

Teaching History in Primary Education: Analysis of the cognitive demands in the Spanish education law¹

Enseñar historia en Primaria: Análisis de la demanda cognitiva en el currículo español

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Abstract

The processes of teaching and learning that are developed in the classrooms are bound to education law, since it sets the standards for teachers. Because of this, in order to diagnose how to teach a particular discipline, analysing this legislation is key. There is a pioneer attempt in the field of teaching history in primary education to determine, from the analysis of the learning criteria and standards established in the basic curriculum of primary education, the cognitive demands associated with its teaching. In Spain, this means examining the Royal Decree that establishes the basic curriculum and the 17 curriculums specific for each autonomous community. To this aim, a documentary study of the current Legislation for this educational level was conducted. An ad hoc questionnaire was designed to, via expert judgement, establish a set of categories which, based on the reformulation of Bloom's Taxonomy, associate verbs to specific cognitive abilities. The assessment of the validity of the content and the reliability analysis from the experts showed a high level of agreement among raters. Afterwards, the cognitive demands drawn from all the described actions in the assessment criteria and learning standards in the state (n=35) and autonomic (n=2140) legislations

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were identified. Then, with the intention of arranging three groups related to the type of cognitive demand stemming from the curriculums, an analysis of conglomerates was conducted. Results show that, with very few exceptions, and in spite of the tendency in History didactics that suggests the opposite, there is still a predominance of cognitive dimensions associated with memorising and understanding, with not many actions left involving more complex demands. This tendency increases in higher levels of education, losing every critical and creative component.

Keywords: Curriculum, educational innovation, comparative research, history, primary education, taxonomy, cognition

Resumen

Los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje que se desarrollan en las aulas están ligados a la legislación educativa pues esta marca las pautas de los docentes. Por ello, de cara a diagnosticar cómo se enseña una disciplina, es clave analizar su legislación. De manera pionera en el campo de la enseñanza de la historia en Educación Primaria se intenta establecer la demanda cognitiva asociada a la enseñanza de la historia a partir del análisis de los criterios y estándares de aprendizaje recogidos en el currículo básico de Educación Primaria. En España, esto supone abordar el Real Decreto que establece el currículo básico y los 17 currículos autonómicos que lo concretan. Con este fin se procedió al análisis documental de la legislación vigente para este nivel educativo. Se diseñó un cuestionario *ad hoc* para, a través de juicio de expertos, poder establecer una serie de categorías que asociaban determinados verbos a capacidades cognitivas concretas, partiendo de la reformulación de la taxonomía de Bloom. La evaluación de la validez del contenido y el análisis de confiabilidad entre expertos mostraron un gran acuerdo entre jueces. Se identificaron posteriormente las demandas cognitivas que se desprendían de todas las acciones descritas en los criterios de evaluación y estándares de aprendizaje de la legislación estatal (n=35) y autonómica (n=2140). Tras esto se realizó un análisis de conglomerados, con la intención de conformar tres grupos relacionados con el tipo de demanda cognitiva que se desprendía de sus currículos. Los resultados indican que, con pocas excepciones, a pesar de que las tendencias en la didáctica de la historia recomiendan lo contrario, aún predominan las dimensiones cognitivas asociadas a la memorización y comprensión, siendo residuales las acciones que implican demandas más complejas. Esta tendencia aumenta en los cursos superiores, perdiendo todo componente crítico y creativo.

Palabras clave: programa de estudios, innovación pedagógica, investigación comparativa, historia, enseñanza primaria, taxonomía, cognición.

Introduction

Studies on how History is taught and assessed in Spanish primary schools are already frequent and results unanimous. Either through the analysis of the opinion of the students, the exams or the questions and activities in the textbooks, all of them conclude that the memorization of content is still the fundamental pillar and that the ability to understand or analyze is practically absent (Bel, 2017; Miralles, Gómez & Sánchez, 2014; Sáiz & Colomer, 2014). But is it possible to learn History in another way? For decades, research on the didactics of History has pointed in a very different direction: the need to develop in students skills related to History that go beyond the conceptual load (Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2013). But, of course, it is not a question of emptying the History of substantive content, since “without knowledge, there can be no competencies of any kind” (Prats, 2016, p. 41). It is about turning History into a useful discipline for students, one which provides students with the tools that allow them to develop critical and civic thinking (Barton & Levstik, 2009). These postulates connect directly with the need to develop in students the most demanding cognitive abilities of Bloom’s taxonomy.

The American psychologist Benjamin Bloom (1913-1999) has gone down in the history of education for his taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956). His intention was to classify these objectives based on levels of complexity. He made the different behaviors to develop fall on the verbs, establishing a total of six behavioral categories organized through a hierarchy that ranged from the simplest to the most complex behaviors. Despite the criticism it may have received (Hill & McGaw, 1981; Madaus, Woods & Nuttall, 1973; Marzano & Kendall, 2007), the reality is that his taxonomy has been used worldwide when preparing assessment resources and formulating educational objectives (Eisner, 2000).

