# Mapping the research: A decade of research of history teaching and learning in Spain (2015-2025)

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*Abstract:* This paper presents a review of research on history teaching and learning in Spanish schools between 2015 and 2025. It focuses on studies involving real classroom participants, teachers and students from both primary and secondary education. Using the PRISMA method, 25 research articles were analysed from major academic databases. The goal was to understand how history is taught, what students learn, and how teachers approach the subject. The findings show that while many teachers support active and inclusive teaching methods, traditional approaches—such as memorization and textbook-based lessons—are still common. Students often repeat stereotypes and have limited views of historical events and figures, especially regarding gender and cultural diversity. Women and minority groups are often underrepresented in classroom narratives. Some studies highlight the benefits of innovative methods, such as using local history, archaeology, theatre, and digital tools like virtual reality. These approaches help students engage more deeply with history and improve their critical thinking and motivation. However, these methods are not widely used, and their impact varies depending on the context. The research also shows that students struggle to connect historical causes and consequences and often rely on simplified narratives. Teachers face challenges in changing these patterns due to curriculum constraints and lack of resources. Overall, the study calls for a more critical, inclusive, and engaging approach to history education in Spain. It also suggests that future research should focus on long-term studies and stronger theoretical frameworks to better support teachers and improve student learning.

## Introduction

History has been a long-standing presence in societies. The transmission of issues from the past to new generations has been a human necessity, in which storytelling has been an activity that has allowed the transmission of knowledge accumulated over the years, as well as myths and legends with a clear function of social cohesion (Hobsbawm, 1998b). However, it ancient Greece appeared its formalisation as a field of knowledge, which has been used to reconstruct the past for various purposes, such as leisure or politics (Duby, 1994), thereby shaping certain constructions of the past and identities of the present (Prats & Santacana, 2011).

Because of this function, history was incorporated into the school curriculum when education systems were formalised in order to establish a uniform history, closely associated with the emergence of modern nation states (Ferro, 2007; Hobsbawm, 1998a). Since that time, it has been included into the teaching subject in schools and educational institutions in western societies (Cuesta Fernández, 1997), although as a field of knowledge within the sciences of education, it has been incorporated more recently (Prats, 2002). In Spain, this field of knowledge can be traced back to the 1980s, a period which coincided with the establishment of a democratic system of government. The definition of historical education in this context emphasised its close connection with civic and political education, underscoring the integrated nature of these educational pursuits.

The relationship between the democratic construction of transitional societies and the reconfiguration of teaching environments is not an issue exclusive to Spain, nor to the scientific field of didactics, since it was also fertile ground for a series of innovative experiences in historical and social education (Duarte Piña, 2022; López Facal, 2004). Indeed, in the aftermath of totalitarian regimes or periods of political transformation, numerous countries have undergone a re-evaluation of their education systems, with the objective of cultivating democratic societies through civic or citizen training. In this context, history as a school subject has assumed a pivotal role.

Since the formalisation of history teaching as a specific field of knowledge towards the end of the 20th century, a substantial body of research has emerged. In the English-speaking world, as well as in the French-, Italian-, and Spanish-speaking worlds, various thematic lines have been articulated, providing the discipline with a vast body of knowledge (for an international perspective on research, Henríquez & Pagès, 2004; Lévesque & Clark, 2018). Research on educational materials, curriculum, institutional guidelines, heritage, the teaching profession, conceptual constructions, and other topics has been of interest to research on history teaching in Spain (Miralles Martínez et al., 2011). Therefore, it is essential to research our current knowledge of teaching and learning history in the school classroom.

A wide international bibliographic study showed that key concepts such as Historical Thinking and Historical consciousness are widely explored in the field of learning history, especially in English-speaking countries (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2022), but the analysis did not focus on the research results. But a specific bibliographic review focused on how historical

thinking is developed revealed that, in practice, historical thinking can be developed through a wide range of strategies (Reyes Parra et al., 2024).

In this context, this paper aims to analyse research papers to reveal patterns, elements, and factors involved in the process of teaching and learning history among school agents, specifically schoolteachers and primary and secondary education students in Spain.

## Method

### Research method and design

For the purpose of conducting a bibliographic study on what we scientifically know about history teaching and learning in Spanish Classrooms, the PRISMA method principles are utilised, as this approach has been demonstrated to enhance transparency in systematic research and to facilitate a comprehensive overview of the current state of research. The search was conducted in May of 2025 across the WoS Core Collection, the Scopus database, and Cercabib, the library browser of the University of Barcelona. The purpose of this was to identify any research that may have been omitted from the aforementioned scientific databases.

