

# A Proposal for the Design of a Gamified Experience for the Teaching of Historical Thinking in Primary Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The need for a transformation of the teaching and learning process of history has long been called for from the field of history education research. A change is advocated which affects both the methodology and the epistemology of the field and promotes the development of historical thinking. This chapter presents an intervention programme aimed at primary education students in Spain and validated via expert judgement with the aim of contributing to the aforementioned change in the teaching of history by including work on the historical thinking skills along with the use of active methodologies such as gamification. The objective of this chapter is to present this gamified project for the development of historical thinking in such a way that it can serve as a point of reference and to propose a series of steps to facilitate the design of gamified learning experiments.*

## INTRODUCTION

Research on the teaching of history advocates the need for a change in the teaching and learning process and the redefinition of the current model of history education by introducing historical thinking into the classroom (Carretero et al., 2017; Metzger & Harris, 2018; Thorp & Persson, 2020; VanSledright, 2011, 2014).

In order to achieve an education in historical thinking, it is necessary to move beyond the mere memorisation of dates and information and to work on second-order concepts which provide the necessary tools for the study of the past and the construction of historical explanations (Domínguez, 2015; Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Furthermore, it is argued that the traditional teaching practices employed in the majority of schools for the teaching of history should be substituted by active methodologies which attribute a leading role to students in the construction of their own learning (Gómez et al., 2018; Martínez-Hita et al., 2021).

Gamification is a teaching innovation which is gradually gaining in popularity in schools due to its positive effects on aspects such as learning and motivation (Huang et al., 2020; Kocakoyun & Ozdamli, 2018; Landers, 2014; Sailer & Homner, 2020; Swacha, 2021). Therefore, this chapter proposes the use of gamification as a tool which can facilitate the active learning of historical thinking concepts.

## HISTORICAL THINKING

Research into historical thinking is increasingly gaining relevance (Epstein & Salinas, 2018; Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Thorp & Persson, 2020) as can be observed in the recent monographs on this issue (Carretero et al., 2017; Counsell et al., 2016; Metzger & Harris, 2018). Within this field, two main trends can be identified (Seixas, 2017); one based on historical consciousness and controversial issues (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Domínguez-Almansa & López-Facal, 2017; Rüsen, 2012), which complements another focused on historical thinking (De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Thorp & Persson, 2020; VanSledright, 2014).

In spite of the proliferation of research on history education, and historical thinking in particular, Lévesque & Clark (2018) have stated that history teachers have not fully integrated proposals made as a result of this research into their teaching practice, although it is true that the education curriculums of some countries have incorporated historical thinking (Brant et al., 2016; Clark, 2018; Domínguez, 2015; Parkes & Donnelly, 2014).

The lack of relationship between the research on historical thinking and classroom teaching experience (Lévesque & Clark, 2018) explains the fact that researchers continue to defend the need to carry out a renovation of history education towards the development of historical thinking. This necessity is also justified by the very epistemology of history and its aims, as well as by the guidelines set out in education curriculums (Gómez et al., 2018).

In order to develop historical thinking, two complementary aspects are required: a substantive knowledge of first-order concepts about the past (*substantive history*); and a knowledge of second-order historical concepts (*second-order or procedural ideas about history*). The former are the concepts which history addresses (i.e., the contents), whereas the second type of historical knowledge provides the necessary tools for the study of the past and the construction of historical explanations. Without these second-order concepts, it would be impossible to give meaning to the substantive (first-order) contents

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