This Bloom taxonomy, reviewed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), is the one that will serve as the basis of the present research, and that starts from the following assumption: current educational research defends with solid arguments that the teaching and learning of History should transcend mere memorization, requiring the development of thinking skills even at an early age. Faced with this, what line does the current educational legislation mark? The analysis of the cognitive demand

associated with the actions present in the assessment criteria (from now on AC) and assessable learning standards (from now on ALS) gathered in the basic curriculum of Primary Education will allow to outline the answer to this question.

Theoretical framework

The importance of Bloom's taxonomy as a basis for the proposed analysis has already been pointed out. This was created in 1956 by Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill and Krathwohl, and it started from a simple but powerful idea. It ordered the skills required of students from least to greatest cognitive demand and, therefore, from least to greatest difficulty. Memory, which occupied the lowest part of the pyramid, was followed by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and, as the most cognitively demanding skill, evaluation. Through a series of actions, these abilities could be assessed. For example, memorizing, naming, repeating, and others would serve to evaluate memory (Wallace, 2015). Considering this hierarchical structure and the theses of Bloom and his team, if someone wanted to understand a concept they had to first remember it and, in the same way, it could not be applied if it was not remembered and understood (Churches, 2009; Eisner, 2000). That is, the progression of skills went through the overcoming of inferior hierarchies. Bloom was not the first to categorize human thought, but the success of his scheme was its simplicity (Wineburg & Schneider, 2009), in such a way that his way of scaffolding the teaching-learning processes had a lot of prestige, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world.

After almost fifty years of presence and influence, Bloom's taxonomy was finally revised in 2001 and reformulated by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). One of the main contributions of this review was to abandon the idea of a cumulative hierarchy that, on the other hand, had been one of the most criticized ideas (Marzano & Kendall, 2007). In addition, the new version distinguished between factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. That is, it was necessary to differentiate between those basic concepts that must be acquired, the interrelation that can be made between them, the skills or techniques that can be developed with that knowledge and, finally, the awareness of the knowledge that one possesses. Nouns were also replaced by verbs. Its

success has been such that a revision adapted to the digital age has even been created (Churches, 2009). Currently this taxonomy has become a scheme to classify educational objectives or learning standards and to analyze the curriculum and detect strengths and weaknesses, as proposed by Krathwohl (2002).

That is why the present research uses Bloom's revised taxonomy, which will be applied to the analysis of AC and ALS enunciated in current educational legislation in relation to the teaching of History. Research shows that what is assessed radically determines what is taught (Merchán, 2005), hence the focus on these specific aspects of educational legislation.

For the teaching of History, current research trends consider that teaching time and history is to teach, from the very beginning of schooling, all the aspects that these notions (time and history) possess (Cooper, 2002; De Groot -Reuvekamp, Van Boxtel & Harnett, 2014; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Levstik & Barton, 2008). It is teaching a civil and chronological time, which must not only be known and applied but also valued as a social construction. It is to introduce a historical time that goes beyond the mere chronological and factual expression and that allows us to understand the temporal dimensions associated with it, such as the succession, duration, simultaneity and the rhythm of history. Along with these, it is essential to develop in the students of this educational stage the skills of historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013) and critical-creative thinking, this being key to the formation of citizens capable of making informed decisions (Prats & Santacana, 2011).

The introduction of the teaching of History at an early age is also advocated, radically opposing the theses of Piaget (1974). These concluded that in preschool and primary education stages it was not appropriate to introduce a temporal and historical thought since the students did not handle numerical elements, which made it impossible to control temporal concepts, nor could they have a tangible experience on it, necessary to build the first learnings. Given this, the child had to control, in the first place, the measurement and organization of time. This would help them build temporality progressively. In the same way, Piaget (1974) warned that this phase was characterized by the presence of "primitive discussions" (p. 85) and "collective monologues" (p. 77). Under these terms, he alluded to the fact that the child was only capable of making simple statements, without connection or explicit reasoning and

limited to their personal experience, as well as their inability to interact with various interlocutors. In short, the skills of arguing, reasoning and constructing joint meanings were initially discarded as typical of these ages (Maine, 2015).

It is insisted that current research rejects Piaget's thesis and all its restrictions regarding the introduction of History and the development of thinking skills from an early age (Arias, Egea & Levstik, 2019; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2014). The main argument is based on pointing out the existence of a certain abstract thought in children that allows them to recreate and understand situations, places and times that are alien to their experience. In addition, they have embryonic skills that can be developed through multiple strategies and that allow them to establish cause-consequence relationships, change-continuity, recognize perspectives and contrast information to generate new statements (Cooper, 2002; Levstik & Barton, 2008). For this, disciplinary knowledge is not fundamental and can be progressively introduced from the questions that sources and materials allow to enhance in the classroom, the genesis of diverse interpretations and their argumentation within the class-group being especially useful for the learning of History. Thus, the History taught must be a discipline linked to the interpretation and construction of knowledge and not to academic History (Brophy & VanSledright, 1997). For this, it is necessary to effectively introduce activities associated with the application, analysis, assessment and creation.

