

**Factors Influencing Grade 11 Students' Decision to Study World History as a  
Subject at Specialized School of Astana**

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## NUGSE RESEARCH APPROVAL DECISION LETTER

Dear Aizhan,

The NUGSE Research Committee reviewed the project entitled " Factors influencing grade 11 students' decision to study world history subject at specialised school of Kazakhstan " and decided:

To grant approval for this study subject to minor changes, to be discussed with supervisor

**Approval subject to minor changes:** The study is approved subject to minor changes.

Reviewers' comments:

*Potential risks:* Clarify in Q 20 that students are aware that they are free to choose not to respond to a question and understand that they can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences.

Before starting your data collection, you need to discuss these changes with your supervisor, revise your proposal accordingly, and then ask your supervisor to check the revised proposal.

Sincerely,  
NUGSE Research Committee

### Acknowledgment

This work would not have been possible without the best supervisor professor Mir Afzal. I am very much thankful to professor Mir Afzal, for the patient guidance, encouragement and advice he has provided throughout my research time. I am extremely lucky to have a supervisor who cared so much about my work. I am especially indebted to all staff of Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University for their guidance and support during all two years.

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## Abstract

In Kazakhstan, as students enter Grade 11, they have to choose their major subjects for further studies, because their admission to university and future career depends on the subjects they choose. This is not an easy decision for students to make as they usually grapple with more than one choice of subjects and their decisions are influenced by many factors.

This study explores the factors influencing grade 11 students' decision to study World History as their major subject at a specialized school in Kazakhstan. The school follows International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. The purpose of the study was to study how teachers and students perceive World History subject; what factors motivate students to choose World History; and what factors discourage students to study World History. Using qualitative research methods, data for the study was collected by semi structured one-on-one interviews with students who chose World History subject, teachers who teach World History, parents of 11 grade students and a member from the school leadership. Focus group interview was also conducted with teachers from different subject areas.

The finding of the study revealed a number of factors influencing students' choices of World History subject. These include students' own personal interests in knowing about the world, their career choice and aspirations, effect of information technology, and scholarship opportunities. The study makes a number of recommendations that might be useful for the school (and other schools) in organizing career counselling programs, parents, and policy makers.

*Key words: secondary school, influence, World History subject, subject choice*

Факторы влияющие на решение учащихся 11 классов при выборе предмета  
«Всемирная история» в качестве основного предмета в специализированной школе  
Казахстана

Абстракт

В Республике Казахстан учащимся 11 классов необходимо выбрать основной предмет для изучения, что позволит им по окончании продолжить обучение с целью получения соответствующей профессии. Это нелегкое решение для одиннадцатиклассников, поскольку они испытывают затруднение именно в выборе одного предмета. Кроме того, на их решение могут повлиять различные факторы.

В данном исследовании рассматриваются факторы, которые влияют на решение учащихся 11 класса изучать «Всемирную историю» в качестве основного предмета в специализированной школе Казахстана, которая следует учебному плану Международного бакалавриата (МБ). Цель исследования - изучение того, как учителя и ученики воспринимают предмет «Всемирная История»; какие факторы мотивируют учащихся выбирать именно этот предмет и препятствуют в выборе «Всемирная история» через использование качественного метода исследования. Кроме того, данные для исследования были собраны полуструктурированным интервью «один на один» со студентами, выбравшими предмет «Всемирная история», преподавателями, которые его преподают, родителями 11-ти классов и администрацией школы. Фокус - групповое интервью также проводилось с преподавателями из разных предметных групп.

Результаты исследования выявили ряд факторов, влияющих на выбор студентов для изучения предмета «Всемирная история»: личные интересы учеников в познании основных событий в мире, карьерный рост, влияние информационных технологий и возможность иметь стипендию. В исследовании содержится ряд

рекомендаций, которые могут быть полезными для представителей правительственных структур, школы (и других школ) при проведении ориентационной работы с учащимися и родителями.

*Ключевые слова: основная школа, влияние, предмет «Всемирная история», выбор предмета*



Қазақстанның белгілі бір мектебінің 11-сынып оқушылары Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін таңдауында әсер ететін факторлар

#### Аңдатпа

Қазақстанда 11 сынып оқушыларына болашақ оқуды жалғастыру үшін негізгі бір сабақты таңдау қажет, өйткені олардың сабақ таңдауы жоғарғы оқу орындарына түсуіне және болашақ жұмысымен байланысты. Белгілі бір пәнді таңдау оқушыларға оңай емес, себебі олардың таңдауына түрлі факторлар әсер тигізуі мүмкін.

Берілген жұмыста Қазақстанның белгілі бір мектебінің 11-сынып оқушылары Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін таңдауында әсер еткен факторларды зерттеуі қарастырылған. Зерттеу өткізілген мектеп Халықаралық Бакалавриат (ХБ) оқу бағдарламасымен жұмыс жасайды. Зерттеудің мақсаты: оқушылар, мұғалімдер, мектеп әкімшілігі Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін қалай түсінеді және қабылдайды; қандай факторлар оқушылардың қызығушылығын арттырып, ынталандырады және қандай факторлар Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін таңдауына қиыншылық тудырып, кедергі жасайды. Жұмыста сапалы зерттеу әдісі қолданылды және деректерді жинау интервью алу арқылы жүзеге асты. Бетпе-бет жеке интервью Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін таңдаған оқушылардан, осы пәннен сабақ беретін мұғалімдерден және мектеп әкімшілігімен жүздесу арқылы алынды. Фокус интервью әртүрлі пәндерден сабақ беретін мұғалімдермен жүргізілді.

Зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері 11-сынып оқушыларының Дүниежүзі тарих пәнін таңдауына төмендегідей факторлардың әсер ететіндігін көрсетті: пәнге деген қызығушылығының артуы, тұлғалық өсуі, ақпараттық технологиялардың дамуының ықпалы және грантты ұту мүмкіндігі. Зерттеу жұмысы барысында мектепке, ата-аналарға және мемлекет өкілдеріне бірнеше ұсыныстар берілді.

*Кілт сөздер: негізгі мектеп, әсер ету, Дүниежүзі тарихы пәні, пән таңдауы*

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction and Background**

In the era of globalization and technological revolution, education has become one of the major catalysts for socio-economic changes around the globe. Education is an integral part in the development of human capital, which provides knowledge and skills that are used to meet the diverse needs of individuals and societies around the world. At the present time the human capital is the main value of every society and the main factor of economic growth (Burashev & Biksitova, 2013). The state and governments may pay close attention to the social sphere, which is the main factor of state development. To confirm the idea of the need for care of the state of ordinary citizens in the market developing time, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, accentuated in one of the annual addresses to the Kazakh people “Socio-Economic Modernization as Main Vector of Development of Kazakhstan” (2012). The first of the ten objectives he mentioned was dedicated to citizens’ employment, which contains three main issues and the first of them is to develop an educational system and diversifying employment opportunities (“The Address of the President”, 2012). According to the state program of education development in the republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 “Secondary education is a fundamental level of the system of education. The right to free secondary education is guaranteed by the Constitution of the country”. Currently Kazakhstan has 184 professional schools or lyceum, 7511 ordinary schools and 127 universities (Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Committee on Statistics, n.d.).

According to requirements of the United National Test (UNT) students should pass five subjects, four of them are compulsory: Mathematics, Kazakh and Russian languages, History of Kazakhstan, and the fifth one is elective for students to choose from amongst various subjects (“ENT 2015 v Kazakhstane”, 2016). Consequently, the secondary school in grades 11 and 12 are to make an important choice of selecting the elective subject.

According to the Committee on Statistics of Kazakhstan (2014) World History subject was selected by 7,63% students only. This is obviously not very encouraging to see very few Kazakh students studying World History. In spite of the fact that professions such as Legal Studies, Customs and Immigration, Sociology, Philosophy, Political Science and Archeology require the completion of World History (Specialnosti, n.d.). Also, the era of globalization has reduced distances and brought people from various parts of the world closer to each other, whereby increasing interactions amongst people (professionals, students and others) from around the globe. Thus the need for students, the global citizens, to studying World History has become more important than it was ever before.

