

The Early Modern Age in Spain's university entrance examinations

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to analyse how the contents on the Early Modern Age are assessed in the university entrance exam in Spain within the framework of the curriculum of the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (2017–2023). The aim is to determine if this approach responds to current proposals on history education and historiographical research on the Early Modern Period. A mixed methodological design has been used, combining a quantitative approach (frequencies, percentages, relationship between variables, hypothesis tests) and a qualitative approach (textual and content analysis). Six hundred and twenty-five questions on the Early Modern Age have been analysed in the university entrance exams in all Spanish regions, and the exams of the National University of Distance Education. The results show how the assessment maintains a traditional character. Most are short questions and definitions of facts/concepts related to institutional and political history, where the students' ability to read, describe, locate, repeat, reproduce, and/or memorise is assessed. In short, these assessment tests demonstrate the lack of updating in the approaches to history education research and modernist historiography.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE CONTROVERSIES ABOUT HISTORY EDUCATION IN SPAIN

The Royal Decrees on minimum teaching standards for Primary, Secondary and High School were published by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in the Spring 2022. Throughout those months, long debates on History were raised in the press, similar to those that have taken place with every curriculum change in Latin American countries, in the USA, or in the countries that made up the former USSR (Carretero, 2011). Debates which, as

Sam Wineburg pointed out in his book *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts* (2001), have focused mainly on what historical content students should learn, and not on the 'why' and 'what for' of learning History and therefore historical content, which is not the same thing (Prats, 2010).

The changes we are facing in the 21st century in terms of access to information, globalisation and the cultural diversity of an increasingly pluralistic society pose important challenges for history education (Gruzinski, 2018): How to deal with the teaching and learning of this discipline in a multicultural society with identity conflicts? How do we approach historical knowledge in the classroom so that it fosters key intellectual skills such as reflection and argumentation, and do we plan a history on which to build identities for secessionist/unionist political purposes, or as a discipline that enables us to create critical citizens capable of discussing and reflecting on society beyond these identity tensions?

In the Spanish case, the controversies over curricular changes in recent years have been raised by three issues: the introduction of educational competences; the relevance of introducing democratic memory and civic values in the teaching of history, and its connections with historical memory and the victims of the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship; and the tensions generated by the basic knowledge that the Autonomous Communities can introduce, and its complementarity or contradiction with national history (Delgado, 2022; García Cárcel, 2011).

The approach of the new curriculum of Geography and History is based in integrating the learning of past experiences with the challenges of the future, and to propose social knowledge, linked to civic engagement (Schugurensky & Wolhuter, 2020). It is aligned with recent Council of Europe proposals on quality history teaching. This report called for flexible history curricula and interactive pedagogies that recognise cultural differences; teaching and learning about the complex history of democracy; social history that reflects the activities of individuals and social groups; recognising that societies have been nurtured over time by people from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds; introducing controversial issues in the classroom; valuing multiple identities; and providing students with intellectual tools to evaluate historical sources (Council of Europe, 2018).

However, once the curriculum proposals were published, there was a major reaction in public opinion, including a press release from the Royal Academy of History in which they expressed their opposition to this approach, particularly in the subject of Spanish History, which is taught in the last year of high school¹. This opposition was based above all on three issues: the prevalence of the Contemporary Age; the introduction of concepts from other Social Sciences; and what they indicated as an excess of political and civic content related to democratic memory.

1.2. THE INTERNATIONAL PROPOSALS TO FACE HISTORY EDUCATION AND THE EXAMS OF ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY IN SPAIN

In history education, traditional teaching approaches coexist with practices based on constructivist learning theories. For decades, work in history edu-

1. It should be noted that the Royal Academy of History generally has a conservative approach, both ideologically and historiographically. It is not an organisation that professionally engages in research in History or Education. Although its members are highly prestigious researchers, its trustees are major businessmen and members of the nobility. More about it: López Facal (2001).

tion has been exploring models that incorporate new methodological concepts. Theories and research on teaching and learning history have for decades given a central role to the concept of "historical thinking" (Gómez Carrasco & Sáiz Serrano, 2023). In most research, historical thinking is assumed as a central explanatory model for historical education, although there is no single tradition on how to implement it (Lévesque & Clark, 2018). The success of the term historical thinking is related to the need to analyse practices and obtain empirical data on the development of historical knowledge and on the nature of history as a science.

Unlike this approach to historical thinking, outlined from the Anglo-American sphere (England, the United States and Canada) and nuanced by the historical reasoning proposals of van Boxtel and van Drie (2018), the perspective of historical consciousness has great relevance in the works developed in Germany, Brazil, Portugal, or in Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway and Finland). It is a confluence between knowledge of the past as an individual need for orientation to understand the present and face the future (temporal orientation), but also as a collective need around the construction of memory and identity.

International works that have used this concept of historical consciousness to research aspects of learning have done so to analyse the relationship between past and present in a chronological and social context (Duquette, 2015); the influence of progress, presentism and moral judgements on students' historical ideas; and the construction of historical narratives that allow for the analysis of identity and orientation in cultural life (Barca, 2007 Nordgren, 2019).

These studies are having difficulties in consolidating educational practices and the assessment of historical knowledge. One example is the university entrance exam. This test has been the central object of analysis in various studies in the field of education in recent decades (Sáiz Serrano & Fuster García, 2014; López Lorente & Monteagudo Fernández, 2016; Fuster García, 2016; Revesado Carballares, 2022), although little is known about the relationship of these exams with the development of historical competences, as required by legislation (Ruiz Lázaro et al., 2023).