This need for a change in the teaching of disciplines, such as the one indicated for History, has been accompanied by a certain transformation of the internal structure of educational legislation. In this effort to achieve efficiency, the curricula have been filled with objectives (Gimeno, 1982), either listed as such or, more recently, formulated as learning standards (Royal Decree 126/2014) (from now on RD). It is noteworthy how, over time, the curriculum has become more guided and, with the appearance of the objectives, the contents, the basic competences or the AC, the ALSs have continued. These are understood by the RD as the means that details the AC, which allows "to define the learning outcomes, and which specify what the student must know, understand and know how to do in each subject" (RD 126/2014, art. 2). Following the curriculum model scheme of De Ketele (2008), this evolution is related to this attempt to move from an encyclopedic curriculum model focused on the teacher to another behaviorist-Taylorist focused on the objectives to be achieved by

the students (De Ketele, 2008; López-Goñi & Goñi, 2015). That is why AC or ALS actually propose those didactic objectives that have to be achieved through a specific action to be carried out.

Despite this structural evolution, the changes in the curricular model (the principles that support it) have not been really significant (López-Goñi & Goñi, 2015). But what about school disciplines? Have they undergone a parallel evolution to this attempt to modernize the curricular structure? Has the paradigm shift in the discipline of History didactics influenced the current configuration of the Spanish educational curriculum? These are the central questions underlying this work. That is why the objectives of this research are focused on (1) establishing the cognitive demand associated with the criteria and learning standards collected in the basic curriculum of national and regional Primary Education, and (2) analyzing the trends associated with the development of detected cognitive abilities. Its achievement will allow us to answer the questions posed.

The DR analyzed has left the autonomous communities some room for maneuver. Therefore, to know the general panorama, it is necessary to analyze the state legislation and the seventeen regional laws. Hence the pioneering character of this work. Although similar investigations have been proposed for other areas of knowledge such as Natural Sciences (Borge, Pires & Delgado, 2018; Delgado & Calonge, 2018), Physical Education (Méndez, Méndez, Fernández & Prieto, 2015; Otero & Vázquez, 2019) or Music (Casanova & Serrano, 2018; García, 2018), very little has been written about how the teaching of History is approached through the educational curriculum of Primary Education in a comparative way. There are undoubtedly interesting studies published after the entry into force of the LOE (De Pro & Miralles, 2009) or the LOMCE, but that either do not propose a global comparative study (López-Facal, 2014; Pelegrín, 2015), or they are limited to specific courses and not to the entire stage (López, García & Martínez, 2015). Similar comparative curricular studies are found in Secondary Education (Molina & Calderón, 2009), which help to contextualize the study carried out.

Method

To answer the research question and objectives, an investigation has been carried out that, according to Bisquerra (2004), is classified as a

documentary analysis of the Spanish educational legislation in force at the time the study was developed: RD 126/2014, which establishes the basic curriculum for primary education, and the 17 regional curricula that specify the aforementioned regulations. All regional legislative documents are published in the respective official gazettes of their Autonomous Communities (Appendix 1). After the first review of these documents, 2,175 actions were identified in the AC and ALS of content block 4 (“Huellas del Tiempo”) enunciated by a total of 98 different verbs. In order to determine with what level of cognitive demand (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) each of these verbs were related, a random selection of a total of 32 (33% of the total) was made. To measure the degree of agreement on the ascription of each of these verbs to each level of cognitive demand, an ad hoc questionnaire was designed with a Likert-type scale of 4 options, from (1) “No agreement” to (4) “Totally agree”. A total of three expert judges in the subject filled in the questionnaire and with the results we proceeded to obtain the Aiken’s V coefficient to evaluate the content validity. A total Aiken V coefficient of $0.96 > 0.80$ was obtained. For the reliability analysis between judges, the Krippendorff Alpha Coefficient (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) was also calculated, using SPSS 24 program (macro *kalpha*) obtaining an $\alpha = .86$. This high degree of agreement allowed the definition of common aspects to be categorized based on the objectives set. Said categorization was carried out through a control sheet. After that, the degree of cognitive demand was divided into three levels, grouping the categories, hierarchically, into data sets (Table I).

TABLE I. Categories related to the degree of cognitive demand (CD) associated with the detected verbs and levels established for their comparative analysis (low CD, medium CD and high CD).

