

Article

# Teaching Gender in the History Classroom: An Investigation into the Initial Training of Primary Education Teachers

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**Abstract:** In this article, we aim to, firstly, examine the social representations of a group of trainee Primary-Education teachers ( $n = 62$ ) with regard to both the procedures and the social purposes of teaching History at school and, particularly, the role of women in History lessons. Secondly, we attempt to intervene in those representations and to evaluate the potential impact of a teacher training programme both in and for education in gender equality. Empirically, we employ a quantitative (means and standard deviations) and inferential (Wilcoxon's signed-rank and Kendall's tau-b tests) pre-experimental, pre-test/post-test design with no control group. The results shed light on the generalised acceptance of critical curricular focuses in History lessons that are directed towards training in historical and social thinking skills from a gender perspective. The sex of prospective teachers does not seem to influence these results. Likewise, these results confirm the didactic potential of using critical literacy resources in the classroom for improving the visibility of women and the female experience in the historic-social discourse of History as it is taught and in the promotion of models of global citizenship.

**Keywords:** history teaching; gender equality; teacher training; primary education; education for social justice

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## 1. Introduction

Recent research underlines the fact that current curricula and textbooks continue to leave women invisible in the representations of students and trainee teachers, as they build on a framework of hegemonic discourse with markedly androcentric character [1,2]. The absence of the historical role of women as citizens and main characters in History, evident in the assignment of archetypes and integrated in the collective imagination, is still recognisable today in both curricular programmes and teaching practice [3,4].

The removal of the stereotypical persistence of *desirable gender models* [5] can be achieved through teacher training in History and Social Sciences in order to redefine the end-purposes of History teaching and question their present narratives. Indeed, the presence and leading role of women in History lessons will not be done through additional inclusions in specific quotations or annexes, but through the discourse of change [6], with the aim of constructing integral social knowledge.

Inquiring into the social representations of trainee teachers constitutes a first step for reflecting on university study plans and for innovation, reflection, and the improvement of teaching practice, as well as for the adoption of critical perspectives oriented towards social transformation [7,8]. In accordance with Pagès [9] and Adler [10], beliefs and attitudes towards what History is and the practice of its teaching (how and why to teach History and what to teach) condition the didactics of History and practical decision-making. Using this valuable information and reflecting on what might intervene

in its restructuring would impact on the improvement of our own teaching practice and on the implementation of plans and proposals for improvements in the training of university teachers from a gender perspective.

A form of teaching History at school is needed in our opinion, which, in the words of Pagès and Sant [4], can help to “counter socialize from a perspective opposed to the hegemonic ( . . . ) [from a conception of history] as a tool for teaching and learning the mechanisms of power, through which people are historically constructed” (pp. 93–114). In this sense, the adoption of approaches geared towards the consolidation of global, inclusive, and diverse citizenship are essential, where critical and social thinking, and the recognition of complex and multiple identities, represent their fundamental core.

If we comprehend gender theory as “knowledge in which one has to be trained to intervene in classroom teaching practice” [11] (p. 72), the need to incorporate gender equality training into university study plans [12] and to analyse teaching practice becomes evident. However, both the invisibility of the female experience and the absence of gender relations in the teaching of Social Sciences are confirmed in the literature [6,13,14] and in teaching staff’s own training. This absence has gradually been favouring the concealment of gender diversity and, in consequence, the maintenance of hegemonic identities, traditionally constructed upon androcentric grounds [15].

Despite both the state and the regional legislative frameworks in force, gender inequalities continue to be present in the decision-making on curricula contents, the application of methodological strategies, the selection of didactic resources, interpersonal relations, and in the way the classroom is organised and the tasks are assigned [16]. This reality calls for specific and transversal gender training for teachers [17–21]. In accordance with the scientific literature, teaching experiences, and educational initiatives on the inclusion of the gender perspective in teacher training [1,22], the need to work through epistemological and methodical models that facilitate the transformation of teaching practice seems evident.