The university entrance examinations of History of Spain should assess students' acquired historical knowledge and skills of critical thinking and historical analysis. With this intention in mind, in the 2022–2023 academic year, the Draft Royal Decree was published to regulate the basic characteristics of this test, establishing the procedure for calculating the entrance qualification, while a pilot test has been implemented in several educational centres in ten autonomous communities with the idea of bringing them into line with the competency-based nature established (Ruiz Lázaro et al., 2023).

In this context, some research has focused on finding out the level of student learning in the History of Spain exam, concluding that it contributes little or nothing to the development of historical thinking skills, due to the low cognitive levels required of students (Sáiz Serrano & Fuster García, 2014), which is explained by the characteristics of the test itself. As recent research has shown, these tests are heterogeneous between autonomous communities (Ruiz Lázaro, 2022), which shows the possible divergences in the development of students' historical thinking depending on each territory.

1.3. THE EARLY MODERN AGE IN HISTORIOGRAPHY: A SYNTHESIS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

An important part of the criticism levelled at the current educational legislation came from historians of the Early Modern Age, who perceived the curriculum as a way of cornering this historical content in the face of the Contemporary Age. However, this disconnection between research and teaching already existed in previous curricular proposals without controversy (Gómez Carrasco, 2023; Simón García, 2023). If we review the articles published in the prestigious journal *Studies in Early Modern History* since 2011, we can see a disconnection between research knowledge and taught knowledge. International research has delved deeper into global and cultural connections in the face of a narrow view of the country's history. Studies such as Brauner's (2016) on material connections and exchanges in trading companies through diplomatic gifts; Cañizares-Esguerra's (2017) on global scientific revolutions in the Early Modern Age; Colombo's (2013) case study of a 17th century convert from Islam to Catholicism, explaining the multifaceted and complex phenomenon of conversion, where political, social and religious factors are intertwined; Crewe's (2015) work on trade between America and China through Manila; Firpo's (2016) article on the Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation from the Italian point of view; Gürkan's (2015) work on intermediaries on the Mediterranean frontiers; van Gelder and Krstić's (2015) article on interfaith diplomacy and intermediaries in the early modern Mediterranean; or Prange's (2013) work on maritime violence in the early modern Indian Ocean show themes centred on global history, global connections, or the circulation of ideas, people and products.

There is no doubt, as Fillafer (2017) points out, that global history occupies a preponderant place in today's historiography. Its origins stem from the assumption that the planet has a common history, and that it is feasible and desirable to write it. Those connections, of which Elliott (2010) spoke, have usually been posited since so-called modern times, through the expansion, discovery, trade and cultural inter-exchanges of Europe with the Americas, Africa and the Far East.

The study of exchanges of goods, services and ideas, the formation of military and political relations, and the migration of people, which are the distinctive elements of the contemporary idea of what defines globalisation, shows that it is not a new phenomenon. Authors such as Antunes (2004), speak of a process of globalisation evident throughout history, particularly with a process of intensification in the Early Modern Age, which is defined as a period of discovery, expansion and innovation. Through the interaction of social and economic agents in Amsterdam and Lisbon, it reconstructs local, regional and intercontinental networks of trade, credit, investment and labour.

The role of the Iberian Peninsula in the global connections of the Early Modern Period is of great relevance for understanding these globalisation processes, especially in the period between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (Yun Casalilla, 2019). Zwart's (2016) work analyses the impact of the global market in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the increased monetisation and commercialisation in these societies. But there is a growing body of research that focuses on Africa. Manning and Rood's (2016)

study explains that Africans are only marginally represented in mainstream world history studies, even though the historical literature on this past has expanded since the beginning of the 21st century. The problem, the authors argue, is that world historians still give credence to horizontal separations of groups of civilisations and a view based on vertical distinctions, so that innovations are seen as arising mainly among the elite. To challenge these inherited views, the article offers a narrative of world historical changes initiated by black people in subaltern positions.

Closely related to Eurocentrism in explaining the historical processes of the Early Modern Age, Subrahmanyam (2017) argues that any real and convincing form of "global" intellectual history must necessarily be more than the familiar intellectual history of Western Europe in the broad sense. He elaborates on the idea of "intellectual networks", drawing heavily on examples from Central and Western Eurasia, and especially from the Islamic world. An idea that is also shared by Raj (2017), who points out that this idea of Scientific Revolution in the Early Modern Age has often ignored connections and reciprocities with other parts of the world.

Among the studies that are being revitalised on social connections and movements of people is slavery. The so-called "African diaspora", a consequence of the Atlantic slave trade, involved the movement of more than 12 million enslaved people from African shores by Europeans from the 16th to the 19th century. This detestable business brought considerable economic benefits, not only to the English, Dutch and Portuguese as is usually pointed out in secondary school textbooks, but also to the Spanish Monarchy, as many Spaniards enriched and benefited from the financing of slave ships (Piqueras, 2021). Thus, in recent years, studies have been developed such as Hassell's (2022) on the religious identity of slaves between Portugal and India in the 16th and 17th centuries; Walden's (2022) work on the slave trade in West Africa and the Congo and Angola area; the circulation of new ideas such as medicinal plants that brought African slaves to the New World (Schiebinger, 2017); or the diplomatic connections and the exchange of gifts for the gold and slave trade on the African coasts (Brauner, 2016), are examples of an increasingly relevant subject.