The research was conducted using the UNESCO Tesauro concept 'History Teaching', as it is the only standardised term for researching the teaching of history. It was expected that using this formalised term would exclude other social science research fields, prioritising studies focused on the teaching of history. However, to explore the learning dimension of history teaching, the term 'Historical Learning' was added to the search, along with 'Spain', to limit the research's geographical scope. Common concepts in the field of history teaching, such as 'historical thinking', were discarded as previous systematic literature reviews had shown them to be irrelevant to the Spanish context (see Reyes Parra et al., 2024).

The search was conducted in the "All fields" section of the Core Collection. The same keywords were used in the "Article title, Abstract, Keywords" browser in Scopus, and "Enseñanza de la Historia" and "Spain" were used in the general browser of Cercabib. Therefore, research on the terms "history" and "teaching" in the Spanish-speaking world was identified.

In addition, the documentation was limited to articles and papers published between 2015 and 2025.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are delineated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion Papers*

| Criteria | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---|---|---|
| Type of document | Article | Reports, book chapters, and other documents, different than articles. |
| Dates | 2015-2025 | 2014 or before. |
| Language | English, Catalan or Spanish (authors language) | Other languages than English, Catalan or Spanish. |
| Type of documents | Should be research | Theoretical, reflexive texts, intervention designs, or any other type of document different from research papers. |
| Participants in the study | Research should be developed with active school agents in History and social sciences classrooms (students, teachers) in Spain | Prospective teachers' study, textbooks' analysis, curricular analysis or any other sample than school students and active school teachers. |

**Sample**

After applying the search criteria, a list of 237 papers was obtained (46 from Scopus, 42 from Web of Science Core Collection, and 149 from Cercabib). After the removal of duplicates and the exclusion of texts that were not journal articles, a list of 130 papers was obtained. Following a thorough examination of the abstract and, where necessary, the methodology, papers were excluded if they failed to meet the inclusion criteria for participants in the study. This process resulted in the final selection of 25 papers, as shown in Figure 1.

Due to the nature of the research, no ethical committee approval is required.

**Figure 1**

*Flowchart Sample Configuration*
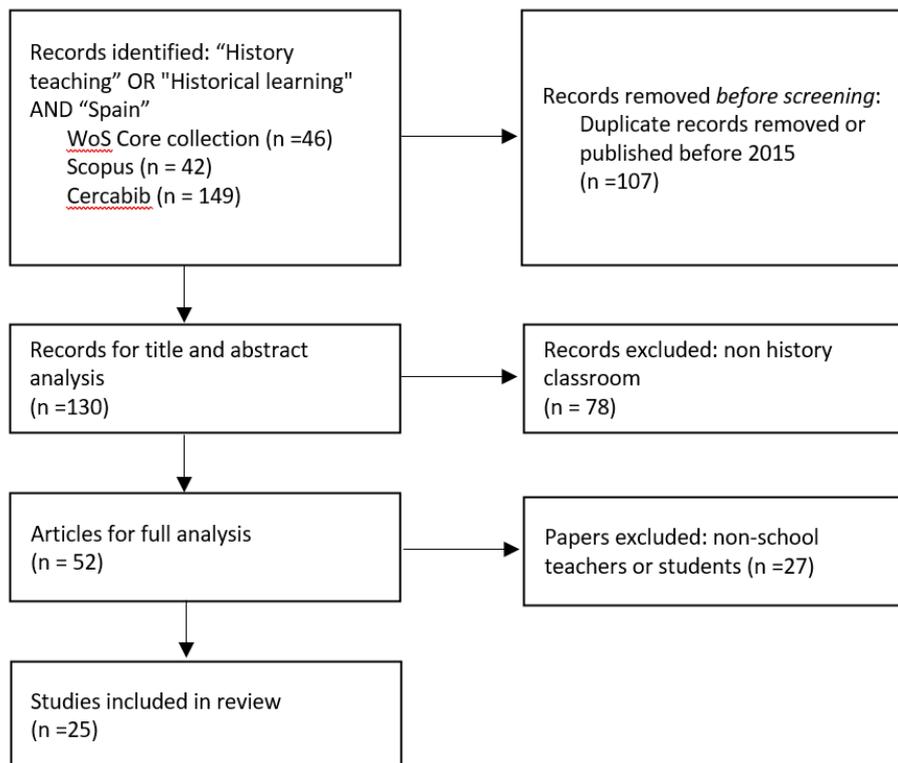


**Analysis of data**

The definitive list of studies was compiled in a spreadsheet, where we extracted basic identifying information, methodological data, key topics, and main results in an open and inductive way. The classification was carried out in an iterative process, involving the authors classifying the information in the documents together with a socialisation process. For this process of obtaining and interpreting information, we used an Excel sheet to extract in a descriptive and qualitative way the following information:

- Identification data: authorship, publishing year, and journal.
- Methodological features: type of study, study design (if available), participants (primary education students, secondary education students, teachers), age of students at the school level, number of participants, place of data collection, instruments used, and other methodological information as relevant.
- Research topics or concepts in study: we classify them into main topics, and secondary topics emerge from an inductive reading of the content.
- Main results: here we describe the results qualitatively; they are further analysed.