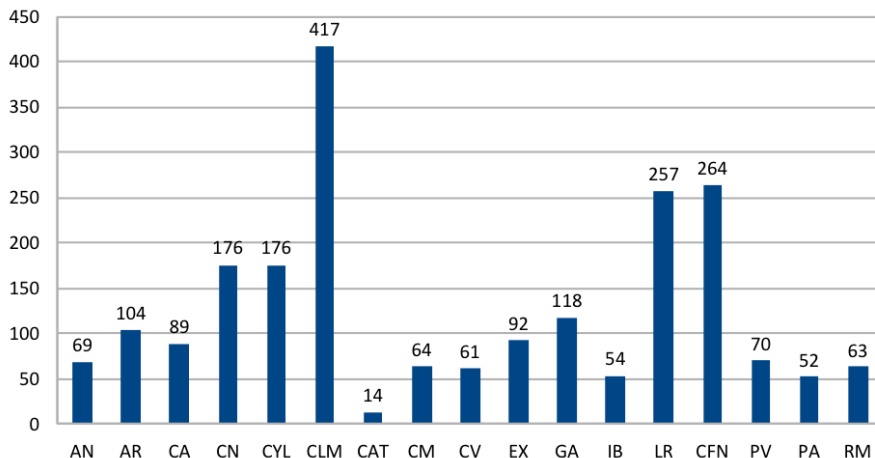
Category	Associated verbs	Level
1. Remember	Knowing, being aware (knowing), knowing, recognizing, identifying, naming, citing, mentioning, listing, indicating, pointing out, narrating, telling, describing, defining, situating, locating, locating, dating, perceiving, assuming, accepting, consolidate, learn, visit, consult, read	Low CD
2. Understand	Classify, order, sequence, explain, expose, express, inform, communicate, manifest, transmit, exemplify, select, collect, search, collect, specify, understand, give reasons	
3. Apply	Use, use, employ, demonstrate, discover, show (represent), represent, act, dramatize, comment, propose, plan, integrate, calculate, make, record (information), contribute (data), deepen, treat (sources)	Medium CD
4. Analyze	Differentiate, distinguish, contrast, compare, relate, associate, organize, obtain (information), interpret, respond (interpret), inquire, investigate, study (analyze), explore, observe	
5. Evaluate	Formulate (answers), evaluate (evaluate), justify, pose (questions), consider, deduce	High CD
6. Create	Elaborate, carry out, build, rebuild, trace, establish, invent	

Source: Own elaboration based on the categorization of Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001.

When analyzing the legislation, a seventh group of verbs related to the development of attitudes and values was identified; this group has been left out of this analysis as the verbs are not associated with said cognitive abilities. These are actions enunciated with the verbs respect, value (give value), appreciate, show interest, develop curiosity, participate or enjoy.

The sample finally analyzed constitutes a total of $N = 35$ actions for the case of the RD and $N = 2140$ for the set of regional laws. In relation to these, the great diversity in terms of the specificity and detail in the development of the AC and ALS to be evaluated in each case stands out. The numbers oscillate between the 417 actions demanded of the students of Castilla-La Mancha and the 14 of the Catalan curriculum for the whole of the Primary stage (Graph I). Due to the disparity in the number of shares demanded by each autonomous community, the comparative analyzes will be carried out based on percentages.

GRAPH I. Number of actions categorized in each of the regional laws analyzed².



Source: Own elaboration.

For the statistical treatment of the information, SPSS 24.0 was used. Specifically, the cluster analysis of K means was carried out to group the different autonomous communities into groups with a similar profile. According to Clatworthy, Buick, Hankins, Weinman and Horne (2005), this statistical test is one of the most used for this purpose, given its high degree of validity. Thus, taking into account the degree of cognitive demand, three groups were created: group 1 (group with a higher cognitive demand), group 2 (medium cognitive demand) and group 3 (lower cognitive demand).

⁽²⁾ The acronyms used in the text correspond to: AN = Andalusia; AR = Aragon; CA = Canary Islands; CN = Cantabria; CYL = Castilla and León; CLM = Castilla-La Mancha; CAT = Catalonia; CM = Community of Madrid; CV = Valencian Community; EX = Extremadura; GA = Galicia; IB = Balearic Islands; LR = La Rioja; CFN = Foral Community of Navarra; PV = Basque Country; PA = Principality of Asturias; RM = Region of Murcia.

Results³

Objective 1. Establish the cognitive demand associated with the criteria and learning standards collected in the basic curriculum of Primary Education.

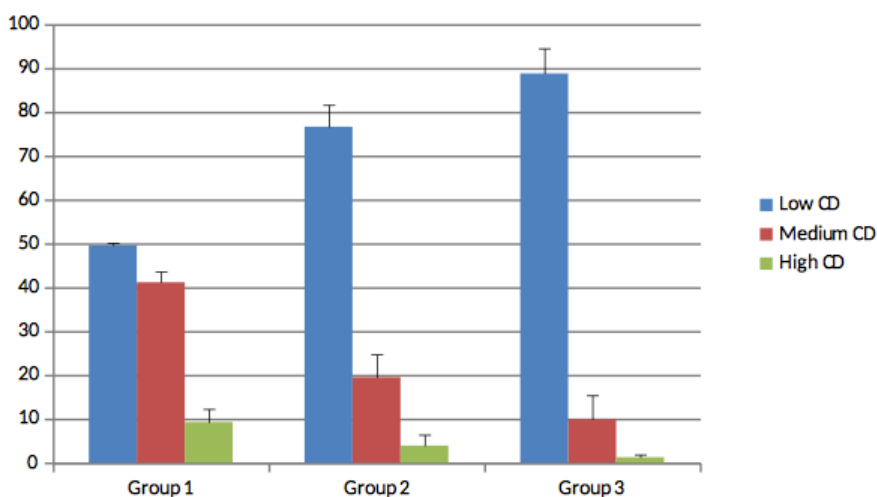
In RD 126/2014, the null representation of actions associated with high cognitive demands and the scarce presence of actions of medium cognitive demand is observed (5.71%, $n = 2$). On the other hand, actions associated with low cognitive demand make up 94.29% of the sample ($n = 33$).