However, there are a number of publically funded specialized schools in Kazakhstan which encourage their students to study diverse subjects. One of these specialized schools, where this study was conducted, follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum programme and authorized by Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP) programmes. The IB curriculum encourages “both personal and academic achievement, challenging students to excel in their studies and in their personal development.” (Programmes, n.d.). IB has four programmes: Primary Years Programme (PYP) 3-12 age range, Middle Years Programme (MYP) 11-16 age range, Diploma Programme (DP) 16-19 age range and Career-related Programme 16-19 age range. According to the IB Diploma programme (DP) students are selecting the courses from six subject groups: studies in language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics and arts. Each of the subject groups contains several subjects. For example, Individuals and societies subject group contains: business management, economics, geography, global politics, history, information technology in a global society, philosophy, psychology, social and cultural anthropology and world religions at Standard Level (SL) only (Curriculum, n.d.). Students should take at least three subjects at High Level (HL) and remaining at SL. At HL – 240 teaching hours

and students demonstrate more knowledge and covers in more depth and detailed information. The SL has 150 teaching hours, the amount of content is smaller in some subjects. (Curriculum, n.d.). At the present time 38 students chose HL and 16 students chose SL World History out of 120 students of 12 Grade; in the grade 11, there are 48 HL students and 10 SL students. Although the number of students taking World History subject is small as compared to those taking other subjects, it is important to note that some students do study World History at this specialized school. Therefore I was keen to study the factors that might influence students' choices of World History.

### **1.2 Research Purpose**

The purpose of my research was to examine what motivates Grade 11 students to choose and study World History subject. The study explores and provides in-depth analysis of factors that encourage or hinder students from choosing World History for their study at the school. The study was guided by the following questions:

### **1.3 Research Questions**

What are the factors that influence grade 11 students to study World History subject at specialized school in Astana?

#### **Subsidiary questions:**

How do teachers, students, parents and school leadership see World History as a subject or field of study at specialized school?

What are factors that motivate students to choose World History at the school?

What are the factors that discourage students from studying World History at the school?

### **1.4 Problem Statement**

According to the Ministry of Education and Science the most popular subjects in the United National Test (UNT) during the last 10 years are Physics, Biology and Geography, with 27% of the students selecting physics, 26% choosing Biology and

approximately 25,5% students selecting Geography (Tukusheva, 2014). In 2016, the Kazakhstan government allocated 31702 scholarships for students to study various disciplines. The scholarship were distributed as follows: 12,593 for technical sciences, 3,000 for medical specialty, 700 for humanities, 100 for law and 5000 for pedagogical specialty (V 2016 godu v Kazakhstana, 2016). Thus it can be noted that physics and biology are the most popular subjects in order to get a government scholarship for higher studies. Consequently high grade students are motivated by these scholarships to choose certain subjects and students opt for those subjects for which there are more scholarships. The problem arises here is that some subjects, such as social studies, world history, and other subjects in the field of humanities for which there are not many scholarships, get neglected and undermined. World History one such subject for which there are hardly few scholarships, and therefore not many students take this subject. The country needs qualified professionals in all fields including humanities, especially world history, and if students do not take these subjects, there will be a shortage of professionals in these fields. Therefore, this study aimed to explore all those factors which facilitate or inhibit students from choosing a World History subject for their studies. The findings of this study (Chapter 4) provide useful insights into such factors.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The World History subject is the study of humanity, nations, culture, religion and civilizations. Through studying history, students investigate human origins, as individuals and groups, the raise and fall of various nations, independence of countries, wars the cultural, political, economic and technological advancement in different countries of the world. The subject contains specific facts, details, research – based information, the previous experiences or behaviors of people as individual, state, nations or empire. By learning and investigating the previous causes, consequences and effects on various problems or situations, people will know better solution to deal with conflict among

countries, nations or states. History shows us how nations have emerged, developed or fallen, and more importantly what is common amongst the nations and the people.

After its independence, Kazakhstan became a member of the UN and many other international organizations. Consequently it must have its own scientific and research center and well qualified human resources in the main areas of historical science and historical education - world history. The study of the history of Kazakhstan and world history is started in six grade in the schools of the republic (Istoriya Kazakhstana budut, 2016). Thus studying the World History subjects is a good opportunity to develop critical thinking skills:

*“human experience and behavior; the varieties of physical, economic and social environments that people inhabit; the history of social and cultural institutions. In addition, each subject is designed to foster in students the capacity to identify, to analyse critically and to evaluate theories, concepts and arguments relating to the nature and activities of individuals and societies”* (Individuals and societies, n.d.).

Keeping in view the growing importance and relevance of World History to Kazakhstani students, this study provides useful insights into the factors that encourage students to studying World History. Therefore the study might be of great interest to a number of stakeholders and institutions. For example, results of the research might be beneficial for the school where it was conducted. The finding of the study will help the school leadership and teachers to understand the factors that influence students' choices of selecting or not selecting World History subject. The results of the research might be beneficial for other schools in Kazakhstan. Because schools could use the study to develop and support career orientations work with high grade students. The study would also be significant for the policy-makers in Kazakhstan. The results could be used in other research studies.



### **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One (Introduction) includes background information of the study. Chapter Two (Literature Review) presents an analysis of relevant literature and provides a theoretical base for this study. Chapter Three (Methodology) explains the qualitative research design and methodology used to carry out this study. Also, this chapter explains sampling procedures and instruments which were used to collect the data. The Fourth Chapter (Findings) presents the results of the study. The Fifth Chapter (Discussion) highlights the study's contribution to knowledge, identified weaknesses and limitations. The final chapter (Conclusion) draws certain conclusions based on the study's finding and makes recommendation for policy, practice and further research.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

*“... truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future.”*

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote.

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews available literature related to factors influencing students' choices of subject, particularly World History subject. The purpose of the literature review is to further define the research problem, what is already known about the particular topic, what is it that we still do not know, and how my study can contribute to our understanding of the factors that encourage or discourage students from choosing and studying world history subject.

In the process of writing a literature review section, such resources were used: print and electronic resources, academic journal and articles. Furthermore the Library of Nazarbayev University's online databases, print books and encyclopedias were used.

#### 2.2 Historical Perspectives on World History

According to the Dr. Crabtree (1993) one of the founders of Gutenberg College history is important subject and does matter. Our perspective of history shapes the way we see the present, and helps to find the right answer for our current problems or challenge. Human should know and understand of the past in order to learn how to deal with present faced situations. Consequently, it is clear to understand that history is substantive.

The origins of the word history came from Greek construction of *istoria*, which means the knowledge of the past, which is something continuous as human or self-development. According to the Nasson (n.d.) professor of history, at the University of

Cape Town, South Africa “history is the study of the past in order to understand the meaning and dynamic of the relationship between cause and effect in the overall development of human society” (p.1). History is about to be confident, to have critical and inquiry knowledge, contribute actively to the shaping of our future, possibilities and alternatives.

History is pretty vital as chemistry, biology or mathematics in order to rattle through new discoveries and think analytically. “History. Any society that doesn't pay proper attention to it not only has dangerously shallow roots, but also risks starving its own imagination” (“A Point Of View...”, 2012). People think that studying the history or art and philosophy does not make sense, in comparison with economics mathematics or engineering. However, history teaches people and develops how to think analytically, introduce innovations, and creativity skills. Therefore it is worth considering that these skills will be needed in the various future profession or life.

Consequently we see that the story has enormous potential to help in the future for everyone. skills development, outlook, point of view by analyzing their actions and possibly the entire company. Aims and objectives of the study of history in the school stage of basic education formulated as a set of priorities for the society value orientations and personality traits that manifest themselves in the learning process and in the broader social context. The main purpose of the study of history in the modern school - education, development and education of the individual student, capable of self-identification and the determination of their value priorities, based on understanding of the historical experience of the country and humanity as a whole, actively and creatively apply historical knowledge in educational and social activities.

According to the State obligatory standard of secondary education (primary, secondary, general secondary education) (2015), high grade students are learning 10 subject: Kazakh language and literature, Russian language and literature, English language,

mathematics, world history, Kazakh history and geography, natural science (physics, chemistry, biology), self-determination, ICT, physical education and military education.

World History subject is one of the items of chose from.

According to the education law of the Republic of Kazakhstan article 1 item 52 “Unified National Testing (UNT) - a form of final assessment of students in institutions of secondary education, combined with the entrance examinations in educational institutions, implementing educational programs of post-secondary or higher education” (2016). Thus students of high grade 11 start preparation for the national test. The UNT is in two languages – Kazakh and Russian, and also considers four compulsive subjects (Kazakh and Russian languages, Kazakh history and mathematics) and one subject should be chosen by students individually. The fifth subject is directly relevant to students’ future profession. All specialties can be attributed to the different types, depending on the object of work. Given the proposed typology, each profession can align some code, or profile - that is, what type and what criteria it applies (“Psihologicheskie tipy professiy”, n.d.).

### **2.3 Significance and Relevance of World History**

As was mentioned before the subject choice depends on future profession, therefore students think in terms of prospective of next few years. The problem of choosing a professional path arises before a student reaches an appropriate age when he needs to choose a subject related to his /her future profession. Thus the independent life path of students begins. The first, very important and independent decision has to be made, relying not on the life experience that comes with the years, but rather on the ideas of its future society in which they will live.