## Results

### General scientific overview

To determine the most effective means of locating results and obtaining a comprehensive overview of the research, it is first necessary to address when research is published. Chronology has been demonstrated to facilitate understanding of the scientific interest of researchers, while the identification of journals has been shown to assist in observing trends in the dissemination of this kind of research, as well as in establishing a dialogue with other disciplines. In this regard, it is important to note that the publication of research results in journals serves not only to contribute to the academic pathway, or to fulfil a formal request on research projects, but also in our field to strengthen the research field and contribute to scientific dialogue and theorisation (Prats, 2002).

The initial observation of the data reveals a notable balance across time periods (see Figure 2). A mean of two to three papers per year have been published on the subject of history classroom agents in Spain, indicating a growing interest in researching reality among the main subjects in the dimension of learning and teaching history. As the graphic shows, publication output on the topic has been more stable over the last five years than in previous years, indicating a high degree of polarisation.

### Figure 2

*Distribution of Published Research in the Number of Articles Per Year (2015-May 2025)*
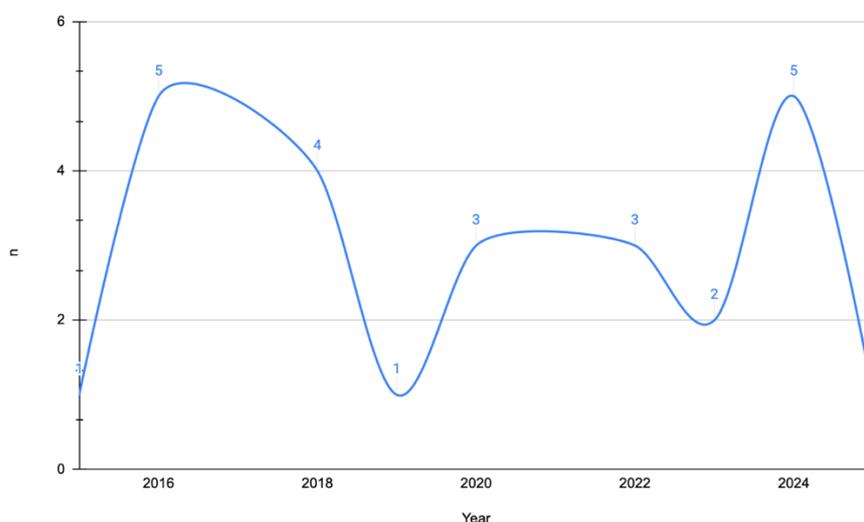


As demonstrated in Table 2, an analysis of the journals in which researchers were published reveals a diverse range of publications. A total of 25 papers have been published in 21 different journals, indicating a wide range of possible impact of the research in educational sciences.

The majority of research is published in generalist educational journals (10 journals) or in social sciences disciplinary journals (7 journals). It is evident that a significantly smaller number of general social science journals are chosen to publish this type of research (a mere

2). Moreover, of these two journals, only one is specifically dedicated to the pedagogy of history and social sciences.

Furthermore, all the papers in the present list have been published in journals in the Scopus database or the WOS Core Collection, and most of the research is published in journals that accept papers in Spanish. Five papers were published directly in English; therefore, opportunities for promoting international dialogue and reflection can be pursued primarily with Spanish-speaking researchers, such as Latin American ones.

**Table 2**

*Journals Where Research Has Been Published*

| Journal | Number of papers |
| --- | --- |
| Didáctica de las Ciencias Experimentales y Sociales* | 1 |
| Educação & sociedade | 1 |
| Educatio Siglo XXI+ | 1 |
| Education as Change | 1 |
| Education in the knowledge society | 1 |
| Enseñanza & teaching: revista interuniversitaria de didáctica | 1 |
| European Journal of Woman's Studies | 1 |
| European Public and Social Innovation Review | 1 |
| Frontiers in Education | 2 |
| Historia y Memoria | 1 |
| Información Tecnológica | 1 |
| Public Archeology | 1 |
| Revista Complutense de Educación | 1 |
| Revista de Educación | 3 |
| Revista de Estudios Sociales | 1 |
| Revista de Historia (Chile) | 1 |
| Revista Educare | 2 |
| Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado | 1 |
| Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social | 1 |
| Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado | 1 |
| Tempo e Argumento | 1 |
| **Total of papers** | **25** |

*Journal specialized on History and social sciences teaching

**The participants of the studies**

Upon examining the data's geographical provenance, it becomes evident that the majority of the research was conducted in Spain. This observation pertains to the geographical scope of the studies undertaken, which can be categorised as either national or international. A mere 3 papers (12.5%) encompassed one or more countries besides Spain, with Colombia

being mentioned in one study and Chile in two. The present study demonstrates a discernible inclination towards initiating dialogues and cultivating a deeper understanding within the context of the Spanish-speaking cultural milieu.

