

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE PLANNED AND ENACTED CURRICULUM:
TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF INTEGRATING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE
HISTORY CURRICULUM IN TWO LYCEUM SCHOOLS IN ASTANA

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**Alignment between the Planned and Enacted Curriculum: Teachers' Perception of
Integrating Critical Thinking in the History Curriculum in Two Lyceum Schools in
Astana**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

[April, 2023]

Word Count: [21 918]

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ETHICAL APPROVAL



53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave.
Nur-Sultan 010000
Republic of Kazakhstan
Date: 16 of October 2022

Dear Aibibi Nogaibek

This letter confirms that your research project titled, 'Alignment between planned and enacted curriculum: Teachers' and curriculum designers' perception of integrating critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan curriculum' has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Naureen Durrani

On behalf of:

Dr Matthew Courtney, *PhD*
Chair, GSE Ethics Committee

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CITI Training Certificate

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to convey my sincere gratitude and thankfulness to Allah for giving me the courage and direction I needed to finish this thesis.

I would want to sincerely thank my supervisor Naureen Durrani for her advice, assistance, and knowledge. Her understanding, guidance, and support have been invaluable in helping me through the difficulties of writing a thesis and developing my study.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my family and friends for their constant support and inspiration. Their devotion, selflessness, and unwavering faith in me have served as a constant source of inspiration for me.

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ABSTRACT

Kazakhstan's education reforms after independence in 1991 have concentrated on the school curriculum. Kazakhstan has implemented several curriculum modifications to replace the curriculum model it inherited from the Soviet Union, which was perceived as too focused on content and less so on developing students' critical thinking. Modernizing the curriculum has been used to help achieve the country's development goals. A series of curriculum changes in Kazakhstan collectively known as the "Updated Curriculum Reform" sought to modernize existing teaching strategies by requiring teachers to switch from learner-centered to teacher-centered pedagogy in an effort to foster students' capacity for critical thought, problem-solving, and research. The history curriculum was also subject to curriculum changes and was considered pivotal for developing students' critical thinking since studying historical events encourages critical thinking, and enhances a person's capacity for independent thought, communication, information processing, and critical reading. However, global evidence suggests that many teachers may find teaching critical thinking confusing due to a lack of clarity about what critical thinking means and how to develop it among students.

This study explores Kazakhstani teachers' perspectives of teaching critical thinking skills in history curricula in lyceum schools and their views on the planned and enacted curriculum. A qualitative research design was used for the investigation. Five History teachers, selected from two schools, were interviewed to explore teachers' perceptions of integrating critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan curriculum.

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The study found that teachers' understanding of critical thinking in History subject is diverse but their teaching practices to instill critical thinking are limited due to a lack of effective professional development opportunities. Furthermore, misalignment between enacted and planned curriculum exists as there are discrepancies in textbook content and a lack of methodology guidelines for teachers. However, there are particular limitations to my study such as research side restrictions, teachers' instruction language, and a limited number of participants and stakeholders on critical thinking in the history curriculum. These restrictions play a crucial role in maintaining teachers' general perceptions of the curriculum focused on critical thinking.

Keywords: teachers, critical thinking, pedagogical practices, history, curriculum
(mis)alignment

Аңдатпа

1991 жылы тәуелсіздік алғаннан кейінгі Қазақстанның білім беру реформалары мектеп бағдарламасына бағытталды. Қазақстан Кеңес Одағынан қалған оқу бағдарламасының моделін алмастыру үшін оқу бағдарламасына бірнеше өзгерістер енгізді, себебі ол мазмұнға тым көп көңіл бөлінген және аз дәрежеде оқушылардың сыни ойлауын дамытуға бағытталған деп саналды. Оқу бағдарламасын жаңғырту елдің даму мақсаттарына қол жеткізуге пайдаланылды. "Жаңартылған білім беру бағдарламасы" деген атпен белгілі Қазақстандағы оқу бағдарламаларындағы бірқатар өзгерістер мұғалімдерден сыни тұрғыдан ойлау, проблемаларды шешу және зерттеу қабілеттерін дамыту мақсатында мұғалімдерге бағдарланған педагогикадан оқушыларға бағдарланған педагогикаға көшуді талап ете отырып, оқытудың қолданыстағы стратегияларын жаңғыртуға бағытталды. Тарих пәнінің оқу бағдарламасы да өзгеріске ұшырады және бұл пән оқушылардың сыни ойлауын дамытудың кілті болып саналады, өйткені тарихи оқиғаларды зерттеу сыни ойлауды ынталандырады және адамның тәуелсіз ойлау, қарым-қатынас, ақпаратты өңдеу және сыни оқу қабілетін арттырады. Дегенмен, жалпы әлемдік дәлелдер көптеген мұғалімдерге сыни тұрғыдан ойлауды оқыту, сыни ойлаудың нені білдіретіні және оны оқушыларда қалай дамыту керектігі туралы ашық және айқын ақпараттың болмауына байланысты түсініксіз болып көрінуі мүмкін екенін көрсетеді.