Based on the application of critical literacy resources [23,24] directed towards social transformation, the present investigation sets out, firstly, to examine the social representations of a group of trainee Primary-Education teachers that concern the procedures and social purposes of the teaching–learning of History at school and, in particular, the role of women in the teaching of History. Secondly, we aim to intervene in these representations, and to evaluate teaching practices through the design and implementation of a plan of action directed at the inclusion of the gender perspective in the teaching of both History and the Social Sciences in Primary Education.

Our main hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is that teaching programmes have an influence on the modification of the epistemological and methodological representations of students with regard to History lessons. In contrast, the null hypothesis ( $H_{0-1}$ ) would expect no influence in this sense.

The second alternative hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) considers that, at the end of the teaching programme, the use of acritical reproduction of content of an androcentric nature, associated with the trainee teachers’ school days, will register an inverse relation with the need to exploit the scientific method and the management of sources for improving the visibility of women in the teaching of History. In consequence, the absence of that relation would confirm the null hypothesis ( $H_{0-2}$ ).

Finally, the third hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) considers the existence of significant differences between the epistemological and methodological representations of the students according to their sex, before and after following the teaching program. The identification of equality between groups would confirm the absence of these differences ( $H_{0-3}$ ).

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The selected participants ( $n = 62$ ) were enrolled in the final year of the Degree in Primary Education Teaching at the University of Burgos (Spain). The sample consisted of 49 female students (79.03%) and

13 male students (20.96%) with a response rate of 81.25% in the pre-test and 65.62% in the post-test. This unequal distribution by sex is common in Spain in the degrees related to the educational field.

We applied a non-stratified [25] and non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique [26], which required participant compliance with the following specific condition for the purposes of the investigation: Having passed the specific study modules of the Didactics of Social Sciences Department in the second and third year of the Degree. The total selection of the sample depended on the researcher and not on random probability of choice. It was guided by intentional selective criteria, in accordance with the degree of adaptation to the objectives of the investigation [27].

## 2.2. Instrument

The instrument of application for data collection was the mixed content questionnaire [28]. Its design was configured on the basis of open questions, closed questions, and iconographic sources. The group of closed questions, of a quantitative type, appeared in the form of a Likert scale with an intensity matrix, based on a set of affirmations to which the trainee teacher had to respond by selecting different degrees of acceptance (5. Totally agree; 4. Agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 2. Disagree somewhat; 1. Totally disagree).

The questions related to the end-purpose of teaching history assumed special relevance in the design of these questions, as they shed light on the initial representations of the content (what to teach and for what reason) and the methodology (how to teach) of the trainee teachers [29].

The instrument was structured into four categories of analysis, and separated into core-structure questions and sub-dimensional questions that, in the form of affirmations or assertions, accounted for the different aspects corresponding to each category:

Category 1. Contents, procedures, social objectives, and end-purpose of the teaching–learning of History at school: The first category was proposed on the basis of seven main questions with three open questions and sixteen sub-dimensional questions, expressed in the form of affirmations or assertions. Example (C1-E1-P5): “The contents that have to be worked in the teaching of History at school should be directed toward ( . . . )”.

Category 2. Men and women in the teaching of History at school: The second category was organised into two core-structure questions with eight sub-dimensional questions, also presented as affirmations and assertions. Example (C2-E2-P12): “The teaching of History in Primary Education should be based on ( . . . )”.

Category 3. Main characters of History at school: The penultimate category had two main structure questions with an open question and four sub-dimensional questions. Example (C3-E3-P15): “The learning outcomes at the Primary Education stage would have to allow the pupils to ( . . . )”.

Category 4. Iconographic sources and the teaching of History: The activity linked to this last category required that the trainee teachers mobilise their historical knowledge, prompted by a set of counterpoised iconographic sources, selected in accordance with different historiographic traditions.

The results that are presented here correspond to the above-mentioned second category, on the end-purposes and the teaching methodology of History lessons at school, before and after the follow-up of the teaching programme. The interest of this category lies in its design, specifically oriented to obtain information about the role of men and women in the teaching of History at school.