Humanitarian sciences, unlike technical and natural sciences, belong to the social sciences. The list of humanitarian professions can be continued further. These include the profession of a historian. Historians dig into the past so that we can more fully and more

colorfully imagine the events of the past. The general trend indicates an increased popularity in this specialty. They possess qualitative knowledge of Russian history, foreign languages, the basics of international relations, political science, document management, archival work, historical informatics, international relations, and jurisprudence. The politology, religious study, cultural studies,, jurisprudence, law and philosophy (Spisok specialnostei..., 2008) professions that are related to history. Politics is one of the most prestigious humanitarian professions. This profession promises money and power. Real political activities include a diverse range of activities, the organization of parties, participation in electoral campaigns and speech in parliament, the adoption of government decisions, rallies and diplomatic negotiations.

Nowadays foreign education become accessible international universities propose various programmes. Some of the programmes might afford full or part grant, which is a good opportunities for students to get wishful education. One of the Kazakhstani programmes “Bolashak” which was established in 1993 by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, aims to training of specialists for priority sectors of the country's economy. The program includes both obtaining a scientific degree of higher education institutions, as well as scientific and production internships in leading companies and universities in the world (Istoriya programmy, n.d.). According to the Seksembayeva, Dairov, Abzhanov (2017) Centre of international programme alternatively engage students to consider other educational programmes besides “Bolashak”. Therefore Kazakhstan has submitted more than 150 agreements with different countries such as China, Turkey, Ukraine, Latvia, Poland and Hungary. Consequently, students’ opportunities of chosen World History subject is growing up. Students are no longer in the frame of few professions. In future, the Center of International Programmes plan to expand the geography of contracts and the number of grants allocated to Kazakhstani students (Seksembayeva, Dairov, Abzhano, 2017). Considering accessibility of the international education, students might expand their

choice of the profession. Institutes of international education organize different educational programs, which may include Masters and PhD programs or even short terms workshops. Hence, the archeology, working in museum, at school or university as a teacher or even as a librarian (careers in history, 2017).

#### **2.4 Factors Influencing Students' Choice of World History**

Most students after graduation plan to get higher education and they start to choose subject. This part of Literature review will show factors influencing students' choice of World history subject. There is a limited resource in this research area.

Students are exposed by external and internal factors, which directly and indirectly influencing on their subject choice. According to the Okeke (2000) parents have a big influence on students career and subject choice. Furthermore, the life style of the Kazakh family brought up children's sociability, calmness, courtesy and responsiveness. In addition, even those who have already gone out to live separately do so under the guidance of their father and do not remain unattended, and if necessary, they can always seek help and advice from their parents. The head of the family decided the main family issues. And such families were very close-knit, friendly, they could not be destroyed just like that, they brought up mutual support and unity (Atemova, K.T. & Isabekova, G.B., 2015).

Subject teacher are providing guidance and support to students during the lesson. According to Malgwi et al., (2005) students are less influencing by teachers rather than parents or peers. Students Teacher is mostly people provide professional over view of subject or subject opportunities.

The friendships of high school students are already very strong and their influence on the choice of a profession is not ruled out, as the attention of their peers' professional future also increases. According to Hashim and Ambong (2015) parents and peers may help students in subject decision processes. But in comparison of parents, peers suggestions or advice are less influential.

### **2.5 Conclusion**

To conclude, in this chapter I reviewed literature review about factors that may influence students' choice of WH. Despite the fact that there is a lack of research on this particular topic, the literature showed that there are different factors that influence students' choice of WH such as the influence of parents, peers, career choice, scholarship opportunities and subject preferences. In addition, it was found out that these factors play a significant role in choosing other subjects as well.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodology used for carrying out this study. It explains the qualitative research design and the rationale for choosing this particular design. It also discusses the research site, participants and sampling procedures, data collection tools, data analysis and ethical consideration taken into account through the study. The Chapter ends with a brief discussion on the limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 Research design**

The current study used qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2014) the qualitative research method seeks to explore the phenomenon in its natural context through exploring, understanding, and interpreting the views experiences, and perceptions of the participants in the study. One of the strengths of the qualitative research is to represent the narrative description of people opinion, views and perspectives about the issues or topic under study. The qualitative methods are also useful in recognizing various factors, such as socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, ideological, and political influence on the phenomenon under study. Thus, the current study of the Grade 11 students' decision to study World History subject required an in-depth exploration and understanding of the factors that the students' choice about World History subject. Consequently, it was necessary to learn opinions of the students: who chose the World History. Furthermore, the qualitative research design allowed me to explore the research questions through a wide range of perspectives collected from World History teachers and other subject teachers, students, parents, school administration and subject coordinator. All these stakeholders have a direct or indirect influence on students' choices of subjects and therefore it is important to take into account their perspectives about World History subject. According



to the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Kipp, 2010) the parents are innermost environmental layer and children are influenced by them.

### **3.3 Research Site**

This research study was conducted in one of the specialized schools of Astana. According to the IB organization (n.d.) there are only three schools in Kazakhstan which follow the IB Diploma Programme. The selected school is one of the three schools following the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme curriculum, which include World History subject.

### **3.4 Research Participants**

As qualitative research relies on the views, experiences, and perspectives of participants for in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon, the participants should be purposefully selected (Creswell, 2014). At the current study four groups of participants were chosen: students, teachers, school administration and parents. Each of the group was selected by the purposeful sampling approach used in the qualitative research design.

Students were selected by homogeneous purposeful sampling. According to the Creswell (2014) "homogeneous sampling - you might select certain sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic". Thus students taking the World History subject were selected.

Similarly teachers of World History and other subjects were also selected for the focus group interviews. It was important to include these two types of teachers to get a broad view about World History subject from the perspectives of those who teach it and those who do not teach it.

A responsible person from the School Administration was selected to explore institutional and leadership perspective on World History subject. This person was involved in organizing the teaching processes, facilitating various subject teachers

including WH teachers, career orientations to students and building an academic school environment.

Parents were selected by homogeneous purposeful sampling. Parents of Grade 11 students who selected the WH subject were interviewed to get parents' perspectives on WH subject and why they supported their children to study WH subject.

### **3.5 Data collection**

To explore the research questions guiding this study, the qualitative research method was employed. Data was collected through mainly semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. According to the Creswell (2014) "a qualitative interview occurs when researches ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers" (p.239). The interviews conducted in this study provided useful information I could ask open-ended questions followed by probing questions to explore the participants' views, experiences and perspectives about WH subject and why students study it in the context of Kazakhstan. As we knew little about the factors which influence students' choices of subjects (WH), it was important to explore those factors through brought range of perspectives from students, parents, teachers and school leadership. Hence, the interviews and focus group discussions held with different participants helped generate rich data.

I conducted one-on-one interviews with the selected three students who had chosen WH subject. According to the Creswell (2014) "one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably". Since the students might have experienced different influence in selecting WH subject and some of the factors could be sensitive, such as parents' low economic status, it was appropriate to have individual interview with these students so that they could answer questions without hesitation and peer pressure.

Second one by one interviewer was with the four teachers of WH subject and focus group interview with three teachers from different subject. The small number of general questions provide the view from specific people (Creswell, 2014).

As a representative of the school administration, the DP coordinators was chosen and interviewed. As the DP coordinator has a lead role in the school management structures, it was important to have an individual interview with her and get leadership/management's perspectives on WH subject.

The last group of people with whom I conducted individual interviews were two parents of students who study the WH subject at the school. Due to their individual schedules varying from each other's, different professional backgrounds, and possible sensitivities involved in their responses, it was appropriate to interview them individually.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedures**

The qualitative research method requires the permission from the gatekeepers to gain access to variety of individuals. Accordingly, to interview the students, teachers and DP coordinator, I first approached the school leadership (principal) to seek permission to conduct study at the school.

Soon after I received the ethics approval from NU GSE (Appendix A), I obtained the principal's permission and identified the participants. The purpose, research questions, methods and other details about study were presented in a written form to the principal (Appendix B and Appendix C). After obtaining permission from the principal, the DP coordinator and teachers' were identified and invited to participate in the study. With their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study, the date-time and place for interviews was decided. Secondly, according to the Law of children rights (2002) Article 1 children until 18 years old do not have the right to give independent permission to participate in a study, consequently their parents' permission was taken. Only after that the focus group interview or one-on-one interview took place. The students' interviews were

taken during the school hours, therefore it was necessary to allocate the time and place with vice-principal on educational work, deputy principle and tutors.