An analysis of the regions of Spain participating in research reveals that corpus development is not homogeneous across the country. With the exception of two studies conducted across several regions of Spain, research is concentrated in specific regions. The Murcia region is highlighted, as almost 40% of the research was conducted there (see black colour in Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Distribution of Places Where Studies Were Conducted*



It is important to note that each region of Spain has its own educational system, organisational structure, and autonomous curriculum. Consequently, it is acknowledged that research findings may not be directly transferable to understanding history education in Spain.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the analysis of the classroom type under investigation reveals that the corpus is predominantly composed of research on secondary education, with a subsequent focus on studies of active teachers and, finally, those addressing the history of primary classrooms. Secondary education has been shown to lead to a twofold increase in research activity compared with primary education. In Spain, the primary education curriculum does not incorporate a specific subject on history. However, it is a component of the subject of social and cultural environment studies. Given the autonomy of the curriculum in each autonomous community, it is imperative to emphasise the need for further research in primary education. Conversely, the Secondary Compulsory Education curriculum incorporates History and Social Sciences, thereby fostering opportunities for dialogue and the dissemination of outcomes.

**Figure 4**

*School Level to Which the Participants Belong Per Study Count*
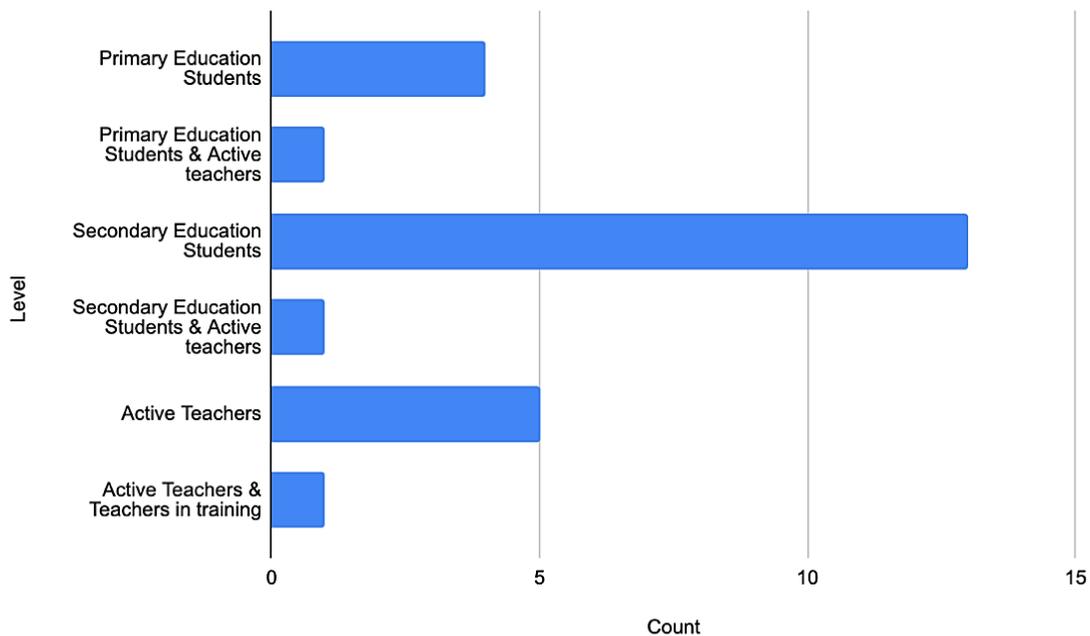


However, a more balanced presentation of results is observed when the methodology is considered (Table 3). The analysed studies are evenly distributed by methodology, with almost half being quantitative (n=12) and the remainder qualitative (n=13).

Furthermore, an even distribution of studies across levels, methodologies, and subjects is evident in the table below. These results imply that complex views on classroom realities can be extracted from the analysed research.

**Table 3**

*Distribution Of Studies by Subjects and Type of Study*

| Type of study | Percentage of studies |
|---|---|
| Qualitative Study | 48% |
| Primary Education Students | 8% |
| Primary Education Students & Active teachers | 4% |
| Secondary Education Students | 20% |
| Secondary Education Students & Active teachers | 4% |
| Active Teachers | 12% |
| Quantitative Study | 52% |
| Primary Education Students | 8% |
| Secondary Education Students | 32% |
| Active Teachers | 8% |
| Active Teachers & Teachers in training | 4% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

To gain insight into the reality of the school environment, studies employ a variety of instruments and samples, thereby providing data and information from students and teachers across a broad spectrum of school levels. In this sense, the analysed studies constitute a comprehensive and detailed investigation of the educational process, encompassing children and their teachers from the initial years of compulsory education through non-compulsory secondary education. This extensive research provides a complete and complex perspective on the educational process. The following table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the methodological framework employed in the research study.