The analysis of the internal consistency of the instrument for the closed questions was done through the calculation of Cronbach’s alpha statistic. This statistic yielded results of over 0.60 both for the initial (pre-test) questionnaire ( $p$ -value = 0.715) and the final (post-test) questionnaire ( $p$ -value = 0.846), which are considered optimal values in social studies of an exploratory nature.

## 2.3. Design and Procedure

A pre-experimental design was used, with pre- and post-test measurements, without a control group. In accordance with this design, the values obtained in a group were compared with themselves before and after treatment [30,31]. Likewise, the research was positioned in the methodological

principles of case study and action-research [25]. Likewise, the study positioned itself in the critical paradigm, the principles of which are directed towards social emancipation and transformation [32,33], and towards the struggle against inequality and the democratisation of the curriculum [34]. From this perspective, the investigation is an attempt to understand the meaningful structures [35,36] that, in terms of gender relations as a category of historical and social analysis, define and explain the construction of the social representations of the trainee teachers in Primary Education before and after the implementation of a training programme. The design of the study that is presented here was developed in two specific methodological frameworks:

- (1) The study of cases, the interest of which lies in their power to explain specific contexts, in which the participants in the investigation permit the comprehension of the relational meanings generated between the trainee teachers and the teaching staff [28].
- (2) Evaluative research oriented towards the systematic evaluation of information obtained with regard to the object of study. Its proposal is to centre on “measuring [through the use of defined research methods] the effects [results] of a programme, through comparisons of the goals proposed as targets [evaluation criteria linked to the objectives that are formulated], in order to contribute to subsequent programme decision-making and to improve the programme in the future [social purpose of the evaluation]” [37] (pp. 16–17).

Our teaching programme was implemented in the context of the compulsory fourth year study module “Investigation and Innovation in Learning (Social and Cultural) Knowledge of the Environment” during the first term of the 2016/2017 academic year. It was sequenced in four interventions:

1. Approximation, knowledge, and close examination of the social representations of Primary Education trainee teachers in the initial stages of their training.
2. Classroom implementation of the training programme with the application of critical literacy resources from the gender perspective: Critical analysis of the curriculum, texts, and iconographic editorial sources, as well as guided reading and the design of teaching innovation projects.
3. Analysis of the results of the intervention and the adoption of measures for the design and programming of the teaching practice of the trainee teachers.

Building on the principles of critical literacy [23], the design of the programme seeks, on the one hand, to train the trainee teacher in curricular decision-making. On the other, its aim is to satisfy one of the most repeated demands in the research on classroom practices in the History classroom: The addition, in an inclusive and plural context, of the gender perspective in the teaching of Social Sciences and in the initial stages of teacher training.

The anonymity of the responses from the participants and their subsequent processing was at all times guaranteed.

#### 2.4. Data Analysis

We applied a quantitative analysis of the frequencies, averages, and standard deviations of both the total and the inferential results, through hypothesis testing and intercorrelated variables. We used the SPSS v.24 statistical software package for data processing and analysis.

In order to determine the structure and construct validity of the instrument, we applied the multivariate technique of factorial analysis to the total of the difference in values obtained in the pre-test and the post-test observations ( $n = 94$ ), using the principal component extraction method and varimax rotation. The Kaiser rule of eigenvalues greater than 1 was applied to the factor rotation method. This model meant that we were able to identify levels of correlation in terms of the theoretical relation between the established variables, reducing their number and summarising the data in accordance with the objective of the study.

Prior to the analysis, we examined the correlations/covariance matrix between variables following the application of Bartlett’s test of sphericity, and the calculation of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO)

measurement of sampling adequacy, in order to establish the matrix factorisation possibilities. The results obtained in the KMO test (0.813) and in the sphericity test ( $\chi^2 = 183.349$ ; gl. 28,  $p < 0.005 = 0.000$ ) indicated the adequacy of the matrix to be factorised.

The exploratory factor analysis identified two factors that explained 71.401% of the total variance, which is considered a satisfactory level. Values of under 0.40 were suppressed for the validation of the scales.