The last interview group – parents, was also identified and recruited by providing them with a written form of research purpose, questions and method. While recruiting the participants, I shared with them all details about the study including the nature, purpose and duration of interviews and focus-group discussions, and their rights

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, the six step of Creswell (20) were used to in analyzing the data of the study. Firstly to prepare all the notes and transcribing the interviews. The twelve interviews were transcribed and consent forms were collected. All gathered information were read and re-read in order to highlight the key ideas. The hand analysis, color coding were used in order to develop the codes as the major step of analysis. The main ideas were highlighted by yellow color and the major and interesting phrase were underline by red color. The highlighted ideas were replaced into new paper to create themes. The themes were identified, presented and interpreted, focusing on the factors which influence grade 11 students in decision making process.

### **3.8 Ethical issues**

The information about the participants who participated in the quantitative study is kept as anonymous by using pseudonyms instead of their real names.

The confidential information obtained from participants was available only for the researcher and thesis supervisor. All hard copy documents such as consent form, protocol, transcript of the interview kept in secure place at researcher's house. Soft data kept in password protected files in the researcher's computer. Participants of the study were first acquainted with the purpose and methods of the study, confidentiality, approximate time, potential benefits and risks, and their rights.

Since the two types of interview (semi-structure interviews and focus-group discussions) were used and they were held within the school, with the exception of interviews with parents. The names of students and teachers were not known to school administration. A group of parents was identified and selected and interviewed outside the school, which ensured complete anonymity. After transcribing the interviews, the audio taps were deleted to safeguard the participants from potential risks. The names of the school and participants were not used in the thesis and any conference presentation or publication from this study.

### **3.9 Risk and benefits of the study**

There were no known risks for the participants of this research study. However there might have been some minor risks for the participants if the information received from them was disclosed to others. For that, I ensured that all the information remains confidential. As the interview was held within the school hours, students and teachers may find it difficult to allocate time for the interviews. In this connection, the time and place of interviews was decided as per their convenience. To avoid any inconvenience to the participants, the time and place of interviews were decided a few days earlier and, rechecked / reconfirmed with the participants a day before the interview. Again, I strictly followed the NUGSE Ethics protocols in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of both the research site and participants and the information received from them. The participants were also made aware of their rights through the consent form which had all the details about safeguarding the participants from any potential risks.

The results of this proposed study might have some benefits at various levels. It might be useful to increase the students' motivation and to be more confident in their choice of subject. The subject World History is the study of the humanity, nations, culture, religion and civilizations. The present research might be beneficial to policy makers and stakeholders, school administration, teachers, parents and students. The study may help

Policy makers and stakeholders review their approach to allocation of the scholarship for higher education and attract more students to different professions. School administration may use finding in order to manage the career orientation programs and encourage students to choose different subjects, especially World History

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study. These findings emerge from the data collected from four types of participant: students, teachers, school administration and parents. The purpose of the study was to explore the factors influencing grade 11 students' choice to study World History as an elective subject. The findings presented here aim to answer the following questions that guided the study: How do teachers, students, parents and school leadership see World History as a subject or field of study at a specialized IB school in Kazakhstan? What are factors that motivate students to choose World History at the school? What are the factors that discourage students from studying World History at the school?

In order to answer these questions, the qualitative research methods including, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis were used. The findings are presented under the following headings: Students' own interests and inclination; students' career choices; teachers' teaching methods; scholarship status; economic status.

### **4.2 Perception about World History**

World History subject is taught in the specialized IB School. At grade, seven and eight, students have social study subject which combines world history, geography and economics. In grade nine and ten, World History is taught as a compulsory curriculum subject. It is usually taught for two lessons in a week and each lesson lasts for an hour. At the end of grade ten students choose six subjects. There are six teachers of World history subject, two international and four local, three teachers teach in grade nine and ten, others teach grade 11 and 12. All of the students are provided with specialized textbooks and electronic materials, which are usually ordered from foreign countries, as World History subject taught in English language.

The participants provided detailed answers to the question about their perception and how they see the World History subject at school. Teacher of World History subject, who has 21 years' teaching experience said: "History exists to give experience and support in one's actions, reinforcing first of all the philosophical positions of man" (teacher\_1). Similarly another teacher stated, "I studied at school during the Soviet Union period, and World History subject was one of the compulsory subject, the content was very interesting and in my personal opinion students should know about existent of the world and human" (teacher of ITGS).

The elder teachers, who studied and later on taught during the Soviet time, mentioned that they found the curriculum for World History at that time quite rich and interesting. However, a student told:

"I think we don't need some subject at grade nine or ten, for example, if I don't like history and don't want to choose it, why I need to study this subject and spend my time. Instead of this subject, I may concentrate myself in more interesting thing, maybe learning new language".

Other students also explain that it was a waste of their time, if they study a subject that they do not like. "I don't want to waste my time on subjects, which I don't like or I will not use in the future, moreover subject which is not related to my future profession" (student\_2). Students want to follow their interests rather than study any subject, as a student stated, "The WH subject is interesting and it requires a lot of reading and analysis, and I have to manage my time properly to cover all the curriculum requirements and succeed in the exam" (student\_3)

On the other hand, teachers of mathematics, who has only three years teaching experience said: "I think, our school offers a very good opportunity to study WH subject, we have everything: books, laptops, electronic resources and



professional teachers, with great experiences”. A member of the school administration stated:

“Hm, WH subject is one of the compulsory subjects at MYP program at grade nine and ten, but later students choose it as elective subject. I think, when students expand their horizons by studying various subject, they develop their skills. WH teaches student to read and analyze, find out the consequences of wars or conflicts, create their own solutions and tactics. Most of the students are not satisfy to study some subjects, maybe they are too young”.

Therefore, it can be noted that the school community has different perceptions, both positive and negative, about WH and why students should choose it.

The data revealed a number of factors influencing students’ choices of studying World History subject at the school where this study was conducted. These factors include the following:

#### **4.3 Students’ own interests and inclination**

During the interviews several factors were identified, which influence Grade 11 students’ decisions about their careers. These factors were explored from different perspectives, taking into account school, home and peers’ impact on students. Furthermore one of the identified factors is students’ subject interest aroused by some external factors. Since students’ interest is formed and developed on their own talent, skills and ability. This is the first factor, which might influence students’ choice – subject interest. During the interviews students told, that their choice to choose a subject is usually based on interest.

“I think, history is very interesting and very useful subject...” and “Hm, you always should know, what is going on in the world, about future history, for example and it will help you. You will know more about other countries and you become a multiple person”

(Student-1) Another student stated, “I like history from grade six, at that time we started learning about the ancient time (Student\_2). As was mentioned at previous chapter, Kazakhstani students of grade six, start learning WH subject and the curriculum begins with origins of humankind. As WH subject contain a lot of text materials, students spend their time by reading or watching historical movies: “I have chosen world history because it is so easy for me, and I like to read (Student\_3). But it should be noted, that students’ interests were formed from different aspects. One of them is parents’ opinion or family traditions. For example Student\_2 says:

“My father always told me different historical facts, and we have a lot of history books at home.” and “I do remember, when father explain me about Second World War, I was listening carefully and was waiting to study these topic at school.”

These answers show that family might have not direct impact, and through the family conversation or family members’ interests children preference for a subject develops. Parents in their interviews explain that they try to give freedom of choice to their children: “During subject choice, as you know they should choose several, we try not to pressure our son, however he always asks us, what will be the consequences if he chooses one or another subject” (Parents\_1). Also another parent noted, “Hm, I think, that she choose World History subject because she likes it and maybe it is easy for her. I try not to interfere in her subject choice” (Parents\_2).

However, despite independent choice, students needed parents’ help or at least they search for clarification of the confusion they may have regarding a career or subject choice. There is very little information available to students about the various subject opportunities, characteristics, profession and different types of functions. Some parents encourage their children to choose the same professions as they themselves pursued.

“I discussed my subject choice with my parents, of course. But they were anyway in favour of my choice. Because of their support, I have had the choice independently. They didn’t impose their own opinions, they just told me choose whatever I wanted” (Students\_1).

The study was conducted at a specialized IB school, parents do not fully understand the new type of curriculum and subject selection processes at this school:

“Our school has quite different curriculum, and it was hard for my parents to understand it. When it was time to choose a subject, I asked my parents, they told me to choose by myself, the subject I liked’. I always was interested in world history, I like to read and we have very good teachers (Students\_3).

Whereas school administration and teachers, consider student’s subject choices from professional perspectives, they also take into account student academic performance, abilities, level of languages and other factors. The World History subject teachers said that she did not try to influence students’ decisions, and students have had the liberty of making their own choices.

Maybe I will tell plainly but we didn’t motivate students, we just teach them world history, I don’t know interesting or not it is another question, but to tell that we in some way motivate them, maybe we demotivate them by telling them world history is very hard subject because most of the students doubt about their ability, we are not playing a role of motivators (Teacher\_2).