**Table 4**

*Research Type, Sample and Instruments*

| Research | Type of | Sample | Subjects | Instrument | School age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Trigueros Cano, et al., 2015) | Quantitative | 1117 | Students | Questionnaire | 14 to 16 |
| (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2016) | Quantitative | 152 | Students | Questionnaire | 15 to 16 |
| (Ortuño Molina, et al., 2016) | Qualitative | 66 | Students | Protocol & observation | 10 to 12 |
| (Saiz Serrano et al., 2016) | Qualitative | 134 | Students | Questionnaire | 13 to 16 |
| (Ibañez-Etxeberria, et al., 2016) | Quantitative | 278 | Students | Questionnaire | 15 to 16 |
| (Sallés Tenas & Santacana, 2016) | Qualitative | Not specified | Students | Interviews | 16 to 18 |
| (Piqueras Casado et al., 2018) | Quantitative | 56 | Students | Learning Standards | 8 to 9 |
| (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2018) | Qualitative | 39 | Teachers | Interviews | 12 to 16 |
| (Olmos Villa, 2018) | Qualitative | 68 | Students | Questionnaire | 17 to 18 |
| (Arias-Ferrer & Egea-Vivancos, 2018) | Qualitative | 40 | Students | Observation | 12 to 13 |
| (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2019) | Qualitative | 70 | Teachers | Interviews | 12 to 16 |
| (Monteagudo-Fernandez et al., 2020) | Quantitative | 467 | Students | Questionnaire | 12 to 16 |
| (Colomo-Magaña et al., 2020) | Quantitative | 192 | Teachers | Questionnaire | 12 to 16 |
| (Sánchez Ibáñez et al., 2020) | Quantitative | 332 | Teachers | Questionnaire | 6 to 16 |

| Research | Type of | Sample | Subjects | Instrument | School age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Toro-Perez et al., 2022) | Qualitative | 90 (teachers) 65 (students) | Teachers and students | Questionnaire (teachers) Narrative (students) | 6 to 12 |
| (Guerrero-Romera et al., 2022) | Quantitative | 332 | Teachers | Questionnaire | 6 to 16 |
| (Ortega Sánchez, 2022) | Qualitative | 71 | Students | Questionnaire (open answers) and focus group | 8 to 9 |
| (Córcoles-Charcos et al., 2023) | Quantitative | 38 | Students | Questionnaire | 10 to 11 |
| (Muñoz-Muñoz, et al., 2023) | Qualitative Quantitative | 48 | Students | Questionnaire Interviews | 15 to 16 |
| (Ibagón Martín & Martínez, 2024) | Quantitative | 1412 | Students | Questionnaire | 12 to 16 |
| (García Fernández & Reyes Soto, 2024) | Quantitative | 96 | Students | Questionnaire | 14 to 15 |
| (Castrillo et al., 2024) | Qualitative | 88 | Teachers | Questionnaire | Primary and secondary |
| (López Rey, 2024) | Quantitative | 49 | Students | Questionnaire | 12 to 13 |
| (Muñoz-Muñoz et al., 2024) | Quantitative | 48 | Students | Questionnaire | 15 to 18 |
| (García Fernández, 2025) | Qualitative | 196 | Students | Ethnographical techniques | 16 to 18 |

**Themes and thematic patterns on history classrooms agents**

Research in the domain of history teaching and learning with school agents is divided into two primary fields. Research in this field has been dominated by studies of the learning and teaching process as a whole, with comparatively little attention paid to the learning dimension in isolation. A body of research has been conducted on the subject of perception, with studies observing the development of different aspects related to schooling, contents, methods, and meanings.

**Perceptions in the field of teaching and learning history.** Specifically, some scholars have examined the conceptualisation and construction of historical characters and processes, highlighting the pivotal role of education in shaping secondary school students' perceptions of the past. García Fernández and Reyes Soto (2024) conducted a survey across almost 100 secondary schools to examine how America's Conquest is constructed. The study concluded that the process is viewed in a heroic manner and also plays a civilising role. The authors acknowledge that these narratives are attributed to historical accounts transmitted

within the pedagogical environment and concurrently recognise the necessity to continue their examination. In a similar vein, the study by Muñoz-Muñoz et al. (2024) points out that political and military figures are considered relevant by 15-16-year-old students. This phenomenon is attributed to both schooling and textbooks, thereby underscoring the pivotal role of education in the articulation of historical culture. Furthermore, in a separate study (Muñoz-Muñoz et al., 2023), the same authors observed that although schools play a dominant role in shaping ideas and icons in historical culture, media, and extra-school inputs introduce alternative characters that differ from the traditional political male figure. However, the impact of these inputs on the construction of historical culture remains predominantly a school-based issue.