In her study on women and migrations in the Early Modern Age, Rey Castelao (2021) has delved into the role that these women played both in displacements and in taking on work and family responsibility when men were absent for work at sea, as seasonal labourers in the fields, in construction, or in itinerant trade and transport. Studies on gender, household or sexuality (Cesco, 2011) play an important role in the research of the journal *Studies in Early Modern History*, also connected to travel and material culture. Thus, Lloyd's study (2022) on the trials and wills of women arrested by the Inquisition in Portugal in the second half of the seventeenth century shows the role they played in the commercial business of their families, the result of a strategy of education and literacy planned by their families in the face of the Inquisition's threat to the "new Christians".

Therefore, through the Early Modern Age, it is possible to address issues of great social relevance, as modernist historiography has shown in recent decades: religious problems and the complex relations of coexistence derived from them: the Inquisition, Judeo-Conversion, Moors, Protes-

tants (Moreno & Peña Díaz, 2022); family relations, parental authority and the roles that were assigned to children, young people, women and the elderly within society, their survival and transformations (García González, 2020; Rey Castelao, 2016, 2021); material culture (Bartolomé-Bartolomé & García Fernández, 2012), consumption, dress, fashion, and transgressions (Peña Díaz, 2018); power relations and the linking of hegemony with taxation and credit (Marcos Martín & Amigo Vázquez, 2019), the formation of local oligarchies and the organisation of territory; the globalisation of the economy (Yun Casalilla, 2019), maritime trade between continents (Iglesias Rodríguez, 2020), the discovery of new cultures by Europeans, the reciprocal influences between them, the heritage that has come down to us from them, economic exploitation and the Atlantic slave trade (Oliveira, 2016); the concept of modernity, the scientific method and its influence on our social, cultural and thought system (Martínez Hernández, 2020).

In short, all these historical elements, posed through specific problems and with activities that allow reflection, analysis and enquiry, should enable students to acquire specific skills, applying the historian's own techniques.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this paper is to analyse how content on the Early Modern Age is assessed in the university entrance exam in Spain within the framework of the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE in Spanish) between 2017–2023, in order to discern whether this approach responds to current proposals on history education at the international level and to historiographical research on this knowledge. In order to achieve this objective, two specific objectives have been set: (1) To analyse the typology of the questions, the cognitive skills required and the structuring historical concepts that are posed in the university entrance exams; (2) To detail the content assessed on the Early Modern Age and its historiographical updating.

2.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

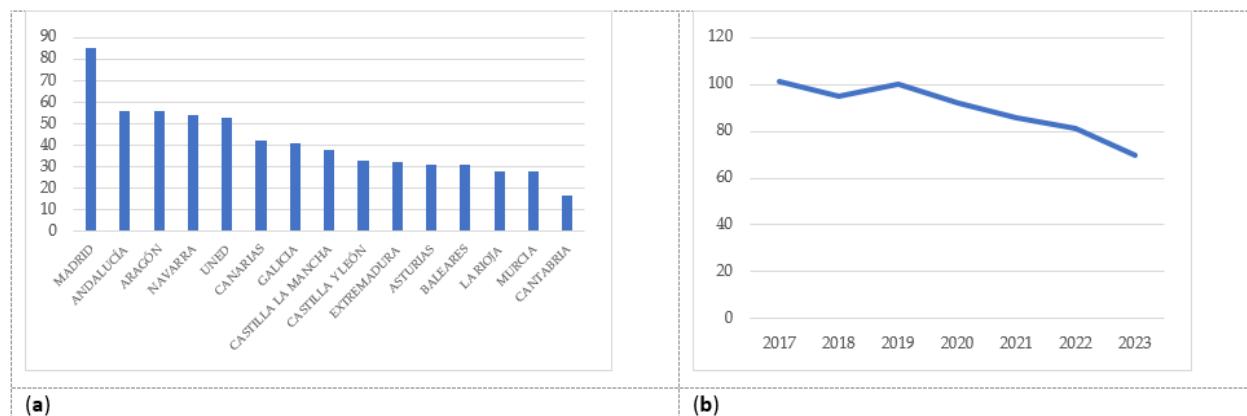
Due to the aim and purpose of this study, it was decided to adopt a mixed methodological design, which falls within the so-called non-experimental methods: the independent variables have already occurred or are not manipulable (Kerlinger, 2002). The data analysis has been carried out by combining a quantitative (frequencies, percentages, relationship between variables, hypothesis testing) and qualitative (textual and content analysis) approach. The main research on history education has also insisted on this complementarity of approaches (Barton, 2008).

Quantitative analysis techniques were applied in this work through frequencies, percentages and relational analyses of categories established based on test activity data (activity typology, cognitive level, historical concepts and content). The qualitative analysis was carried out through the content analysis of these questions, a textual study, which allowed us to understand the historiographical updating of the evaluated contents.

2.3. SAMPLE

We analysed 625 questions ($n = 625$) on the Early Modern Age in the university entrance exams between 2017 (the year in which it is assessed for the first time with the LOMCE curriculum) and 2023 (the year in which it is assessed for the last time with the LOMCE curriculum) in all Spanish regions and those developed by the National University of Distance Education. The distribution by regions and their annual evolution can be seen in the graphs in Figure 1. The only regions that did not introduce any questions on the Early Modern Age were Catalonia, the Basque Country and the Valencian Community.

Figure 1
Distribution by region and its annual evolution of questions on the Early Modern Age in the university entrance exams in Spain



Note: (a) Distribution of questions on the Early Modern Age according to the Autonomous Communities. (b) Evolution of the number of questions on the Early Modern Age.