Another teacher shared her opinion about students’ interest in certain subjects and why students take WH:

When they choose history, they usually think about this subject only, they do not think so much about their future with studying this. I think when they choose science and mathematics subjects they are more focused on their future it is a little bit more practical. History they usually choose as they are interested in it (Teacher\_3).

Similarly, another teacher stated that students have different reasons for choosing WH subject. Some students think that it is a difficult subject but teachers make it easy for them to learn it. As it is clear from the interviews, students' interest is not only about teaching methods or school facilities. High school students are quite responsible in their choice, as they pay attention to both parents' opinions and their own interests while choosing a subject.

#### **4.4 Students' Career Choices**

Eventually, each student has to choose future profession. In modern time, there is not only a huge choice of specialties, but also a lot of options for going to related fields of study without interruption from current work, obtaining additional earnings. The foundations for choosing a profession are laid back in school; when students at the lessons demonstrate their abilities in certain subjects, and at the time of communication with parents, teachers and peers. Despite the huge subject interest students think over future profession.

Hm, so... As I told, I consider the variant of applying to humanities faculty. For example, I thought about journalism. We know that journalist should know about world issues. Because of this very reason, I chose the world history and hope it will help me achieve what I want" (Student\_1).

Students have some background information about professions and during the subject choice they always find a link between subject and future career.

First of all world history is very relevant subject, and it directly connected with politics and international relationship. And those kind of profession not political science, but something very similar diplomat or in ministry, they are always much in demand. Politics are always be politics, maybe archeologist today may find something but in the future there will be nothing to excavation. It means that after university graduation I always might find job (Students\_2).

Similarly another student mentioned,

Maybe, I want to work at the ministry of foreign affairs, where work is connected with politics and world history. I read about different cultures and histories of world countries. I think of working at the international relationship office, therefore I will learn more about our world by studying WH (Student\_3).

Some students thought that their subject choice is connected to their future professions, “I try to combine my interest and what my future profession demand” (Student\_1). Students have only a general / broad vision of their future life and they try to combine their interests with specific subjects and profession demand. As was mentioned before, it should be taken into account that students discuss their interests and get advise from parents. Furthermore, the focus group interview with teachers from different subject areas also identified some similarities and differences about students subject choices. Teacher from three subject, mathematics, ITGS and design explain about their practices with 11 grade students:

Those students who I have in High level, I knew them before, I mean I taught them at grade 10. We did not discuss about their subject choice, they mostly make their choice based on high grade students, I mean 12

grade students. They (12 grade students) are mainly advised that ITGS is very easy subject, and you will not “париться” but some students were very responsible in their choice and chose subjects according to their future profession (Teacher of ITGS).

The mathematics teacher said why students choose mathematics for their specializations, “Mathematic was chosen by students, because of engineering specializations, and it is demanded at technical specialization. Students came to me and say: they need mathematics because of their future profession” (Teacher of Mathematics).

The subjects of students are chosen depending on the need and for the choice of profession, as well as specialties for admission to universities. However, sometimes students are forced by parents to choose a particular subject for their career: “Some students look to the future profession, some students were forced by parents, the parents thought that IT is a fast developing sphere, children will need it in the future” (Teacher of Design subject).

Students have dreams about their future life, where they work and create something in the special sphere. During the school years, their interests may change or remain the same, regardless of different factors, students choose the subject according to their future profession. Students have to take into account career demand and subject interest, because not always two of these factors can come together and satisfy students.

#### **4.5 Teachers’ Teaching Methods**

The third factor that influence students’ choice of a subject is how the teacher teaches the subject. The teacher by various means presents information about the subject of study, and the students of all senses perceive, realize and remember it. The data below reveals how teachers teaching methods can influence students’ choices of subjects.

We do a good job, we have substantial content, interesting contents, we are interested in history ourselves and basically I think we motivate them to choose history by respecting them, by respecting their intellectual capabilities. So we provide them with challenge, because it is interesting, we do not make it easy, we do not make it fun for the sake of fun, we like to be fun, we let it to be fun,. So what we provide is actually challenging and they like it and they choose it, they want something that is meaningful and that is heavy. They do not want easy fun, but it is true that the teachers have to have a sense of humor they have to be nice. If students do not like the teacher, they will not like the subject. That is true (Teacher\_1).

The teachers feel that they by doing a good job (means teaching interesting lessons), they can satisfy students' choice of a subject. For them, there is no other way that works better than engaging students in interesting lessons. As a teacher mentioned, "There is only one way that to do a good job. Anything else will not solve problems" (Teacher\_1).

According to the participants' responses, it seems that history teachers do not have a particular goal of motivating students to select the world history subject. They believe that this is not their job responsibility, because there is a special person (career counselor) in the school who is engaged in providing students with orientation to various professions. However, every teacher tries to put huge work into teaching process, by developing skills and approaches. In an interview with a history teacher who has worked for 21 years and for the last 3 years at an international school, says: "That's what motivates the children well, I do not know. We have a very strong specialist who can help in preparing children for the exam..." (Teacher\_2). He went onto say, "My task is to promote my subject, that is, the subject as such should be interesting to them [students]. It should be interesting but to

understand what their future is - I do not know maybe I'm wrong but school has people [career counselor] who are doing this" (Teacher\_2).

The main direction of school work is the development of the professional competence of teachers, so that they are able to organize the activities for students skillfully, to pass on to the learners a certain amount of knowledge and apply their abilities for active life action.

The school tries to constantly develop teachers, we send them to both international and local seminars. For example, every teacher in a senior school is required to take certain courses. On the subject knowledge and IB curriculum. At the end of the course, he receives a certificate. These courses are conducted by international specialists from abroad or online (School administration).

The school administration tries to professionally develop school staff, thereby to raise teachers' self-fulfillment, which consequently influence students' academic performance or maybe their interests in certain subjects. As a teacher stated,

Well, the situation is such that they [students] make a choice and the choice is very conscious very responsible but how much conscious the students are, I do not know because the students in the 10th grade are not all the same, it's very difficult to influence, because this decision is taken together with parents and plans are discussed for the future. We do not climb into it, we do not know what future plans they have. That's to motivate, I say again that you can only motivate us so that we are professionals, we professionally do our work, and we will try to do our best so that if students choose the subject we teacher, we ensure they get good scores. We try to teach better (Teacher\_2).



Despite teachers' rather indifferent attitude towards student's subject choice, through their interesting lessons they do develop interests in students for the World History subject. A teacher might inspire a student just by doing his best in the subject. During the interview student\_1 answered the question: What factors motivated you to choose world history: "Well, I think our history teacher. We have two teachers one international and another a local one, the lesson is all in English language, nevertheless everything is clear and interesting. Mostly I like how he explains".

Each of the factors discussed here has an influence on students' subject choice. Students remembered different interesting stories, activities and even historical movies, which they saw at the lessons. Therefore, by creating interesting and attractive lessons, teachers intentionally or unintentionally influence students' subject choice.

#### **4.6 Scholarships**

One more and not less important factor, which students have to think about during the subject selection processes is the availability of scholarships for studying certain subjects. Interviewed students stated that regardless of their family financial status, they would prefer to secure a scholarship for their higher studies. All of them unanimously agreed that they would like to choose subjects for which there are more scholarship available.

Students consider all of the possible options for selecting their subjects. The Kazakhstan government provides a range of scholarships in different disciplines and every student tries to get a scholarship. "I am not confident about my parents' income, maybe after some years they cannot pay for my education. As I am thinking about to study at one of the best universities, consequently the price is high."

(Students\_2)

Teachers knew about these factors, and how these influence students' subject choices. Sometimes, parents push their child to choose the special subject in order to get a

full grant. Mostly the science subjects have a major part of governmental scholarships, as stated by one of the teachers,

I have at least three students, who don't like mathematics, but they must do it and force themselves. Their parents call me often, and explain that its very important for their children to get high marks, because of universities demand (Teacher of Mathematics).

Students who are studying at this school are very ambitious. Firstly they think about getting international, overseas education and the last choice is to study in a good university in Kazakhstan. They try to study only by scholarship. "I consider to study at one of the Singapore universities, but if I cannot get admission there, I will try to study at a national university, and sure enough on full grant" (Student\_3). Another student said, "I am going to study at NU, and I am studying hard because selection is very strict and the best students of the country would like to study there" (Student\_2).

A subsequent question why they (students) need full grant or scholarship not surprised them. They surely knew why and for what they need the scholarship. It was one of the easy questions for them to answer and be sure about it, I think. A student stated,

Well, I don't want my parents to pay a lot of money for my university education.

I'm not the only child at the family and maybe money will be needed for my little sister. And last one I'm not sure of my parents' abilities to pay for university as today the price of education is very high (Students\_2).

