HISTORICAL COMPETENCES in COMPULSORY EDUCATION: assessment, inquiry based strategies and students’ argumentation


1. The assessment
It is another way to monitor and improve students’ learning, to correct the mistakes committed during the process, and to adopt relevant decisions. Knowledge memorization is still valued the most. The analysis, reasoning, reflection, and the evaluation or interpretation of documents do not appear in exams.

2. The cognitive model

2.1 Ability to deal with historical problems in their context (social history)
2.2 Stimulating the analysis and extraction of evidence corresponding to sources and historical experiments (methodological process)
2.3 Developing a historical awareness, that is, the ability to interrelate past and present events
2.4 We must help them to develop an ability to build or represent narratives of the past.

3. Formative assessment by means of inquiry-based strategies

The inquiry-based approach suggests that students should explore the academic content, ask questions, do research, and answer them (Project methods, problem-based learning or case studies); in other words; that they should learn to prepare hypotheses, to look for evidence or sources, and subsequently to classify them and subject them to a critical analysis. We assess through direct observation, progress markers, portfolios, co-assessment and self-assessment. The final goal consists in determining students’ cognitive skills through the utilization of new assessment strategies and procedures, including complex contextualized tasks.

4. Assessment of historical thinking in exams

- Objective tests which can help to increase the cognitive demands of these exercises
- Tasks to provide a historical interpretation
- Narrations

5. Conclusions

- History teaching must leave behind memory-based learning, which still prevails in Spain.
- Valuing the didactic potential involved in the teaching of skills related to strategic contents as well as to those associated with historical thinking at primary and secondary educational levels. Research sources and methods are utilized, along with historical reflection and reasoning.

- It becomes necessary to perform an intervention which can increase the presence of history-applied didactics in Primary and Secondary Education through Inquiry-Based Strategies and the proposal to include Students’ Argumentation as part of the assessment.