Banderas, 2024).

This research has tried to help in this endeavor. Although one of the limitations of this research, which we should not forget, is that it would need to include more voices from different autonomous communities to enrich the analysis of how historical memory is approached in different parts of Spain. Another limitation is that the sample of this research has been of convenience and intentional and, therefore, biases can be introduced in the results, since not all segments of the population have the same probability of being included in the sample, so the results and conclusions obtained are not generalizable



as they are not representative of the total population, but they can be transferable to other similar contexts. In future research it would be desirable to be able to do stratified sampling that is more representative and that can increase the validity and generalizability of the research results (Reyes, 2022).

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**Address information:** Enrique Javier Díez-Gutiérrez. Universidad de León, Facultad de Educación, Campus de Vegazana, 24071. E-mail ejdieg@uni-leon.es





## **Research section**