Another student shared his reason for competing for a scholarship, "I don't want to complicate my parents, because I now that I have all the opportunities to get grant and I will try my maximum to use them".

#### **4.7 Information technology**

The era of technology most of the thing become more accessible, internet may send you to any part of the world virtually. Children, teenagers and even adults are more depend

on gadgets, we use them in our everyday life. Schools lessons step by step move to digital format, you can apply to any world universities just by sending email and pass interview through “Skype”. Consequently information technology has become one of the factors influencing students’ subject and career choices. One of the interview questions was: How did you know about World History subject and what opportunities do you see in studying it? The answers were, “Hm, I didn’t do a big research on this topic, but I asked my friends high grade students and look through the Internet” (Students\_1). Another student mentioned, “I asked my parents about different profession and then I look through the Internet at the requirements for applying to them. Sometimes my parents even didn’t hear about several professions and I have to use Internet to get more knowledge” (Students\_3).

Through the media resources students can easily contact with the students from other countries and cities. Some of the students have friends from Europe, USA or Russian. Through acquaintance and communication with peers from other parts of the earth, students develop their own perceptions about WH subject or other things, for example Students-3 said:

Last summer I visited England, there was a summer camp for international students. I met a lot of friends who are in the same age as I am. One of the conversations we had was about future professions and what do we like to do. It was interesting, that some of the students have the same interests as me.

One more and popular technological resource is social media, most of the students use social media (face book, Linked-in, tweeter and others) for various purposes including exploring universities and their program, scholarships and other. “Yes, I rarely saw a lot of entertainment about different universities, but mostly I didn’t pay serious attention to them. But most of them are not relevant and not interesting to me” (Student\_2). Another student said:

I use two most popular social media Facebook and V Kontakte, all of my classmates are there. We have a conversational group, where we discuss our homeworks, weekend plans and even summer holidays. I sign in to some universities, which are interesting to me, because I can fast and easily catch the latest news and see real pictures of university and campus. Also I chat with some of the students, to get more information (Student\_3).

The social media marketing may influence on students choice, depend on the students career choice they may choose demanded subject. Sometimes school curriculum does not fully cover students' needs, consequently students try to use internet to get more information in some area. "I subscribe to different historical websites, because during the lesson we don't have enough time to read, we do different activities and force to let pass some topics" (Student\_2). Students try to find different approaches to learn more and make WH more interesting. A student mentioned, "My mother likes to watch historical channels on TV and later on discusses some events during the lunch or dinner (laughing). I think, I like what she likes to watch, particularly the historical movies" (Student\_1).

Finally, the participants may not fully realize the influence of information technology on their subject or career choices but it is evident that all of them use internet resources for getting information about many things including various subjects, universities, and professions etc. Thus, the information technologies gradually becomes part of every day's life of students.

#### **4.8 Economic status**

One of the interview questions was about socio-economic background of students, which was a little sensitive question as students may not like to disclose their financial status. However, through indirect questions and other data available at the school, I was able to understand the participants' (students') economic background and see its influence on their subject and career choices. Most of students interviewed mentioned that they aim

to secure scholarships for their higher studies because their parents may not be able to pay for the costs of their studies. Therefore they tend to choose those subjects which have better prospects for obtaining scholarships. A student mentioned, “Yes, I think study on grant is good, you will have a scholarship and payment every month” (Students\_1). Students and parents are very ambitious about getting grant. “My mother wants me to study free of charge. Parents and me looked for scholarship” (Student\_1).

Moreover, teachers from different subject explain some of the students’ choice in technical subject.

I have a small conversation with student, who had a big problem in the subject selection. She doesn’t have skills in ITGS, she always be the last during the lessons and doing the tasks. At the beginning of the course, I created extra curriculum lessons for her and continuing even now. Unfortunately the lessons are not so helpful as she could not get a high mark. I asked her, maybe you should change the subject, she answered, that even with low mark she has more chance to got university grant (Teacher of ITGS).

Students think about grant very seriously, as they push themselves to study subjects, which can offer them better prospects, rather than studying subjects, which they are interested in, or good at. Maybe at the beginning of the subject choice, they try to choose ‘juicy’ subject, but later on they change based on various factors and one of them is parent’s economic status. Therefore, students’ choice may be changed according to university fee.

Moreover, I asked if they cannot get grant, what will they do? Some of the participants answered: “Ohh, If I can’t get grant my parents should pay for my education, unfortunately. I chose the subject, which can help me to get a grant. I try to combine all of

the things, and I think it will be hard to me, if my parents had to pay for my education” (Student\_3).

#### **4.9 World History subject opportunities**

Through these quotes it is clear that students’ subject choices are to a great extent influenced by state grants allocated to various subjects. One of the reasons for this grant-driven subject selection is the low socio-economic background of students and their parents.

Another reason is the lack of awareness and knowledge about various professions and fields of studied. The WH subject teacher was unable to explain the opportunities that this subject offers to students who study and specialize in it. During the interview, the teacher could not mention a few professions that students can consider while specializing in WH subject, “Oh really, students can become Journalists by studying WH... I did not know about it” (WH teacher). The DP coordinator said, “Well, our school has a special people career counselor, whose responsibilities are to explain to students about the opportunities different subjects offer”. From the data it is clear that not every student studying WH subject is fully aware of the opportunities the subject offers.

In brief, there are various reasons for students’ choices of subjects including World History. These include their interest in studying a subject, their awareness and knowledge about the prospects a subject offers, chances of obtaining a scholarship for studying a particular subject, their parents’ socio-economic conditions, influences by information technology and friends / colleagues, and job market demands. The students of grade 11 do consider and take into account different factors while choosing World History as a subject. For these students World History is not the easiest subject, but they like reading watch the historical movies, work in political area or international law.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the finding of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze, discuss and interpret the key findings, demonstrate how these findings respond to the main research question. The following research questions guided the study. What are the factors that influence grade 11 students to study World History subject at a specialized school in Kazakhstan?

#### **Subsidiary questions:**

How do teachers, students, parents and school leadership see World History as a subject or field of study at specialized school?

What are factors that motivate students to choose World History at the school?

What are the factors that discourage students from studying World History at the school?

The chapter is organized in the following themes:

### **5.2 Perception of World History**

The general understanding about WH subject reveals that history consists of the actions of essences and the consequences of these actions. The history of the World was made up of a great many factors that affected it to a greater or lesser extent. Each living entity, one way or another, affects the course of events, not to mention those in power.

What our civilization has now is not a plan of development built by someone in advance, it is a natural course of events.

According to Griggs (2010) by learning World History, students became aware about relationships between nowadays event and world history subject. Moreover, the WH subject is the one of the subject that gives student aware of their self-development and academic performance.

As we know, WH subject is mostly about fact and dates, however through this subject students learn more about world. In recent years, Kazakhstani people try to spend their holidays somewhere abroad. According to official figures, in 2012, 385 758 people left Kazakhstan for vacation. This number included people who visited other countries in order to take rest but also learn about those countries (Gde zagranice, 2013). Therefore, people learn more through WH, and for the future life.

Through learning WH subject students may develop historical skills, which include analysis, continuity, change, and finding the consequences of the conflict or problem. Moreover, students can develop the reading and language competences, subject contents, a deep analysis through paraphrasing and creating a summary of historical texts / contents (Standards, n.d.). These skills will help students and all those who studies WH develop themselves and become more confident about their actions.

The WH subject is historical experiences and everything that our modern world have today were developed step by step, by making mistakes and creating something quit new. This study found out a number of factors that influence students' choice of studying WH subject. These include:

### **5.1.3 Factors that motivate students to study WH subject**

Every child has a hidden talent. All children are inquisitive, they are interested in everything surrounding their everyday life. One of the simple examples, when a child sees what his parents do with a pen or pencil at home, he also tries to do the same with the pen or pencil. Thus, the older the child grows, the better he understands his actions. Children rise and go to school, where they make friends, they learn more at school and consequently circle of interest expands.

According to Park (2006) individuals' interests fundamentally impact on career decisions process. As a student takes part in various extra-curriculum lessons, he/she as a rule reacts to particular sentiments and dispositions in the lessons. The students' personal



reactions and reflection that was getting from the activities typically shape and concentrate on chosen profession. Park (2006) summarizes that through identifying students' interest help to learners in professional interest or career choosing process. Consequently, students' perceptions about a certain subject areas usually affect their choice of specialization in a subject. Therefore, at the specialized school where the study was conducted 30 different extra curriculum lessons exist (Kruzski, 2014). Each of the lessons has different direction sport, humanities, scientific, journalism, debates, arts and musical instruments. Through a variety of activities, the student gets more skills, which also positively affects them. For example, World History teachers the school, conduct debate club and TEDx conference. Consequently, students may raise their subject interest through extra lesson, as lessons conducted at informal atmosphere.