Likewise, the average results obtained in previous and subsequent measurements to our teaching intervention were compared, in order to determine whether significant differences existed between them. Aware of the atypical distribution of the data in the variable difference, we used the Wilcoxon non-parametric signed-rank test and evaluated the size of the effect with Hedges'  $g$ .

Finally, Kendall's Tau-b hypothesis test was used with the purpose of confirming the degree of dependence of the selected variables, and thereby testing  $H_2$ .

In order to identify significant differences between the epistemological and methodological representations of the students according to their sex, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied for independent samples.

### 3. Results

From among the factors obtained with Eigenvalues higher than one in the instrument (Social ends, scientific method and active methodologies in History lessons", and "Traditional methodologies of the teaching of History), the matrix that is presented below includes the factors consisting of the variables with strong correlations between one another. The saturations of items by factor are presented in the matrices of valid rotated factors (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Rotated component matrix <sup>a</sup>.

	Component	
	1	2
Ítem 12 b	0.889	
Ítem 12 d	0.863	
Ítem 13 c	0.814	
Ítem 12 c	0.806	
Ítem 13 b	0.734	−0.434
Ítem 13 a		0.839
Ítem 12 a		0.758
Ítem 13 d	−0.485	0.716

<sup>a</sup> Extraction method: Analysis of principal components; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation; a. The rotation converged in three iterations.

#### 3.1. Social End-Purposes, Scientific Method, and Active Methodologies in History Lessons

The first factor to consider gathers information associated with the social representations of the trainee teachers regarding the social end-purposes of History teaching and the evaluation, as future teachers, of the use of active methodologies and the scientific method in the History classroom.

Once the teaching programme was over, the students had no doubts over expressing their agreement with the need to work with social problems and with the problematic issues of social and historic content in the teaching of History at school, and with the development of social competencies on the basis of increasing the visibility of all the social actors ( $M_{\text{post}} > 4.5$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} < 3$ ). In this sense, unlike their perceptions on their education during their schooling, the development of the necessary capabilities to think of society and to encourage social thought in the Social Sciences classroom implies a comprehension of the historicity of men and women, and the acquirement of a true historic awareness of citizenship ( $M_{\text{post}} = 4.57$ ;  $SD = 0.85$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 3.10$ ;  $SD = 1.25$ ). Likewise, the acquisition of social competencies has to begin with increasing the visibility of all social and historic actors from the past

and in the present, including women, in the construction of society ( $M_{\text{post}} = 4.55$ ;  $SD = 0.86$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.96$ ;  $SD = 1.13$ ).

Along these lines, the participant trainee teachers expressed a significant degree of agreement with the application of active methodologies linked to contrasting perspectives, cooperation, collaboration, debate, reflection, and the evaluation of points of view on social problems of the past ( $M_{\text{post}} = 4.6$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.35$ ). In them, women would have to be defined in specific and egalitarian contents with respect to other historic subjects ( $M_{\text{post}} = 4.6$ ;  $SD = 0.61$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 2.10$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ).

Likewise, the use of the scientific method, specific to the historical sciences, is considered necessary from the Primary Education stage. In the available source material, both women and men have had to represent a clear and defined social role ( $M_{\text{post}} = 4.33$ ;  $SD = 0.90$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 1.92$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ).

### 3.2. Traditional Methodologies of History Teaching

The second factor, "Traditional methodologies of History teaching", covers the questions relating to the perceptions of the trainee teachers ( $M_{\text{post}} < 2$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} > 4$ ) and the culturalist description and explanation of political and military events, dates, and the most salient characters of the grand stages of the History of Humanity, with no distinction between social groups and actors ( $M_{\text{post}} = 2.74$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.17$ ;  $SD = 1.25$ ). Despite the consistency of the responses given between the proposed values, the generalised rejection among the trainee teachers of this traditional historiographic discourse appears to be linked to the development of cognitive skills related with the memorisation and reproduction of strict factual content, with neither debate nor comparisons between the editorial and historiographic texts in use ( $M_{\text{post}} = 1.55$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.33$ ;  $SD = 0.87$ ). Equally, the participant trainee teachers expressed their final disagreement with the absence of women and the female experience in the construction of historical knowledge, and with the exclusive memorisation of the names of mainly masculine political and military leaders that habitually appear in the texts and activities proposed in the reference textbook ( $M_{\text{post}} = 1.48$ ;  $SD = 0.94$ ;  $M_{\text{pre}} = 4.25$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ).