If this same analysis is applied to regional laws, the preeminence of actions associated with low cognitive demand (78.46%, $n = 1679$) is observed compared to those associated with application and analysis (17.34%, $n = 371$) and evaluation and creation (4.20%, $n = 90$).

Within this general trend, large fluctuations can be observed in the framework of regional legislation. Contrasting examples are the case of the Community of Madrid, where 95.31% of programmed AC and ALS correspond to actions with low cognitive demand, and the Valencian case, where this category is reduced to 49.18%. The specific analysis of the categorized actions results in the following groupings (Graph II).

³ We recall that the data is read at three levels: the degree of cognitive demand (CD) associated with the actions detected (low CD, medium CD and high CD), the groups or trends observed (group 1: legislation that accumulates a greater cognitive demand, group 2: laws that accumulate a medium cognitive demand, group 3: laws that accumulate a lower cognitive demand) and the autonomous laws that are the protagonists of the study (acronyms described in note 1).

GRAPH II. Distribution of the groups in relation to the cognitive demand (CD) associated with AC and ALS of the autonomous laws for the whole of Primary Education. Group composition: (Group 1) CAT, CV; (Group 2) AR, CN, CYL, CLM, LR, CFN, PV, RM; (Group 3) AN, CA CM, EX, GA, IB, PA.



Source: Own elaboration.

Group 1 corresponds to those laws with a greater representation of actions of high and medium cognitive demand, present in the laws of Catalonia and the Valencian Community only. This group differs greatly from groups 2 and 3, where actions with low cognitive demand take on a high profile. Although with a reduced presence of actions of high cognitive demand in both cases, group 2 pays some greater attention to the actions of application and analysis. 8 legislative texts are integrated into this group. The remaining 7 are associated with group 3.

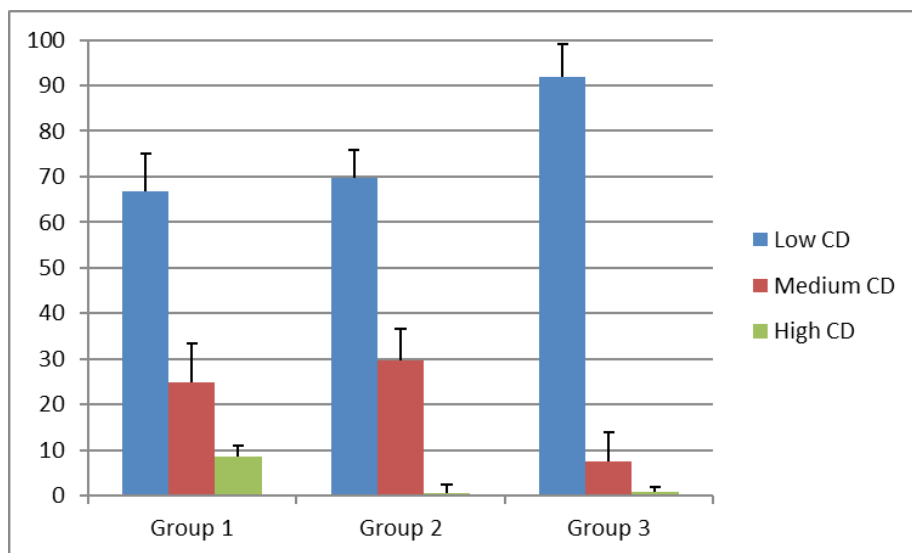
Objective 2. Analyze the trends associated with the development of detected cognitive skills

To address this objective, the cognitive demands associated with the first and second stages of Primary Education (1st, 2nd and 3rd; 4th, 5th and

6th) in the autonomic legislation are analyzed. The RD is removed from this analysis since the contents to be taught during Primary Education are not distributed by courses. This assignment is carried out by the autonomies within their powers. The specific analysis of the categorized actions results in the following groupings (Figures III and IV).

For the first stage of Primary Education, three trends are observed (Graph III).

GRAPH III. Distribution of the groups in relation to the cognitive demand (CD) of the AC and ALS actions of the regional laws for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of Primary Education. Composition of the groups: (Group 1) AN, CN, CLM, CM, CV, LR, CFN, PV; (Group 2) AR, CA, CYL, CAT, PA, RM; (Group 3) EX, GA, IB.