The Wikeley and Stables (1999) observed that learner's ability at a subject is one of the key governing factors in subject choice, also students unknowing and not understanding the subject content can lead to reasons during the subject choice. Thereby, students interest might be created not only by teachers teaching method, which will be discussed later, but also through the schools' extra curriculum lessons.

However, students' interest is not the only factor that which influences their decisions to study World History subject. There are certainly other factors that also encourage them to study this subject. Nowadays technology has become the most popular source of information. According to Tagirova (2003) Technologies offer the widest opportunities to those who are interested in the principle of computers and those who want to develop their own programs, and finally to the vast majority of users who are looking for additional means in their information technologies to solve their professional problems. Thus, information technology also has a great impact on students' decision to study Word History subject.

According to the IB teaching standards, teachers' teaching style and methods must "centre on learners; develops effective approaches to teaching and learning; works within global contexts, help students understand different languages and cultures; explores significant content, develop disciplinary and interdisciplinary understanding that meets rigorous international standards" (IB Teaching Standards, n.d). Similarly, as per IB standards the purpose of education is to provide active learning opportunities for students, as it is stated:

An IB education aims to transform students and schools as they learn, through dynamic cycles of inquiry, action and reflection. Teachers enable and support students as they develop the approaches to learning they need – for both academic and personal success. IB programs aim to help students explore and construct their own personal and cultural identities (IB Teaching Standards, n.d).

Consequently, IB school where this study was conducted follows the IB organization requirements and demands. According to the interviews with local World History teachers of the school, they did not have prior teaching experience at an IB school. Therefore, they attended online and overseas courses and workshops to develop their teaching skills in an IB curriculum. At the present time all World History teachers have "Category-3" certificates, which allow them to teach in DP SL or HL groups. Moreover, teachers should pass the professional training courses, which are organized by an Autonomous Educational Organization (AEO). Therefore the school has sufficiently qualified teachers, including two international teachers with IB teaching experiences. Team teaching methods allow students more opportunities and one-to-one teaching / learning approaches (Kaplan, 2012).

Curran and Rosen (2006) demonstrated that teachers impact students' subject interests and class participations. However, other researchers argue "...that most students tend to have a larger preference for the knowledge they receive from subject as opposed to

an instructor's influence" (p.136). The teaching methods somehow influences students in choosing World History subject, as was mentioned before that one of the students saying that he chose WH subject because he liked the history teacher. Despite long experience and high qualifications teachers do not seem to play a significance role in motivating students towards World history subject.

In continuation of the answers to the second subsidiary questions, one more factor was identified. Regardless of the subject interest, teaching method and information technology, students associated World History subject with their future life, profession or career development. Each of the participants mentioned about their future profession and consequently chose World History subject to satisfaction of their desire. As was mentioned previously, by choosing World History subject students receive an opportunity to study politics, religion study, cultures, jurisprudence, international relations, law and philosophy (Spisok specialnostei, 2008). Students combine their interest and career choice, which consequently influences on their subject choice.

#### **5.1.4 Factors that discourage students from choosing WH subject**

The last question intended to explore factors that discourage students from choosing World history subject. As students are allowed to choose three HL subjects (Curriculum, n.d.), consequently they are allowed to choose professions in the area of three chosen HL subject. Graduate students should pass UNT, which include five subjects and total 125 questions. Consequently students should get high point, to win scholarships for further studies. According to the 2011 statistics of scholarships provided to students in different subject areas, student who got above 99 point got scholarship to study politics, 87 point for religious studies, 90 points for cultural studies but no grants for subjects such as jurisprudence and law even though students had higher. In comparison to technical specialization, for example metallurgy student should got 78 point, physics 69point. Thus

it is seen that getting a grant in humanities subjects is very difficult. The list of scholarships provided above is related to the local national universities of Kazakhstan. However, the students in this study are very ambitious, to study in some good universities including the Nazarbayev University, though they realize that it is not so easy. According to facts and figures of school of humanities and social studies (n.d.) at the present time, there are a number of students at different specialties: History subject-5, anthropology -5, sociology -24 students. Thus, scholarship could be one of the factors that could discourage students to choose world history subject, except students which economic status allows them to study without grant.

According to the online dictionary Socio - economic status mean “an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. Sociologists often use socioeconomic status as a means of predicting behavior”. During the interview students did not mentioned about their low or middle economic status, but they answered that they do not want their parents to struggle in paying for their education. The economic factor may affect the choice, as the range of their search should be narrowed to a grant basis, they also look at the subject they interested and scholarship opportunities available in certain subjects. A student may have good abilities and inclinations to study WH subject, but his parents may not have enough money to support his studies. Therefore the student cannot study WH if he does not get grant.

In summary, the findings of this study uncovered a variety of factors that can encourage or discourage students from studying WH subject. The way WH subject is perceived by students, teachers, and parents and the value they attach to it greatly influence their choice of studying it. Other factors such as students' own interest in knowing the world and its history, teachers' innovative and engaging methods of teaching WH, information technology highlighting the importance and relevance of WH, parents timely

guidance and availability of scholarships for WH can motivate students to study it.

Similarly, the generally low status of WH subject as compared to physics and other hard sciences, lack of knowledge about the subject, limited grants available for studying the subjects, and low socio-economic conditions can really discourage students from choosing and studying WH subject.

## Chapter Six

### Chapter Six. Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study by highlighting the research purpose, design, and key findings. Based on the study's key findings, it draws certain conclusions and makes recommendations for policy and practice.

The purpose of this qualitative study with semi-structured interview design was to explore factors influencing grade 11 students' decisions to study World History as a subject at a specialized school in Kazakhstan. The data was collected through 12 one-on-one semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion with teachers, students, parents and school management team member. The study's findings show that students find it very difficult to choose one subject from amongst various subject options available to them. Their decisions to choose a particular subject are influenced by a wide range of factors including their own interests in certain subjects, their career choices, the information technologies they are exposed to, the teaching methods of various subject teachers, and the availability of scholarships in certain subject areas. It is clear that the students' choices of a subject are influenced by both external and internal factors, as discussed in the previous chapters.

Based on the analysis and discussions on the key findings, this study draws the following conclusions having implications for policy and practice in the context of Kazakhstan.

1. Students at Grade 11 have to make a key decision about the subject / major they are going to pursue for their career. They face great difficulty in making such a decision because they are not prepared and ready for it. They are not fully aware of all the merit and consequences of their decision and how the decision is going to shape their career

and life. Accordingly, it can be concluded that students should reflect on their interests, inclinations, characteristics, mental and physical abilities, and overall strengths and weaknesses while choosing a subject / major for their studies. They need to consult with their teachers, career counselor, and parents to better understand various subject options available to them and their own inclinations before making the decision. However, they should not be influenced by everyone they consult, but rather use the consultations for expanding their knowledge and understanding of various fields of studies and then choose the subject that best suits their interests and potentials. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the school where I conducted this study. Students who chose World History subject and those who did not choose it did not go through any rigorous process of consultations, deliberations and reflections on what subject to choose and why to choose it. Most of them took the decision quite randomly and without deeper understanding of why studying World History is important. Since students subject interest is the long-term process, it is not easy to make an informed decision without engaging students in proper preparation, guidance and counseling. The school where this study was conducted, only offers a one hour presentation to students to explain different subjects (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, World History, Geography, Economics and etc.) and the opportunities each subject could offer. Thus lack of sufficient knowledge about a subject can lead students to make wrong decision about their careers.

2. The second conclusion is that the information technology has a great impact on students' choices of subject major and future careers. It has become part of the new generation's daily life and their main "advisor" for most of the questions in their mind. Students easily and quickly find answers to their questions by doing a "Google search" or using other search tools. However, it is hard for them to find credible information

that fully and correctly reflects the understanding and processes they need to go through for making a decision. There is a danger of students heavily relying on information technology and using unauthentic or irrelevant information as a basis for making critical decisions about their careers. Most of the students in this study who took World History as their major were actually influenced by the information they found on the Internet. This maybe one of the reasons for their uncertainty about the decisions already taken. The lack of guidance and counseling regarding subject majors at the school could also be a reason why students have to rely on the information technology for choosing World History subject as their major.

3. The third conclusion is that students' financial background and competition for scholarships greatly influence students' subject and career choices. Scholarship and parents' economic status are the one of the major factors why students choose certain subjects. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the state grants / scholarships are allocated to different subjects. For example there are many more scholarships for subjects like Physics, Chemistry and other hard and technical sciences but very few scholarships for subjects like World History and Social Studies. Therefore students tend to choose those subjects for which there are many scholarships, rather than subjects in which they are keenly interested in. Consequently, students worry about the fact that if they cannot get a scholarship, they would have to pay for their education. If their parents do not have strong financial resource base, the students worry about continuation of their studies any further. Also, not all the parents can fully cover the higher education for their children. This is an issue with the state grants allocation which directly or indirectly creates a 'class' of subjects with some having maximum number of scholarships and others having very small number of scholarships. There must be fair allocation of scholarships across various subjects to enable students to take



a subject in which they are keenly interested in, rather than forcing themselves to take a subject only for winning a scholarship.