### 3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Having compared the average results yielded by the pre-test with those obtained in the post-test, we were able to confirm the existence of significant differences between the total values returned ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). This difference informed us, moreover, of a large effect size when the teaching action had finished (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2.** End-purposes of History lessons at school <sup>a</sup>.

	12 a <sup>f</sup> -12 a <sup>i</sup>	12 b <sup>f</sup> -12 b <sup>i</sup>	12 c <sup>f</sup> -12 c <sup>i</sup>	12 d <sup>f</sup> -12 d <sup>i</sup>
Z	-4.605 <sup>b</sup>	-4.633 <sup>c</sup>	-5.214 <sup>c</sup>	-4.637 <sup>c</sup>
Asymptotic Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hedges' g	1.28	1.33	1.81	1.54

<sup>a</sup> = Wilcoxon signed-rank test; <sup>b</sup> = Based on positive ranges; <sup>c</sup> = Based on negative ranges; <sup>f</sup> = Final questionnaire (post-test); <sup>i</sup> = Initial questionnaire (pre-test).

**Table 3.** History teaching methodologies <sup>a</sup>.

	13 a <sup>f</sup> -13 a <sup>i</sup>	13 b <sup>f</sup> -13 b <sup>i</sup>	13 c <sup>f</sup> -13 c <sup>i</sup>	13 d <sup>f</sup> -13 d <sup>i</sup>
Z	-5.606 <sup>b</sup>	-5.510 <sup>c</sup>	-5.323 <sup>c</sup>	-5.427 <sup>b</sup>
Asymptotic Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hedges' g	4.46	2.60	2.22	2.63

<sup>a</sup> = Wilcoxon signed-rank test; <sup>b</sup> = Based on positive ranges; <sup>c</sup> = Based on negative ranges; <sup>f</sup> = Final questionnaire (post-test); <sup>i</sup> = Initial questionnaire (pre-test).

In consequence, the first  $H_1$  is accepted, according to which the teaching intervention significantly influences the modification of the epistemological and methodological representations of the trainee teachers regarding the teaching of History.

With regard to the second alternative hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) that was proposed, a strong inverse correlation, moderated by the variables under study, was confirmed ( $\tau = -0.546$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Ordinal–ordinal variable correlations \*.

		13 a <sup>i</sup>	13 c <sup>f</sup>
Kendall's Tau-b	13 a <sup>i</sup>	1.000	−0.546 *
		Correlation coefficient	0.015
		Sig. (bilateral)	

\* = The correlation was significant at a level of 0.05 (bilateral); <sup>i</sup> = Initial questionnaire (pre-test); <sup>f</sup> = Final questionnaire (post-test).

Following these results, we can confirm the  $H_2$  that was formulated, according to which the use of acritical reproduction of the contents of an androcentric nature at school will register an inverse relation with the use of the scientific method and the use of different source materials when completing the follow-up of the teaching programme.

In relation to  $H_3$ , the results confirm the absence of statistically significant differences between men and women ( $p \geq 0.192$ ) in all the study variables and dimensions (*end-purposes of History lessons at school*, and *History teaching methodologies*) (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Test statistics Mann–Whitney U.