Осы зерттеуде қазақстандық мұғалімдердің лицейлердегі "Қазақстан тарихы" пәні бойынша оқу бағдарламалары шеңберінде сыни ойлау дағдыларын оқытуға және олардың жоспарланған және іске асырылған оқу бағдарламасына көзқарастары зерттеледі. Зерттеу жұмысына сапалы зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Қазақстан тарихы

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бойынша оқу бағдарламасына сыни ойлауды интеграциялау туралы мұғалімдердің түсініктерін зерделеу мақсатында екі мектептен іріктелген бес тарих пәні мұғалімдерінен сұхбат алынды.

Зерттеу мұғалімдердің тарих пәні бойынша сыни ойлауды түсінуі әртүрлі екенін көрсетті, бірақ олардың сыни ойлауды үйретудегі педагогикалық тәжірибесі кәсіби дамудың тиімді мүмкіндіктерінің болмауына байланысты шектеулі. Сонымен қатар, іске асырылған және жоспарланған оқу бағдарламалары арасында сәйкессіздік анықталды, өйткені оқулықтардың мазмұнында сәйкессіздіктер бар және мұғалімдерге арналған әдістемелік нұсқаулықтар жоқ. Дегенмен, менің зерттеуімде, оқытушылардың оқыту тілі және тарих пәнінің оқу бағдарламасына сыни тұрғыдан ойлауға қатысты қатысушылар мен мүдделі тараптардың шектеулі саны сияқты шектеулер бар. Бұл шектеулер мұғалімдердің сыни тұрғыдан ойлауға бағытталған оқу бағдарламасын жалпы түсінігін сақтауда шешуші рөл атқарады.

Түйінді сөздер: мұғалімдер, сыни тұрғыдан ойлау, педагогикалық практика, тарих, оқу бағдарламасының сәйкессіздігі

Аннотация

В 1999 году после обретения независимости реформы в образовании Казахстана были сосредоточены на школьной программе. Министерство образования Казахстана внесло несколько изменений в модель учебной программы, которая существовало со времен Советского Союза. Эта модель была ориентированной на теоритические знания и в меньшей степени на развитие критического мышления учащихся. Модернизация учебной программа способствует развитию общества и страны. Серия изменений в учебных программах Казахстана, известных под общим названием "Обновленная программа образования", была направлена на модернизацию существующих стратегий преподавания, которая способствует к переходу от педагогики, ориентированной на учителя, к педагогике, ориентированной на учащихся, чтобы развить у учащихся способность к критическому мышлению, решению проблем и исследованиям. Учебная программа по истории также подвергалась изменениям и считалась ключевой для развития критического мышления учащихся, поскольку изучение исторических событий поощряет критическое мышление и повышает способность человека к независимому мышлению, общению, обработке информации и критическому чтению.

Однако общемировые данные свидетельствуют о том, что многим учителям обучение критическому мышлению может показаться непонятным из-за отсутствия ясности что означает критическое мышление и как развивать его у учащихся. В настоящем исследовании рассматриваются взгляды казахстанских учителей на преподавание навыков критического мышления в рамках учебных программ по истории в лицеях и их взгляды на запланируемую и введенную в действие учебную программу. Для исследования был использован качественный исследовательский

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метод. Были опрошены пять учителей по истории, отобранные из двух школ, с целью изучения представлений учителей об интеграции критического мышления в учебную программу по истории Казахстана.

Исследование показало, что понимание учителями критического мышления по предмету истории разнообразно, но их педагогическая практика по привитию критического мышления ограничена из-за отсутствия эффективных возможностей профессионального развития. Кроме того, существует несоответствие между принятой и введенной в действие учебной программы, поскольку имеются расхождения в содержании учебников и отсутствуют методические рекомендации для учителей.

Однако в моем исследовании есть особые ограничения - касательно территориального ограничения, языка преподавания, числа участников и заинтересованных сторон по внедрению критического мышления в учебную программу по предмету истории. Эти ограничения играют решающую роль в поддержании общего восприятия учителями учебной программы, ориентированной на критическое мышление.