2.4. DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The tool for collecting information on the exam questions was designed in an Excel database. The activities have been systematized into four categories: type of activity (Table 1), cognitive level required (Table 2), presence of first and second order concepts (Table 3) and historical content (Table 4).

Table 1
Categorisation of the typology of activities/examination questions³

Type of activity	Example	Example
Search for information	Students are asked to look for information about a historical figure or event in other sources.	<i>Find information about Machiavelli's work and his theory about the virtues that a modern prince should have. What relationship can you establish with the meaning of the adjective Machiavellian?</i>
Text commentary	Students are asked to answer a series of questions related to a historical text of the period or a text by a historian.	<i>[about a text] Do you agree with the author's opinion? Reason your answer.</i>
Creation	Students are asked to develop some kind of resource related to the historical contents of the manual.	<i>Imagine you are a group of scientists of the time. Prepare a debate and argue your positions: Part of the class supports Columbus' thesis about the possibility of reaching India from the west. Another part, totally against, believes that it is better to travel east.</i>
Essay	Students are asked to write an essay on a topic or historical figure.	<i>Write a fifteen-line essay on humanist thought using these terms: Classical antiquity, education, progress, critical spirit, Christian faith, reason, science, anthropocentrism, theocentrism.</i>
Figures/images	Questions about figures and images provided by the manual.	<i>Look at the map of the spice trade. Describe the route Europeans followed to reach the islands where they obtained them. Why were spices so important at that time?</i>
Short question	The students are asked to answer a short question about the text elaborated from the manual (not about historical texts of the time).	<i>What is the difference between a manuscript and a book?</i>
Objective test	Students are asked to complete an objective correction exercise (linking arrows, filling in gaps, etc.)	<i>Copy in your notebook and connect with arrows.</i>

Note: Author's elaboration.

Table 2
Meaning and examples of the cognitive level required of students in the exam questions

Cognitive level	Meaning	Example
1	They involve the location and repetition of information present in academic texts, primary or secondary written sources. They are those that activate declarative knowledge of literal formulation or text base. They only involve reading, describing, locating, repeating, reproducing and/or memorising skills.	<i>In what geographical areas was its foreign policy applied? What is called "marriage policy"?</i>
2	Those that require understanding the information inserted in the resource (academic text, source, map, chronological axis, image, etc.) by summarising, paraphrasing or schematising it; locating the main idea of the resource, summarising the information offered in it and/or making an outline of it, defining concepts, relating, establishing similarities or differences between them; searching for and summarising new information in other sources; and finally, making simple resources.	<i>Look at the diagram and explain how the government of the monarchy was organized in the times of Philip II. What were the most important organs of power? On whom did they depend? What role did the courts play in the Hispanic monarchy?</i>

3. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 show the conceptualization and examples used to analyse exam questions and history textbooks by the DICSO research group since 2014. Therefore, some of the examples presented do not correspond to the nature of the university entrance exam model (Gómez Carrasco, 2014).

3	<p>Those that require students to analyse, apply and evaluate information extracted from different resources or those that imply the creation of new information. They start from the previous level and derive from the resolution of inferential questions and the application of procedural contents as strategies. Exercises of historical empathy, simulations or case studies; the writing of simulated biographies applying learnt declarative contents; the critical or heuristic evaluation of information provided by sources.</p>	<p><i>Look at the drawing of the encomienda. Write an essay about the life of an Indian who worked in an encomienda. Describe what the encomienda was like, what work he did and how he was treated.</i></p> <p><i>Divide the class into two groups. One group should defend the rights of the indigenous people based on the arguments of Bartolomé de las Casas. The other group should put themselves in the place of the encomenderos and explain their position.</i></p>
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Note: Author's elaboration.

Table 3

Meaning and example of first and second order concepts present in the activities

Concept	Meaning	Example
First Order		
Chronology	Knowledge of the dates on which historical processes occurred or knowing how to place them correctly is required.	<i>Draw in your notebook an axis like this one and divide it into decades. Indicate in it the following stages</i>
Conceptual/factual	Knowledge of a concept or a specific event in the past is required.	<i>What is printing?</i>
Second Order		
Historical significance	Explain the historical relevance of a particular event or person using appropriate criteria	<i>What is established in this text, why is it so important, and is there any protection against detention today?</i>
Sources/Evidence	Understand how history is an interpretation based on inferences from primary sources.	<i>Read the text by Inca Garcilaso. What caught the Incas' attention when they first saw the Spaniards?</i>
Change and continuity	Understand change in the past as a process, with different rhythms and patterns. Identify complex patterns of progress and decay in different peoples or societies.	<i>Humanism meant a change of mentality with respect to the previous era. Explain its ideas</i>
Causes and consequences	Recognise multiple causes and consequences in the short and long term. See the consequence of a particular event or person on human activities and structures and current conditions.	<i>What do you think were the medium and long-term consequences of accumulating more expenses than income?</i>
Historical perspective	Recognise the differences between current beliefs, values, and motivations (worldview) and those of past peoples and societies. Explain the perspectives of people in the past in their historical context.	<i>Look at the drawing of the encomienda. Write an essay about the life of an Indian who worked in an encomienda. Describe what the encomienda was like, what work he did and how he was treated.</i> <p><i>Divide the class into two groups. One group should defend the rights of the indigenous people based on the arguments of Bartolomé de las Casas. The other group should put themselves in the place of the encomenderos and explain their position.</i></p>
Ethical dimension	Make reasoned ethical judgements about the actions of people in the past, recognising the historical context in which they operated. Evaluate the implications for today of past sacrifices and injustices.	<i>Machiavelli's ideas are usually synthesized in one sentence: "the end justifies the means". Do you agree with this statement? Argue your answer.</i>

Note: Author's elaboration.