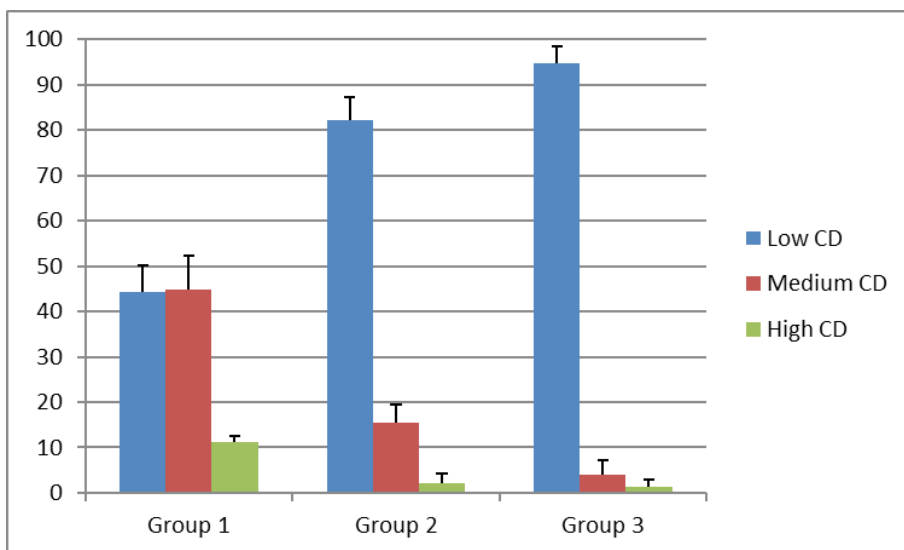
Source: Own elaboration.

On the one hand, group 1 concentrates the highest number of actions associated with levels of high cognitive demand (8.55%). 8 autonomous communities are assigned to this first group. Group 2 maintains a high representation of actions with medium cognitive demand (29.71%), although those with high cognitive demand have a residual presence

(0.68%). The inverse trend is represented in group 3, with 91.85% of actions associated with a low cognitive demand. Three autonomous communities are associated with this group: Extremadura, Galicia and the Balearic Islands.

If the grouping and distribution typical of the second stage of Primary Education (4th, 5th and 6th grade) is analyzed, three trends can once again be observed (Graph IV). However, the percentages of representation of actions with high cognitive demand change significantly, as well as their composition.

GRAPH IV. Distribution of the groups in relation to the actions and cognitive demand (DC) associated with AC and ALS of the autonomous laws for 4th, 5th and 6th year of Primary Education. Composition of the groups: (1) CAT, CV; (2) AN, AR, PA, CYL, CLM, GA, LR, CFN, PV, RM; (3) CA, CN, CM, EX, IB.



Source: Own elaboration.

On the one hand, group 1 sees an increase in the percentage of actions that demand a greater mobilization of the students' thinking

skills. Together, these actions reach 55.76%. However, its representation is now reduced to the laws of Catalonia and the Valencian Community. In contrast, groups 2 and 3 are characterized in this case by an absolute predominance of actions with low cognitive demand, both with values higher than 80%. It is also observed how in this second stage there has been a greater concentration of cases in both groups: 10 autonomous communities are associated with the trend set by group 2 and 5 with that of group 3.

If graphs III and IV are compared, in relation to the values associated with each group and their composition, it can be seen how there is thus a shift in the statements contained in educational legislation towards models associated more with memorization than with analysis and creation. The only exceptions to this shift in the statements towards more memoristic models are those that appear in the legislation of Galicia and Catalonia. In the Galician case there is a slight increase in actions associated with cognitive application and analysis demands that lead it to go from group 3 to 2. This increase is more remarkable in the Catalan case, which goes from being in group 2 to forming part of group 1 with the Valencian Community. The Valencian Community, for its part, remains in group 1, preserving a representation of actions of medium and high cognitive demand greater than 50%.

Discussion

As has been seen both in the state and the regional legislation, the cognitive dimension of remembering and understanding, directly associated with memorization, has a particularly notable weight (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). On the other hand, the actions that encourage more complex thought processes such as applying, analyzing, evaluating or creating are a minority. Only the Valencian legislation has statements of a high procedural, reflective and critical nature, this model being maintained throughout all Primary Education.

That is why, in general terms, it can be stated that the teaching of History is still closer to an accumulation of disjointed data, constructed explanations, and a scholarly-type transmission (Prats, 2016) than to the one that current research proposes, based on the construction of knowledge. Already Pozo (1985) raised this problem when analyzing

the turn that the school curriculum and textbooks underwent after the implementation of the General Education Law of 1975. On that date, it went from a narrated story of a factual type to an “explained” History. He warned that this transformation of the school History should involve a shift in the way of guiding teaching and encouraging the student to develop “their own conceptual, temporal and inferential resources” (Pozo, 1985, p. 31). Today, almost 35 years later, the same debate continues with no signs that it is close to being resolved.

If, in addition, reference is made to the density of the selected content and actions demanded that only the block of content analyzed includes (for example, the case of Castilla-La Mancha), it can be stated that the curriculum designed for this stage is impossible to implement in the classrooms effectively (López-Facal, 2014). Especially if the usual location of the contents associated with History in the temporal organization of the subjects is taken into account, since they constitute the last block of contents that are usually taught (Pelegrín, 2015).

If the analysis is focused on how and when historical content is introduced into the curriculum, it can be seen that, in general, there is a restriction of application, analysis and creative activities as students reach higher levels.