	12 a <sup>i</sup>	12 b <sup>i</sup>	12 c <sup>i</sup>	12 d <sup>i</sup>	13 a <sup>i</sup>	13 b <sup>i</sup>	13 c <sup>i</sup>	13 d <sup>i</sup>
Mann-Whitney U <sub>a</sub>	168,500	145	193,500	174	183	183	165,500	169
Wilcoxon W	1114,500	1091	238,500	219	1129	1129	210,500	214
Z	−657	−1207	000	−488	−281	−267	−736	−666
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	511	227	1	626	779	790	462	505
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	552 <sup>b</sup>	250 <sup>b</sup>	1 <sup>b</sup>	651 <sup>b</sup>	812 <sup>b</sup>	812 <sup>b</sup>	505 <sup>b</sup>	568 <sup>b</sup>
	12 a <sup>f</sup>	12 b <sup>f</sup>	12 c <sup>f</sup>	12 d <sup>f</sup>	13 a <sup>f</sup>	13 b <sup>f</sup>	13 c <sup>f</sup>	13 d <sup>f</sup>
Mann-Whitney U <sub>a</sub>	78	82	67,500	79,500	79,000	80,500	62,500	86
Wilcoxon W	93	785	770,500	782,500	94	783,500	765,500	789
Z	−577	−515	−1304	−623	−645	−579	−1295	−311
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	564	606	192	534	519	563	195	756
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	597 <sup>b</sup>	706 <sup>b</sup>	342 <sup>b</sup>	624 <sup>b</sup>	624 <sup>b</sup>	651 <sup>b</sup>	253 <sup>b</sup>	821 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> = Grouping variable: Sex; <sup>b</sup> = Not corrected for ties; <sup>i</sup> = Initial questionnaire (pre-test); <sup>f</sup> = Final questionnaire (post-test).

In agreement with these results, we confirm the null hypothesis ( $H_{0-3}$ ), by which the equality in the distribution of the study variables is identified and, therefore, the absence of the influence of gender in the epistemological and methodological representations of the students before and after the teaching intervention. This means that the fact of being male or female does not condition the changes produced in the social representations of the future teachers after the follow-up of the subject.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

In line with other studies on the teaching of History and teacher training [13,15], the results from the initial questionnaire, prior to the teaching action, noted the continuance of a positivist, pseudo-objectified, static history lesson of a markedly androcentric nature in the recollections and learning results of the trainee teachers. Despite the advances in historic research and the consolidation of new historiographic currents over past decades, the female experience remains invisible in History lessons.

It could therefore be confirmed that the maintenance and the stability of the positivist tradition and technical curricular approaches in the teaching of History persists. The representations of the trainee teachers, expressed through knowledge of their discipline and their experiences as students in compulsory and non-compulsory education, appear to be led by teachers with hegemonic and unquestionable social knowledge. The students, in consequence, occupy a subsidiary place with no capacity for intervention or reflection upon that knowledge [38].

The final questionnaire yielded results that consolidated the degree of agreement of the trainee Primary Education teachers with the need to increase the visibility of women and the female experience in History lessons. They all recognised a need to increase the visibility of the leading roles of men and women in the construction of social knowledge, and for the didactic treatment of contents linked to social problems and the problematic issues in social and historic contents for the teaching of History at school [39–41].

The students considered both the implementation of active methodologies and the methodological treatment of historical empathy necessary, as well as strategies of simulation, and case studies, among others. They also argued that the use of the scientific method and diverse historical sources in the teaching of History (especially those of a sociocultural nature) would make it possible to bring students closer to the social reality of the time in which the events happened, bringing women to the fore, among other invisible social groupings, in the exercise of their social activity [42]. In the modifications of these representations, the sex variable does not seem to influence any of the study variables. Consequently, the acceptance of critical curricular models and the need to promote the development and acquisition of social thinking skills from a gender perspective are not related to sex or to the cultural identifications of the future teachers' gender. Therefore, the main influential factors in their initial representations on the construction of historical knowledge come from their stage as students of History and their pedagogical models. In this sense, as evidenced by recent studies [43], "finding out social representations, establishing a 'state of the situation', [and] questioning their origins and genesis is essential for teaching, as it is considered [that] to learn is to modify these representations" [44] (p. 6).