Table 4
Typology of historical contents and examples in the activities

Historical contents	Meaning	Example
General History	General questions about the period studied or about subjects that do not fit into the other categories.	<i>What reasons prompted the search for a new sea route to the Far East, and what scientific and technical discoveries facilitated it?</i>
Political and institutional history	Questions about political institutions of the time, international relations, internal and external problems of political powers, etc.	<i>In which reign did the defeat of the "Invincible Armada" take place?</i>
Art and cultural history	Questions about art history, culture, thought, religion, etc.	<i>The Enlightenment</i>
Social and economic history	Questions on social history (social groups, daily life, etc.) and economic history (economic structure, prices, markets, etc.)	<i>Briefly explain the most relevant measures undertaken by the enlightened monarchs for the development of agriculture</i>
Discovery and colonisation of America	Questions about data, personal, facts and processes about the discovery, conquest, and colonisation of America	<i>Fundamental features of the discovery and colonisation of the Americas</i>

Note: Author's elaboration.

This categorisation has been used in other papers related to exams and textbooks (Gómez Carrasco, 2014). To define the cognitive level required in the activities, the work of Sáiz Serrano (2015) has been taken as a reference. In this categorisation, the taxonomy of learning objectives-stages designed by Bloom, in one of its most recent versions, and adapted by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), has been applied. This has made it possible to classify the learning resulting from the tests into cognitive levels. For the analysis of the presence of first- and second-order concepts (the latter related to historical thinking skills), the proposal of Seixas and Morton (2013) has been taken as a basis and also taking into consideration the proposals of Domínguez Castillo (2015). In addition, two typologies of first-order concepts (chronology; conceptual/factual) have been added, as has been done in other works (Gómez Carrasco, 2014).

2.5. DATA ANALYSIS

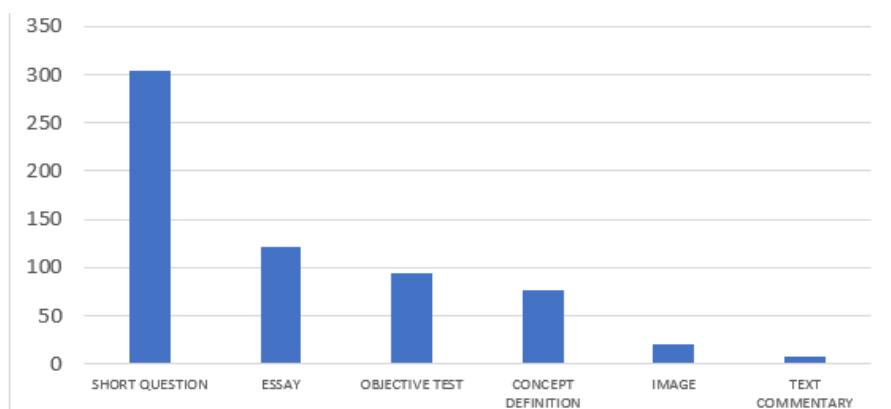
For the processing and analysis of quantitative data, the XLS-TAT program (v.2023) was used to analyse descriptive data (frequencies and percentages). For qualitative variables, tests of association were carried out using contingency tables and the chi-square test. ANOVA tests were also carried out between the qualitative variables and the cognitive level of the exam questions (of an oral nature). The Tukey-c test was then performed to analyse the differences between the variables according to the required cognitive level. The content analysis was carried out on the wording of the questions.

3. RESULTS

3.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF QUESTIONS ON THE EARLY MODERN AGE.

As can be seen in Figure 2, 48.64% of the activities proposed in the exams analysed are "short question", while 19.52% require students to carry out "essays", 15.04% are defined as "objective tests" and 12.32% ask students to "define concepts".

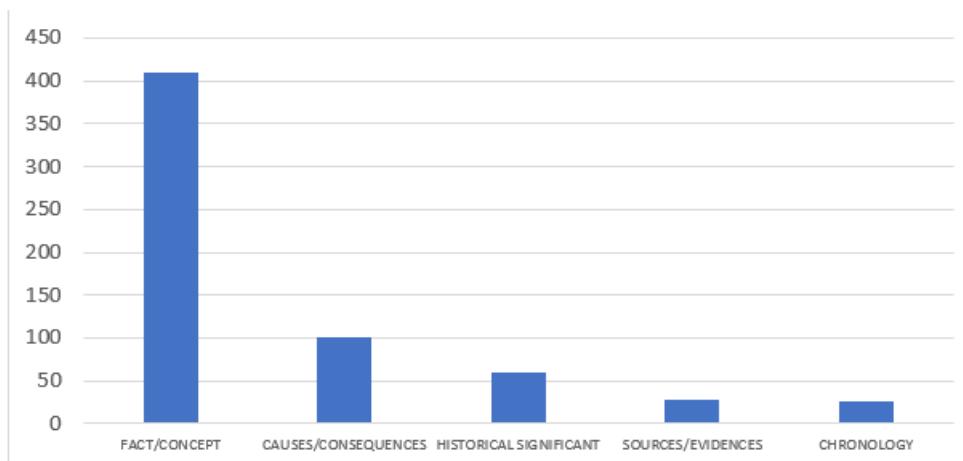
Figure 2
Typology of activities of the tests analysed



Note: Author's elaboration.