The first stages concentrate greater actions of high and medium cognitive demand and these are represented in a greater number of cases. However, these are usually associated with time management and the analysis of elements of the familiar and local environment (Arias & Egea, in press).

Current trends in the didactics of History insist on the idea that it is not necessary to have a consolidated knowledge of calendar time to experience the passage of time and history, since in principle they only require conceiving an event as happened in the past (Levstik & Barton, 2008). In the same way, Cooper (2002) emphasizes the idea that students themselves possess certain historical knowledge based on the past of their own family, which can serve as a starting point, but they also receive historical information from other sources in many ways: in the reminiscence of the past in their environment (through heritage) or in the historical stories that slip into homes through cinema, television, stories, etc. (Aranda, 2016). History is present in their lives beyond their families and locality. This initial knowledge is enough to start a process of development of thinking skills, as it is a motivational point on which to

build and dialogue. Concepts crucial to historical reflection (chronology, change and continuity, cause and effect, the ability to weigh data and to identify with people from a past time) can evolve from very insignificant starting points (Pluckrose, 1993). However, in the legislation analyzed, it is only from the third year when purely historical content is introduced, normally associated with life in Prehistory (Arias & Egea, in press). Some legislation even obviates any type of temporary content in the first two years of primary school, as is the case in Madrid and Extremadura.

The case of Madrid's educational legislation (Decree 89/2014) is paradigmatic, which expressly states that "it is not about students being able to analyze and judge historical events or human behavior. It is [...] about acquiring a spatial and temporal reference system in which to place what they learn in later studies" (p. 26). And they dedicate their efforts to that aim, indicating as ALS contents that are strictly conceptual content for the teaching of History in the primary stage.

In this regard, it should be noted that it is certainly naive to think that the introduction of History and the development of the skills associated with its analysis should be delayed until the moment in which the students handle certain disciplinary knowledge, since there will always be questions without response and gaps to fill (Holt, 1990).

As courses progress and purely disciplinary content is incorporated, the analytical and creative feeling that was introduced in these early years is lost to the benefit of purely disciplinary (and conceptual) content. Instead of taking advantage of the growing capacity of students to approach a greater number of sources, to generate more solvent arguments and to initiate more complex analytical processes, there is a trend towards an increase in content and a reduction in the application thereof, thus ignoring all the approaches made before and completely omitting a fundamental element: the high procedural nature of the historian's work (Lévesque, 2008).

The analysis carried out shows, therefore, that the influence on the Spanish curriculum of the current postulates of didactic research is minimal. This fact fully coincides with results obtained in other contexts (Bracke, Flaving, Köster & Zülsdorf-Kersting, 2014; Clark, 2014; Levstik, 2008). Faced with this, there are some examples at the international level that show that adaptation is possible. In the United Kingdom, for example, History has a marked procedural character since the 70s (Prats, 2016); the Norwegian curriculum gives a determining role to historical

research, the creation of new narratives and the analysis of existing ones (Johanson, 2015); and Australian educational legislation is geared towards developing the skills of historical thinking⁴.

However, the Spanish educational curriculum, despite the constant reforms that have apparently sought to achieve a modern behaviorist-Taylorist and competency model of curriculum, has a burden anchored in the encyclopedic-academic model that does not allow adaptation to the new times, being “the necessary and urgent surgical intervention” (López-Goñi & Goñi, 2015, p. 43).

Conclusions and limitations of the study

It has been possible to verify how the orientation of the current curriculum largely eliminates the important analytical, critical and interpretive component of History. This is at least reflected in most of the regional laws analyzed, where the creative margin detected in the first years of schooling and linked to the student’s familiar and local experience has led to traditional teaching models linked to memorization. Therefore, it is considered essential to underline again, as a conclusion to this study, the great distance between current trends in the didactics of History and legislative development. However, it has also been possible to observe the possibility of adaptation and generation of more creative models within the same common legislative framework, as the Valencian case has shown. A glimmer of hope opens. And it is that, in relation to the teaching of History, aspects related to the construction of History itself and its social use should begin to take place (Prats, 2016; Wine-burg, Mosborg & Porat, 2001). In order to do this, it is necessary to break with this encyclopedic trend, that uncritically narrated linear history, where characters and events are combined to create a closed history with little connection to the reality that surrounds the student, the social and cultural context in which they live.

Teaching practices, usually linked to the texts of school manuals (Burguera, 2006; Martínez, Valls & Pineda, 2009; Valls, 2019), do not usually question this perception. If this basic matrix of knowledge is

⁴ To check the Australian curriculum see <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/>

never questioned, that narrated history more associated with collective memory than with formal or scientific history will be perpetuated (Carretero, López, González & Rodríguez, 2012; López, 2015). This aspect is especially important in Primary Education, where the student body's disciplinary knowledge is very limited and is largely linked to those experiences provided by the environment in which they live (Wertsch, 2004).