The study carried out by Toro-Pérez and Parra Montserrat (2022) with primary education students reached conclusions that were comparable. The researchers noted the presence of active stereotypes in the construction of narratives about children, particularly regarding the Arabic population in medieval Valencia, alongside strong elements of traditional identity. Sáiz Serrano and López Facal (2016) reached similar conclusions in their study of secondary education students, which revealed a significant proportion of students associate identity with traditional interpretations of history and its characters. These observations underscore the profound symbolic constructions that underpin our understanding of the past and the role of schooling.

Indeed, an additional dimension of agents of history, explored in terms of gender, is that of teachers (Castrillo et al., 2024), primary education students (Ortega Sánchez, 2022), and secondary education students (Gómez-Carrasco & Gallego-Herrera, 2016). Castrillo et al. (2024) conducted a study with teachers that revealed two key findings. Firstly, the participants acknowledged the paucity of female representation in history lessons and emphasised the need to include more women. Secondly, they recognised the challenge of having history recognise their historical role and of finding feminine references to include. Conversely, studies undertaken with students have demonstrated that gender stereotypes remain pervasive within the historical narrative of students. The study conducted by Ortega Sánchez (2022) analyzed the narratives of primary students. The study revealed a predominance of male narratives that placed women in private and domestic spheres, while simultaneously creating a lack of visibility for them. As demonstrated in the study by Gómez-Carrasco and Gallego-Herrera (2016), secondary education students consistently reached the same conclusions about sexist conduct among students and the absence of feminine references in history lessons and materials.

Another field of exploration concerns conceptualisations of history, a subject that has been examined among primary and secondary education teachers (Guerrero-Romera et al., 2022; Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2018). In their qualitative study with History High School teachers, Martínez-Rodríguez et al. (2018) demonstrated that teachers are highly critical of the content they teach yet view history as knowledge that can be automatically transferred. In a similar vein, the study by Guerrero-Romera et al. (2022) finds that, despite primary and secondary history teachers' perception of the relevance of employing active methodologies in the teaching of critical history, a predominance of transmissive teaching methods persists. The

impact of these methodologies can be observed in students' conceptions of history, as explored qualitatively by García Fernández (2025) and quantitatively by Ibagón Martín and Martínez (2024). The survey conducted by Ibagón and Martínez (2024) on a sample of 1,400 students in Spain and Colombia revealed that, while students possess complex conceptualisations of history, they rely on traditional interpretations when confronted with historical problems. In García Fernández's (2025) ethnographic research, divergent conceptions of history in the classroom, ranging from conservatism to progressivism, were demonstrated. These disparate perspectives were attributed to the varied learning strategies students employed.

In addition, research was conducted on the perceptions of tools and methodologies in primary and secondary education history (Colomo-Magaña et al., 2020; Sánchez Ibáñez et al., 2020). Colomo-Magaña et al. (2020) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of utilising gamified tests as an alternative to traditional examinations for assessing history learning. The study demonstrated that educators are cognisant of the need to incorporate innovative evaluation methodologies, with the integration of gamified assessments being particularly well received by the teaching community. This emerging pedagogical approach holds considerable promise for enhancing history education. The study developed by Sánchez Ibáñez observes a similar tendency, noting that teachers have a favourable perception of active methodologies. In addition, the prevailing opinion amongst pedagogues is that conventional methodologies have been superseded by more active methodologies. However, as demonstrated by Monteagudo Fernández et al. (2020) in their empirical research, students consider that the methodologies employed in their educational experience rarely evolve into active or cooperative approaches, even with the integration of technological aids. Moreover, Information and Communication Technologies are perceived by students as a complementary element in teaching rather than a central tool for their learning. Similar conclusions were reached in the study by Trigueros-Cano et al. (2015), which revealed that history secondary education exams focus on traditional learning and mainly assess memorisation of the topics covered in lessons, rather than evaluating historical thinking skills or the methodological aspects of exercises.

Finally, in the domain of perception studies, one research study examined the conceptions of citizenship held by history teachers in Spain and Chile (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Following 70 interviews, it was determined that moral conceptions of citizenship prevail in both contexts, superseding legal conceptions. Furthermore, it was observed that conceptions of citizenship and the notion of active citizenship were more prevalent than legal conceptions. The authors also identify a significant impact of sociopolitical and socioeconomic context on shaping the conceptions of citizenship.