With regard to the first- and second-order concepts present in the activities proposed, there are 410 questions to describe or define facts or concepts (Figure 3), i.e. four times more than questions asking for second-order concepts, such as "causes and consequences", which appear on 101 occasions, "historical significance" which has been identified 59 times, or "sources and evidence" which appears on 29 occasions.

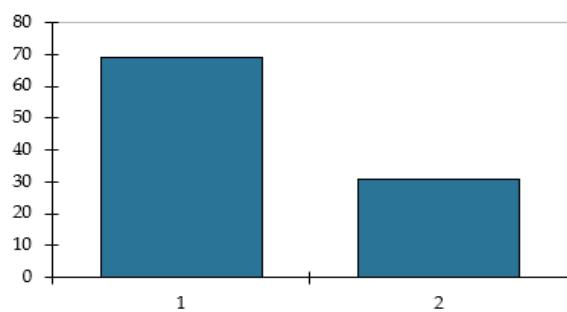
Figure 3
Presence of first-and second-order concepts in the exams



Note: Author's elaboration.

With regard to the cognitive skills demanded of students in the examinations, it has been identified that nearly 70% of the activities (69.28%) fall into Category 1, i.e. those involving the location and repetition of information present in academic texts and which, consequently, require students to have reading, description, location, repetition, reproduction and/or memorisation skills (Figure 4). On the other hand, 30.72% of the remaining activities fall into Category 2, i.e. they require, among other aspects, the comprehension of the information inserted in a resource (academic text, source, map, chronological axis, image, etc.). It should be noted that no activities have been identified in Category 3 of cognitive skills, i.e. those requiring students to analyse, apply, evaluate information extracted from different resources or those involving the creation of new information.

Figure 4
Identification of cognitive skills in the tests



Note: Author's elaboration.

The tests of association with contingency tables and with the chi-square test (>0.0001) show that second-order concepts appear with more relevance in the activities dependent on the use of sources (image or text commentary), in the elaboration of "essays", and activities linked to "cause/consequence" and "historical relevance". The short questions and the objective test mainly gather first-order concepts, namely "facts/concepts", as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Contingency table between activity typology and historical concepts

Type/ Concepts	Causes/ Consequences	Chronology	Sources/ Evidence	Facts/ Concepts	Historical Significance
Text commentary	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Definition of concepts	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Essay	25.41%	0.00%	0.00%	44.26%	30.33%
Image	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Short question	19.41%	0.33%	0.00%	73.36%	6.91%
Objective test	11.70%	27.66%	0.00%	59.57%	1.06%
Total	16.16%	4.32%	4.48%	65.60%	9.44%

Note: Author's elaboration.

Table 6

ANOVA test between the required cognitive level and the typology of questions and historical concepts in the questions on the Early Modern Age in the university entrance exams in Spain

Source	GL	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Pr > F	p-values signification codes
Model	8.000	101.091	12.636	243.807	<0.0001	***
Error	616.000	31.927	0.052			
Total	624.000	133.018				

Note: Author's elaboration.

The result of the ANOVA analysis carried out, taking into account the cognitive level required, the typology of questions and the structuring historical concepts, shows that there are statistically significant differences between the categories. Thus, as can be seen in Figure 5, the typology of questions requiring the lowest cognitive level for their response are, according to the analysis, the "definition of concepts", with a value of 1.491, and the "objective test", with a value of 1.366.

For its part, the analysis carried out between the cognitive level and the historical concepts shows how the highest values of cognitive development are found in the second-order concepts, as opposed to those of the first order. Thus, specifically, the "Causes/Consequences" concept obtained a value of 1.813, while "Sources/Evidence" and "Historical Relevance" reached a value of 1.904.

On the other hand, the Tukey-C test revealed, as can be seen in Table 7, that the concept of "Sources/Evidence" is, together with "Historical relevance", both with a value of 1.904, the one that demands a higher cognitive level from the students. On the other hand, the first-order concepts of "Chronology", with a value of 1.212, and "Facts/Concepts", with a value of 1.095, are those requiring the lowest cognitive level to answer the question posed.

Table 7

Tukey-C test between historical concepts and cognitive level

Category	Mean LS	Standard error	Lower limit (95%)	Upper limit (95%)	Groups
Sources/Evidence	1.904	0.027	1.852	1.957	A
Historical significance	1.904	0.027	1.852	1.957	A
Causes/consequences	1.813	0.030	1.754	1.872	A
Chronology	1.212	0.053	1.108	1.317	B
Facts/concepts	1.095	0.023	1.050	1.140	B

Note: Author's elaboration.

On the other hand, the Tukey-C test analysing the type of exam questions and the cognitive level of the students (Table 8) showed that the "essay" is the activity that requires the highest cognitive level from the students, with a value of 1.727, followed by the "text commentary" and the "image", both with a value of 1.681. At the other end of the scale is the "Objective test", which only obtains a value of 1.366.

Table 8
Tukey-C test, exam question typology and cognitive level

Category	Mean LS (cognitive level)	Groups		
Essay	1.727	A		
Text commentary	1.681	A	B	
Image	1.681	A	B	
Short question	1.568		B	
Definition of concepts	1.491		B	
Objective test	1.366			C

Note: Author's elaboration.

Therefore, as can be seen in Table 9, the "essay" is configured as the type of activity that requires a higher cognitive level, just as the concepts of "Sources/Evidence" and "Historical relevance" are those that also demand a higher level of demand from students.