Taking into account all the above factors influencing students' decisions regarding their subject majors, it is clear that the number of students who chose World History subject is very small. If this trend continues, the very survival of World History and some other subjects will be at risk. If students do not take these subjects, the country in the long run will have acute shortage of professionals in these fields. Therefore the following recommendations are made to ensure diverse specializations in schools and for future job market in Kazakhstan.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The following recommendations may be useful for policy and practice in relation to school / university majors.

### **6.2.1 Career orientation sessions at schools**

I suggest creating a career orientation sessions for students of grade 10 at schools. Because at the end of grade 10 students should make their mind about what subject they are going to take. Such sessions should include subject prospects and opportunities available within the broader fields. For example, students must be encouraged to think globally, if they want to choose World History subject. They should know that if they specialize in this subject, they can explore professions such as working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at an international law firm, at universities etc. Thus, students can get full and detailed information about various opportunities a subject can offer.

Another recommendation is that schools should engage parents in developing better understanding of various subject specializations so that there is a healthy discussion between parents and children regarding subject choices. It is generally seen and also found

in this study that parents either impose their decisions or remain indifferent to their children's subject choices. Young students cannot always analyze information deeply and therefore parents based on their experience can help their children in the subject choice. School can create a sessions to educate parents about their children's interests and performance in various subjects, so that parents do not impose their decisions on their children but instead encourage their children to take what they want to study.

Subject teachers can also educate increase students' awareness about World History or other subjects by highlighting the opportunities World History offers. The school career counselor can closely work with subject teachers, because teachers know the student's attitudes and abilities.

I also recommended to the Ministry of Education and Science to review the distribution of scholarships among various subjects. There must be fair (not equal) distribution of state grants to all subjects and fields of specializations. Thus, students will go for the subject and specialization they really want to pursue rather than choosing a subject for winning a scholarship. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Science may reconsider the distribution of scholarships amongst all subjects including social sciences.

### **6.2.2 Future research**

The current research have had a small sample of participants from one school only. Therefore the findings do not represent voices of a large number of students, teachers, and parents from different schools. Therefore I recommend that a mix method research with a large sample drawn from various schools across the country may be conducted to collect richer data for analysis.

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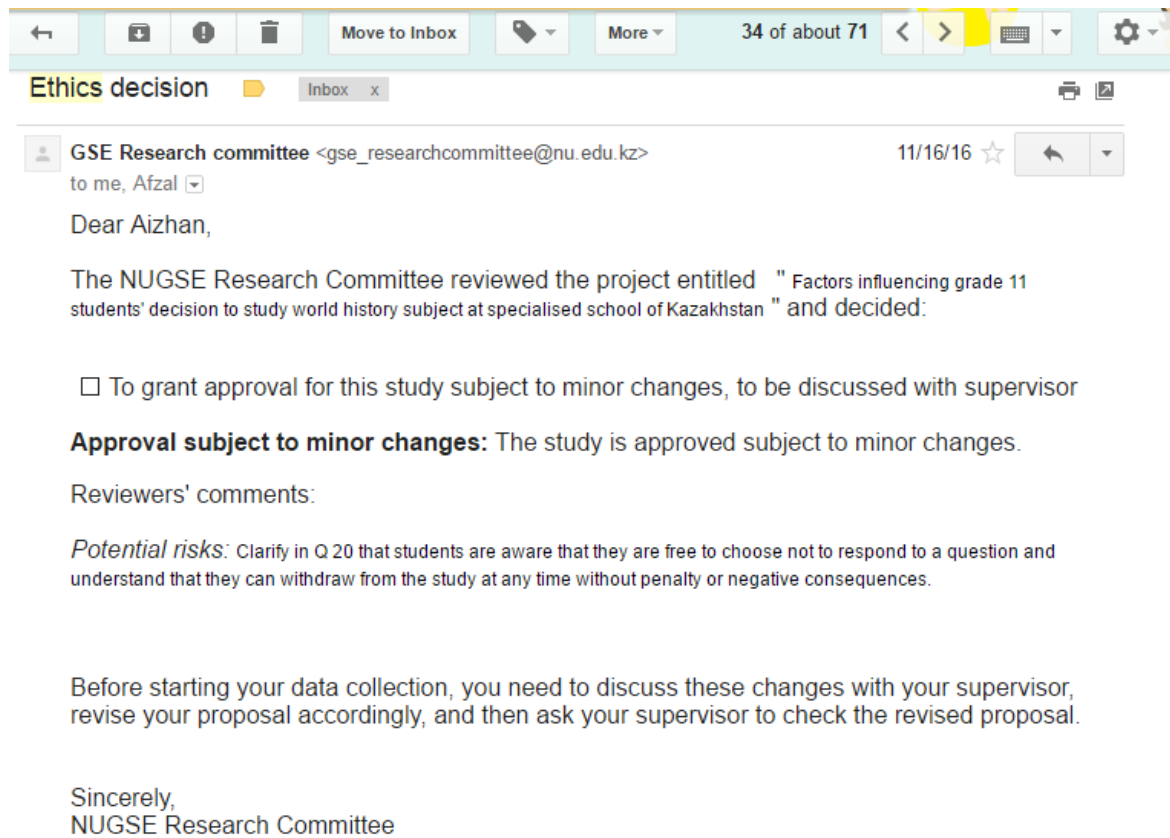
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**Appendix A. NUGSE Ethics Approval**

The screenshot of e-mail received from GSE Research committee





**Appendix B. Consent Form**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
For Teacher of World History

**Factors influencing grade 11 students' decision to study world history subject at school**

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a research study which aims to examine the factors influencing grade 11 students' decision making process about World History subject. You will be asked to answer some questions. You will be asked to be audio recorded. You have a choice to allow or not to allow the usage of audio recorder. If you agree to be recorded, all audio files will be stored in a safe place. After the completion of the research, all audio files will be deleted. Your personal identity and the information will you will provide be kept strictly confidential.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 60 minutes.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at professional meetings, conferences, or published in journals without disclosing the identity of the school and participants.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Mir Afzal, Associate Professor of the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University.

**Independent Contact:** If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz)

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C. Interview Questions****Interview Protocol**

Project title: Factors influencing grade 11 students' decision to study World History subject at specialized school of Kazakhstan

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

**Questions****Students**

1. Which grades are you studying in?
2. How do you feel about your studies?
3. Which subjects do you like the most and why?
4. Which subjects do you dislike and why?
5. What subject did you choose?
6. Why did you choose this particular subject?
7. What factors motivated you to choose WH?
8. Who did you consult for making your decision about the elective subject?
9. Does socio economic factor influencing your decision?
10. Do you enjoy WH lesson and why?
11. What is your aim and future plans of studying WH?
12. Why you did not choose another subject?

**Teachers of WH subject**

1. How long have you been teaching in this school and in other schools, if any?
2. What subject do you teach?
3. What is your background?
4. How many students (roughly) usually take WH as their elective subject every year?
5. What does motivate students to choose WH subject?
6. Do students discuss their choice with you?
7. Does the school have a good conditions for developing the WH subject
8. How do you motivate students to choose WH?
9. How do you promote the subject / WH?
10. What can be done to motivate more students study world history?

**Teachers**

1. How long have you been teaching in this school and in other schools, if any?
2. What subjects do you teach?
3. How many students do you usually get in the elective subjects you teach?
4. What does motivate students to choose these subjects?
5. Do students discuss their choice with you?
6. How do you see World History as an elective subject?
7. In your opinion, why should students study WH?
8. How do teachers, leadership and other stakeholders see WH as a subject and what can they do to promote the subject?

9. How do you motivate students to choose WH?

Administration (DP-coordinators)

1. How long have you been working at this school and in which positions?
2. What subject do you teach?
3. How do you see the importance of WH subject?
4. Do you think students are aware of WH subject opportunities?
5. How does the administration of the school support WH subject?
6. What can be done to further promote WH subject at the school?

Parents

1. What is your background?
2. How do you support your children in their decision making about their subjects?
3. What do you consider in advising your children to select a particular subject / field of study? And why?
4. How do you see the importance of WH subject?
5. Does social-economic factor influence your children's choice?
6. Do you think the school supports WH subject and how?
7. Are you satisfied with what your children learn in WH subject?
8. Do you have any suggestion for the school and/or for the WH teachers to further promote WH as a subject?