The main findings in the field of perceptions' studies can be summarised as follows:

- Education as a shaper of historical narratives: across multiple studies, both primary and secondary students tend to adopt heroic, civilising, and traditional interpretations of historical events and figures. This is consistently attributed to schooling and textbook

content, which reinforces dominant narratives and limit critical engagement. The centrality of political and military figures in students' historical understanding is a recurring theme, suggesting a narrow scope of historical representation shaped by curricular choices.

- Persistence of stereotypes and symbolic constructions: whether examining the portrayal of the Arabic population in medieval Valencia or gender roles, studies reveal that symbolic and stereotypical constructions are deeply embedded in students' historical narratives. These stereotypes are not only present in student discourse but are also acknowledged by educators, who struggle to find inclusive and diverse historical references.

- Gender bias in historical teaching and learning: A shared concern among researchers is the underrepresentation of women in history education. Teachers recognise this gap and express difficulty in integrating female figures into lessons. Students' narratives consistently reflect gendered divisions, with women often confined to domestic roles and rendered invisible in public historical accounts, regardless of educational level.

- Contradictions in teaching methodologies: while teachers express support for active and critical pedagogies, actual classroom practises of teaching and evaluation remain predominantly transmissive. This contradiction is evident across both primary and secondary education. Students, despite exposure to technological tools and innovative formats such as gamified assessments, perceive them as complementary rather than transformative, indicating a gap between pedagogical intent and implementation.

- Complex but conservative conceptions: students demonstrate the ability to engage with complex historical ideas yet tend to fall back on traditional interpretations when solving historical problems. This suggests a tension between cognitive potential and the constraints of educational framing. Teachers conceptualise citizenship primarily in moral and active terms, rather than legalistic ones. This reflects broader sociopolitical influences on educational discourse and priorities.

**Elements and factors of the learning history process.** The second field addressed by the analysed papers is experiences and learning in history. The present study examined teaching practices and experiences to determine the impact of specific strategies and methodologies on learning. In secondary education, the local and oral history (Ibáñez-Etxeberria et al., 2016) and local heritage and theatre (López Rey, 2024) were utilised to enhance student learning outcomes. In this regard, Ibáñez-Etxeberria et al. (2016) demonstrated that oral testimonies play a significant role in learning history compared to regular classes. Simultaneously, students also recalibrate identities, reinforcing European values. In her study, López Rey (2024) showed that working with local heritages can yield positive outcomes. Specifically, students exhibited increased awareness of historical layers, facilitated enhanced, more durable learning, and displayed heightened motivation. Converging conclusions were drawn in the study by Arias-Ferrer and Egea-Vivancos (2018), in which an archaeological excavation and remains analysis were replicated with adolescent subjects in a school setting. Following a thorough examination of the students' learning evidence, it was

determined that deep methodological learning had been accomplished, concomitant with the cultivation of companionate attitudes. The experience was designed to facilitate the development of students' higher-order thinking skills, with a particular emphasis on the ability to contextualise interpretations and formulate questions and answers using evidence.

In their 2016 study, Sallés-Tenas and Santacana examined which active methodologies using primary sources persist in students' memory over more than 30 years following their implementation. It was determined that, in addition to its motivational effect, profound procedural learning had been cultivated among the interviewees, resulting in sustained comprehension of the subject matter. Furthermore, participants recognised that the activities linked to value sources were perceived as more motivational (Sallés Tenas & Santacana, 2016).

The utilisation of technology as a pedagogical tool in primary education, particularly augmented reality with 3D models (Córcoles-Charcos et al., 2023) and virtual reality (Piqueras Casado et al., 2018), has been the subject of research. The findings of this research have yielded a range of outcomes that are both divergent and contradictory. Whilst Córcoles-Charcos et al. (2023) observed an enhancement in students' academic learning attributable to the utilisation of virtual reality environments, as well as significant motivational features in primary education students, the study conducted by Piqueras Casado et al. (2018) arrived at contradictory conclusions. The study concluded that after implementing 3D models in the SketchUp platform, there were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups. This finding suggests that augmented reality tools are as effective as traditional methods. The experimental group demonstrated a higher level of comprehension of the content, as evidenced by the study's results. The presence of motivation could not be determined, as motivation levels were elevated across all groups. It is important to note that both studies were developed in the same educational context and autonomic community.

Finally, a number of studies have examined how elements of the learning history process unfold. Researchers have demonstrated that the process of learning history is complex. This conclusion was reached by observing students in primary and secondary education. Ortuño-Molina et al. (2016) demonstrated in their study with primary education students that immediate thinking made it difficult to link complex causes to complex consequences. Concurrently, an analysis of students' narratives revealed that the social, economic, and political dimensions do not appear in their interpretations or reconstructions of history. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that narratives predominantly featured powerful male individuals as the primary characters. In this sense, authors posit that history is underutilised within the school practise. Toro-Pérez and Parra Montserrat (2022) achieved analogous results in their study of students' narratives, which demonstrated an absence of competencies such as contextualising information to interpret processes or a lack of understanding of the consequences of historical processes. Furthermore, the study revealed a paucity of knowledge regarding medieval history, a finding that aligns with the observations reported by Ortuño-Molina et al. (2016).