Table 9
Summary (LS averages) typology of activities and historical concepts

Category (Typology)	Cognitive levels	Category (concepts)	Cognitive level
Essay	1.727	Sources/Evidence	1.904
Text commentary	1.681	Historical significance	1.904
Image	1.681	Causes/consequences	1.813
Short question	1.568	Chronology	1.212
Definition of concepts	1.491	Facts/concepts	1.095
Objective test	1.366		

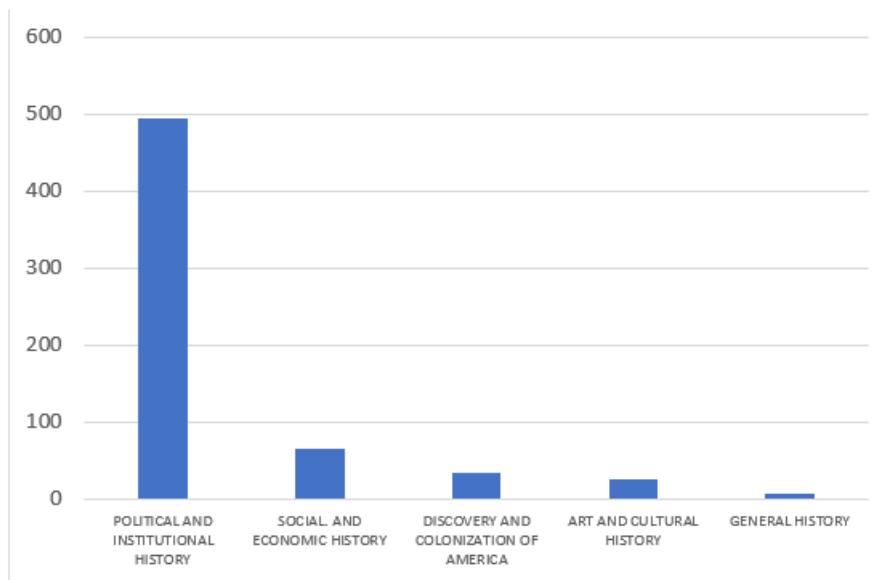
Note: Author's elaboration.

3.2. CONTENTS

As can be seen in Figure 5, content related to political and institutional history occupies most of the content representation in the exams analysed. In fact, this content emerges on 494 occasions, followed by social and economic history (65 occurrences), the discovery and colonisation of

America (33 occasions), art and cultural history (26 occurrences), and, lastly, general history (seven occasions).

Figure 5
Representation of the contents addressed in the exams analysed



Note: Author's elaboration.

A relational analysis between the historical content dealt with in the tests and the concept of a historical nature shows how the highest percentages are located, practically in all the subjects, in the first-order concept of "Facts/Concepts". Except in the case of "historical relevance", a second-order concept which appears linked to the theme of Discovery and Colonisation of America on 42.42% of occasions, in all the remaining themes the concept of "Facts/Concepts" occupies the majority of occurrences. However, it is worth noting that in 40% of the cases, the second-order concept of "Causes/Consequences" is linked to the theme of Social and Economic History.

Table 10
Contingency table between historical content and historical concepts

Contents / Concepts	Causes / Consequences	Chronology	Sources/Evidence	Facts/concepts	Historical significance
Discovery and colonisation of America	24.24%	0.00%	3.03%	30.30%	42.42%
Art and Cultural History	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
General History	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Political and institutional History	13.56%	5.47%	5.47%	67.61%	7.89%
Social and Economic History	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.77%	9.23%
Total	16.16%	4.32%	4.48%	65.60%	9.44%

Note: Author's elaboration. chi-square proof <0.0001

Finally, as can be seen in Figure 6, it is worth noting the relevance of political or institutional content or themes in the questions on Modern History in the University Entrance Exams. Thus, concepts such as "Decretos de Nueva Planta", "Carlos", "Monarchy", "War", "Castile", "Catholic", "Kings", "Philip", "Spain", "Union", "War of Succession", "State", "Bourbon/Borbon" or "Enlightenment" stand out⁴.

Figure 6
Word cloud with the most relevant topics



4. These words were selected because they are the most frequently used in university entrance exams, and they represent the type of exams based on political issues.

Note. Author's elaboration.

It is necessary to point out, in relation to historical concepts, the relevant emergence, in the word cloud, of the concept's "causes" and "consequences", which would imply the development of pupils' historical thinking competences. However, at the same level, we find the term "concept", clearly linked to first-order concepts, which do not imply the development of any competences.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The previous law (LOMCE) had many contradictions. It proposes competency-based learning, but it establishes outdated conceptual and historiographical content and assessment based on learning standards and achievement indicators. It makes it difficult to implement active methodologies. These approaches, far from understanding assessment as a process, see it as an end, which ultimately forces us to continue with the memorisation of concepts that limit the formation of students' historical and critical thinking and the applicability of what they have learnt.