Although the possession of this perception does not hinder learning in itself (Carretero et al., 2012), it does hinder the development of fundamental skills for historical understanding, such as those associated with historical thinking. That is why it is considered key to introduce students directly to this dialectic. This approach to the teaching of History not only allows the introduction of the process of construction of History in the classrooms, but also favors interaction with it and that the student begins to think about History and not to memorize a constructed narrative. If, in addition, it is sought that students are able to connect the discipline with the reality in which they live, with the context in which their actions take place and that help them understand the facts that surround them, History will be endowed meaning for the student (Grant & Gradwell, 2010).

All these considerations should be present in the whole of the curriculum, in its criteria and standards, since Primary Education should be considered as the propitious moment to raise concerns, develop skills, ask questions and build knowledge. In the same way, the teacher must be equally prepared for its application. In this sense, this study marks a new horizon in qualitative research that aims to complement the results provided here from the perspective of educational practice: How do teachers understand and apply these cognitive processes when teaching History? Knowing the perception and work of the teacher or future teachers in this sense would contribute to obtaining a more complete perspective on this reality from the educational practice in the selected stage.

Finally, it should be noted that, among the limitations of the study presented, the apparent provisional nature of the conclusions listed here should be highlighted, since Spain is in a period of modification of its educational system (Torres, 2020), having recently published the so-called LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29). Although, due to its recent publication, the basic curriculum for Primary Education

has not yet been finalized, it will not take long to be defined. Therefore, the critical reader will easily see that what has been said here could be fleeting in a matter of months. However, as seen in previous pages, it is also a reality that the change in the legislative text has not traditionally implied a modification in the way in which the teaching of History is contemplated. Studies similar to the one carried out will allow us to know soon if this premise will be fulfilled after the next publication of the development of the basic curriculum associated with the LOMLOE and if findings such as those presented here have contributed to the reflection on educational practice and have encouraged a certain modification in this trend. These lines serve to insist that a change of model is possible: the research supports it and the experiences started in other countries show possible paths and models to follow.

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Appendix

Appendix I. Regional curricula used in the study

Autonomous Communities	Acronym	Decree	Official gazettes	Link
Andalusia	AN	Decreto 97/2015	BOJA 50, 13/03/2015	http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/descargas/recursos/curriculo-primaria/index.htm
Aragon	AR	Orden ECD/850/2016	BOA 156, 12/08/2016	http://www.educaragon.org/HTML/carga_html.asp?id_submenu=52
Canary Islands	CA	Decreto 89/2014	BOC 156, 13/08/2014	http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/boc/2014/156/001.html
Cantabria	CN	Decreto 27/2014	BOC 29, 13/06/2014	https://boc.cantabria.es/boces/verAnuncioAction.do?idAnuBlob=269550
Castilla and León	CYL	Decreto 26/2016	BOCYL 142, 25/07/2016	https://www.educa.jcyl.es/es/resumenbocyl/decreto-26-2016-21-julio-establece-curriculo-regula-implant
Castilla-La Mancha	CLM	Decreto 54/2014	DOCM 132, 11/07/2014	http://www.educa.jccm.es/es/normativa/decreto-54-2014-10-07-2014-establece-curriculo-educacion-pr
Catalonia	CAT	Decret 119/2015	DOGC 6900, 26/06/2015	http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/curriculum/primaria/curriculum/
Community of Madrid	CM	Decreto 89/2014	BOCM 175, 25/07/2014	https://www.bocm.es/boletin/CM_Orden_BOCM/2014/07/25/BOCM-20140725-1.PDF
Foral Community of Navarra	CFN	Decreto Foral 60/2014	BON 174, 05/09/2014	https://www.navarra.es/NR/rdonlyres/B62A9CFB-C17B-461E-BD7D-BBEE005C2096/0/F1410295_EducacionPrimaria.pdf
Valencian Community	CV	Decreto 108/2014	DOGV 7311, 07/07/2014	http://www.dogv.gva.es/datos/2014/07/07/pdf/2014_6347.pdf
Extremadura	EX	Decreto 103/2014	DOE 114, 16/06/2014	http://doe.juntaex.es/pdfs/doe/2014/1140o/14040122.pdf
Galicia	GA	Decreto 105/2014	DOG 171, 09/09/2014	https://www.edu.xunta.gal/portal/guiadalomce/primaria
Balearic Islands	IB	Decret 32/2014	BOIB 97, 19/07/2014	http://web.caib.es/Normativa/Curriculum_IB/educacio_primaria_lomce_.htm

La Rioja	LR	Decreto 24/2014	BOR 74, 16/06/2014	https://web.larioja.org/normativa?n=1973
Basque Country	PV	Decreto 236/2015	BOPV 9, 15/01/2016	http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/heziberri_2020/es_2_proyec/adjuntos/EB_curriculo_completo.pdf
Principality of Asturias	PA	Decreto 82/2014	BOPA 202, 30/08/2014	https://sede.asturias.es/bopa/2014/08/30/2014-14753.pdf
Region of Murcia	RM	Decreto 198/2014	BORM 206, 06/09/2014	https://www.borm.es/services/anuncio/ano/2014/numero/11264/pdf?id=713895

Source: Own elaboration.