In accordance with the results obtained in the present research, both the analysis and the assessment of the relations between teaching research and didactic innovation would have to be prioritised in the design of teacher training programmes directed at *supporting* and *promoting* gender equality education, with the end-purpose of producing clear impacts on teaching practice. Working with the representations of students, and inquiring and examining their origins in depth, will allow the teacher trainers of History teaching and of Social Sciences to promote change, to rework their programmes, and to argue, in a reasoned way, for decision-making on the training strategies to be applied [45]. Despite the advantages of the design used in this research with respect to the designs of a single group and a single measurement or test (post-test), the conclusions obtained in this type of designs must be taken with caution. Indeed, without a control group, it is difficult to know the influence of factors that may have intervened during the treatment/intervention and that may have been present in the values returned by the dependent variables.

Even allowing for limitations in the data available (limitations of the sample under study and the absence of a test control group), the results obtained in the teacher training programme provide valid indicators of the didactic potential of using critical literacy resources in the classroom for increasing the visibility of women and the female experience in the historic-social discourse of History as it is taught

and in the promotion of models of global citizenship. Likewise, it would be appropriate to apply qualitative research techniques and instruments to consolidate and enrich the conclusions reached.

From an autonomous and critical perspective, and based on the principles of reflexive practice, the design and implementation of our intervention has sought to find a response to three fundamental questions: *Why* and *how* to teach Social Sciences from the gender perspective, and gender inequality as a social problem and *what* to teach in that context. Through this programme, we have attempted to analyse and improve our own teaching practice, with the ultimate end-purpose of turning it into the grounding of our own theory and of converting this theory into innovative teaching practice.

This “action-research” finds an excellent opportunity for the inclusion of gender as a category of analysis in the initial training contexts of trainee teachers of Social Sciences through the application of critical literacy resources and problematic issues in the subject matter, capable of beginning with the present and its problems (among which gender inequality is one). In this sense, recent research [46] demonstrates the need to implement specific teacher training programmes for the acquisition of critical skills for the identification of ideologies, discourses, and hegemonic conceptions of reality for social action. Teaching to read and understand critically requires transcending the traditional levels of linguistic and cognitive reading to incorporate the sociocultural perspective, naturally linked to the acquisition of social and civic competences.

The inclusion of the gender approach in the design of Primary Education study plans and, in particular, in the subject matter relating to the area of the Didactics of Social Sciences, makes it possible to recognise a type of power relation that impacts on the professional development of the trainee teacher. A training that would contribute to the construction of a professional identity with no gender bias is therefore necessary, on the basis of the specific development of the “gender awareness perspective” [2,18,47].

This training would have to incorporate specific curricular teacher training programmes for learning critical teaching skills, which would begin with the concept of criticality as a necessary element in the identification of ideologies, discourses, and androcentric conceptions of reality for social and educational action. From this critical perspective, the rupture of masculine and feminine hegemonic dualities comes through the promotion of formative experiences that destabilise and pluralise their exclusive character [48].

A review of teaching practices is still urgent, therefore, as is the eradication of stereotyped and sexist behaviours, still recognisable in beliefs and attitudes. This review should overcome the traditions and customs responsible for the naturalisation of certain behavioural patterns concerning the traditional dual gender model [49]. From this perspective, the teacher training programmes should offer the necessary preparation to overcome the challenge of working with contemporary social problems, or to address the multiple interpretations of controversial contents in the Social Sciences classroom. In line with the works of Harris and Clarke [50], and Woolley [51], which focus on the study of teachers’ attitudes and perceptions about the curricular relevance of controversial social and historical contents, the safety of teachers is revealed to teach about social problems, and among them, gender inequalities. Teachers seem to have the determination, in fact, to take on the challenge, but it requires training to adopt a nuanced and informed approach to this type of content, in order to generate responses from students.

Education for democratic citizenship in relation to the identification of gender-related relations of power requires the training of critical and self-sufficient citizens, capable of exercising responsible, participative, and creative citizenship, prepared for collective decision-making and the resolution of social conflicts. In this exercise of citizenship, all critical discourse implies the capability of identifying the power relations, the visibility of all the future historic and social protagonists, and the recognition of otherness, difference, and plurality as inherent components of a true global and inclusive citizenship [22,42,52].

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