The topics and content to be developed in these tests are furthermore presented disconnected from the present, as isolated facts, with little connection or implication in the everyday life of students. It does not contribute to

understanding the temporal connections with the past or developing historical thinking skills such as historical perspective or analysis of sources (Felices de la Fuente et al., 2023). Furthermore, the presence of terms and concepts that have been superseded by current historiography is observed, which shows that there are two paths that never cross: on the one hand, historiography, and, on the other hand, history teaching. An analysis of the exams shows a stagnation of the assessment proposals in traditional questions, where activities relating to monarchs, major events, wars, or the definition of key concepts for the big political historical knowledge are tackled. The contents of the exams on the Modern Age are not connected to the historiography of this period, as reflected in the introduction. In most exams, "Philip II" is only used to place him in the 16th century; and the "War of Succession" in the 18th century, or to link him to the Bourbon dynasty. Without disregarding this type of knowledge, what is the point of placing Philip II in the 16th century if they are not capable of reflecting on the nature and limits of power, its evolution, or tyranny, for example? Why this insistence on transmitting a homogeneous image of Spain in the past of the Early Modern Age? Why in the questions of exams are women (of all conditions), slaves, or peasantry absent? These examinations, despite the legislative developments, do not conform to normative demands or to international research in historiography and history education.

We should work on an exam of History of Spain that respects the regulations and that is in line with the normative principles that regulate education in the country, the research in history education and the recommendations of supranational institutions. This exam would focus on the assessment of historical knowledge, but also in the skills of critical thinking and historical analysis. For this reason, the project for an alternative exam should be based on one piece of evidence: the previous exam is in total contradiction with the legislation and its approaches (Fuster García, 2016; López Lorente & Monteagudo Fernández, 2016; Sáiz Serrano & Fuster García, 2014; Souto González et al., 2014).

It is necessary to have an assessment that demonstrates the acquisition of cognitive and metacognitive skills of students, that shows a deeper understanding of Spanish history, but also that reveals a development of historical thinking, understanding the social problems of the past and the present, and working the historical consciousness (Ruiz Lázaro et al., 2023; Sáiz Serrano & Fuster García, 2014; Gómez Carrasco et al., 2014; López Facal et al., 2017).

To achieve this objective, it is necessary to incorporate the international proposals of history education for developing historical thinking skills, such as the proposal by Seixas and Morton (2013). They advocate the use of historical sources, the historical perspective, the analysis of changes and continuities, and the analysis of causes and consequences. The research of this article shows how the activities proposed, based on the Early Modern Age, hardly use the assessment of historical thinking skills. These results are similar to those observed by other authors (Fuster García, 2016). The development of historical thinking in our students must go hand in hand with the development of competencies and learning situations that contemplate other ways of teaching but also of assessing (Domínguez Castillo, 2016).

3. Em Espanha,
as competências
educativas
correspondem a
cada Comunidade
Autónoma: não existe
um modelo único,
como em Portugal.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE ARTICLE

Conceptualization, CJGC; Methodology, CJGC; Validation, CJGC; Formal analysis, CJGC and FGC; Research, CJGC and FGC; Data curation, CJGC; Original draft, CJGC and FGC; Writing revisions and corrections, CJGC and FGC; Supervision, CJGC and FGC; Administration of the project, CJGC; Acquisition of funding, CJGC. All authors have read and agree to the publication of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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A Idade Moderna nos exames de acesso à Universidade em Espanha

RESUMO

O principal objetivo deste trabalho é analisar como foram avaliados os conteúdos da Idade Moderna no exame de acesso à universidade em Espanha no âmbito do currículo da Lei Orgânica para a Melhoria da Qualidade Educativa (2017-2023). O objetivo é discernir se esta abordagem responde às propostas atuais de educação histórica a nível internacional e à investigação historiográfica sobre a Idade Moderna. Foi utilizado um desenho metodológico misto, combinando uma abordagem quantitativa (frequências, percentagens, relação entre variáveis, testes de hipóteses) e qualitativa (análise textual e de conteúdo). Foram analisadas 625 questões sobre a Idade Moderna nos exames de admissão de todas as regiões espanholas e nas desenvolvidas pela Universidade Nacional de Educação a Distância. Os resultados mostram como a avaliação mantém um caráter tradicional. A maioria são questões curtas e definições de factos/conceitos relacionados com a história institucional e política, onde é valorizada a capacidade dos alunos para ler, descrever, localizar, repetir, reproduzir e/ou memorizar. Em suma, estas provas de avaliação demonstram a falta de atualização nas abordagens da educação histórica, bem como nos temas desenvolvidos na historiografia modernista atual.

Palavras-chave: Idade Moderna; História de Espanha; Exames; Provas de acesso à universidade; Avaliação.

La Edad Moderna en los exámenes de acceso a la universidad en España

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar cómo se evaluaron los contenidos sobre la Edad Moderna en la prueba de acceso a la Universidad en España en el marco del currículo de la Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (2017–2023). La finalidad es discernir si este planteamiento responde a las propuestas actuales sobre educación histórica a nivel internacional y a la investigación historiográfica sobre la Edad Moderna. Se ha utilizado un diseño metodológico mixto, combinando un enfoque cuantitativo (frecuencias, porcentajes, relación entre variables, pruebas de hipótesis) y cualitativo (análisis textual y de contenido). Se han analizado 625 preguntas sobre la Edad Moderna en los exámenes de acceso a la Universidad en todas las regiones españolas, y los desarrollados por la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. Los resultados muestran cómo la evaluación mantiene un carácter tradicional. La mayoría son preguntas cortas y definición de hechos/conceptos relacionados con la historia institucional y política, donde se valora en el alumnado la capacidad de lectura, descripción, localización, repetición, reproducción y/o memorización. En definitiva, estas pruebas de evaluación demuestran la escasa actualización en los planteamientos de la educación histórica, así como en las temáticas desarrolladas en la historiografía modernista actual.

Palabras clave: Edad Moderna; Historia de España; Exámenes; Pruebas de acceso a la universidad; Evaluación.