Notwithstanding the outcomes mentioned above, the study by Olmos-Vila (2018) proffers more auspicious results for history lessons in non-compulsory secondary history classes. This is evidenced by a comparison of survey results between students who had history classes as part of their learning itinerary.

Despite the results of the present study, Olmos-Vila's (2018) research offers a more optimistic prognosis for history lessons in non-compulsory secondary history classes. This is evidenced by a comparison of survey results between students who had undergone history classes as part of their learning itinerary and those who had not. The author demonstrated that history lessons engendered more vivid perceptions of the present among students who had attended history classes than among those who had not. Furthermore, undertaking history classes appears to have a positive impact on students' civic consciousness.

Key findings in the process of learning history can be summarized as follows:

- Experiential learning consistently fosters deeper engagement, critical thinking, and long-term retention. Activities rooted in local history, archaeology, and theatre not only enhance comprehension but also reshape students' historical awareness and civic identity. These findings suggest that embodied and contextualised experiences are more pedagogically effective than abstract instruction.
- Active methodologies are valued but inconsistently implemented. While their motivational and cognitive benefits are well documented, their integration into regular practice remains uneven. This gap between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities reflects structural limitations in curriculum design and teacher training.
- Technological tools yield ambivalent results. Augmented and virtual reality can enhance learning, but their impact is contingent on context and design. The lack of consistent motivational effects and learning gains points to a need for more critical integration of digital tools, rather than assuming their inherent value.
- Students' historical reasoning is often superficial, marked by difficulty in connecting complex causes and consequences, and by narratives dominated by powerful male figures. This suggests that history education frequently fails to cultivate interpretive and analytical competencies, especially in compulsory education.
- Non-compulsory history education shows promise, with students demonstrating more nuanced understandings of the present and stronger civic awareness. This contrast highlights the potential of history teaching when freed from rigid curricular constraints.

## Conclusion

This bibliographic review has illuminated the complex nature of research into history teaching and learning within Spanish primary and secondary education. The studies analysed reveal a consistent tension between pedagogical aspirations and classroom realities, already identified in specific contexts (Monteagudo-Fernández et al., 2020; Sánchez Ibáñez et al., 2020). While educators and students alike recognise the value of critical, inclusive, and

experiential approaches to history, traditional narratives and transmissive methodologies continue to dominate practice.

The persistence of gender bias, stereotypical representations, and limited historical perspectives underscores the need for a more reflective and transformative curriculum. Teachers' efforts to challenge these patterns are evident, yet context, structural constraints, and resource limitations hinder meaningful change. Similarly, although active methodologies and technological innovations show promise, their implementation remains uneven and their impact variable. In this regard, the research highlights the pedagogical power of experiential and active learning with primary sources in fostering deeper engagement, critical thinking, and civic awareness. These approaches offer a compelling alternative to abstract instruction and merit greater integration into mainstream educational practice.

From a scientific standpoint, the field of history education research demonstrates both maturity and fragmentation. The diversity of methodologies—ranging from ethnographic studies and surveys to experimental designs—reflects a commitment to capturing the complexity of classroom realities. However, the predominance of perception-based studies and the limited longitudinal or comparative research suggest that the field would benefit from more robust theoretical frameworks and sustained empirical inquiry. Strengthening the scientific scope of history education research is essential not only for advancing academic understanding but also for informing policy and practise in meaningful ways.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that history education in Spain is at a crossroads. To move beyond superficial engagement and foster genuine historical understanding, future research and policy must prioritise inclusive content, critical pedagogy, and sustained support for innovative teaching practises. Only then can history classrooms become spaces where students not only learn about the past but also develop the tools to interpret and shape the present.

However, some limitations can be identified and discussed. The selection of specific keywords may have excluded some studies that could have broadened the scope of the research conclusions. However, as previous research has shown, few papers were found in Spain when using key terms for research on history teaching in English-speaking communities (Reyes Parra et al., 2024). This may indicate a lack of standardisation of concepts that have already been identified (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2022). In this sense, including other keywords could provide new insights, offering a better understanding of our research field, particularly when adopting a comparative perspective. At the same time, as the study did not aim to analyse or evaluate the field of research, discussing aspects such as the geographical concentration of research in certain regions, which can be explained by the scientific output of certain researchers seen in other studies (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2022), could enrich our understanding of the field.

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