Ключевые слова: учитель, критическое мышление, педагогические практики, история, несоответствия в учебной программе

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background Information

Since gaining independence in 1991, the school curriculum in Kazakhstan has been the main focus of education reforms (Bridges, 2014). The curriculum model inherited from the Soviet Union was viewed as “centralized, rigid, inflexible and overloaded” (Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006; Kalikova and Silova 2008, p. 144, as cited in Bridget 2014) and misaligned with the country’s aspirations to modernize its education. The new economic and political reality required different approaches to teaching, and Kazakhstan has adopted curriculum reform. A complex of curriculum reforms in Kazakhstan has been collectively referred to as the “Updated Curriculum Reform” which seeks to transform traditional practices such as teacher-centered classrooms, five-scale assessment, passive reading, and a focus on mere factual knowledge. Thus, it tried to incorporate themes relevant to the new realities based on international practices into the curriculum of the country. The Updated Curriculum has made significant changes in the following areas of the school curriculum (MoES, 2016, p 269):

- The development of critical thinking and creativity in a spiral manner
- The transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning
- The implementation of trilingual education across subjects
- The introduction of criteria-based assessment

Commissioned by the Government of Kazakhstan, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has conducted studies to assess the process of implementation of the new high school curriculum (OECD, 2014). After a thorough

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evaluation, it was discovered that despite the new curriculum being introduced in 2016, the knowledge and skills that graduates of Kazakhstani educational institutions possess and those that are demanded by the labor market differ significantly. According to the research, "graduates often lack practical skills, with vocational education and training systems not sufficiently aligned with labour market needs" (OECD, 2018, p. 4). Additionally, The OECD (2018) notes that the cultivation of practical skills and knowledge has been recognized as an important focus for the reform of the education system in Kazakhstan (OECD, 2018) which further emphasizes the significance of practical knowledge in the Kazakhstani educational system.

Between 2016-2017 the Updated Curriculum was implemented, although the content of the Unified National Test (UNT), high stakes end-of-school cycle assessment, had stayed the same. The majority of research claims that to prevent a detrimental impact on teaching methods, the curriculum and final exams must be aligned (Costa, 1991; Rodd, 1999, as cited in Collier et al., 2002, p.37; Tener, 1995). One particular issue impacting the curriculum reforms is UNT. Teachers and students might not see the value of critical thinking (CT henceforth) in teaching and learning, if such skills are not assessed in a high stake assessment such as UNT. Moreover, most school teachers may prioritize knowledge delivery over teaching students "how to think" to meet the objectives of the "National Curriculum", as was the case in Southwest England (Rod, 1999, as cited in Collier et al., 2002, p. 27). Furthermore, teachers may continue to rely on the Soviet-influenced approach to the curriculum if teachers lack competence in teaching critical thinking. Teaching critical thinking could be "controversial and confusing" for many teachers because of its wide range of definitions and suggested practices (Bensley & Murtagh, 2012). As a result, it is now more

crucial than ever to ensure teachers have access to professional development opportunities to help teachers understand critical thinking skills and how to instill them in the students (Kassembekova, 2020) and to construct contextual definitions for critical thinking (Moon, 2008).

1.2. Problem Statement

The key to economic growth and national competitiveness is an innovative educational system and preparing human capital that encompasses skills crucial in the 21st century. Critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration skills are among the 21st-century competencies listed by the US-based Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, n.d.). Collectively, these skills are referred to as 4C competency. According to research, the most frequently attempted skill to be incorporated into Kazakhstani education is critical thinking (Kassembekova, 2020; Yutsevichutene, 2017). It is becoming increasingly evident that merely having knowledge is insufficient to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the real world. It is important to integrate critical thinking skills into the curriculum, as more and more employers are concerned about recently hired graduates and their lack of abilities in the job (Ferdous et al., 2019). The disparity in skills between the workforce and the needs of the economy is one of the major issues facing Kazakhstan's labor market, according to a research by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Despite advancements in education, the study acknowledges that "there is still a mismatch between the skills that the education system provides and the needs of the labor market" (ILO, 2020, p. 5).

Additionally, Ferdous et al. (2019) describe the three important factors as the main reasons for unemployment related to professional abilities as follows: insufficient

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professionalism in the job, insufficient time management, and poor critical thinking capacity in problem solving. Schools must encourage students to think critically and creatively, to see problems from a variety of angles, to recognize the limitations of both their own and other people's viewpoints, and to turn their ideas into new approaches (Vincent-Lancarin, 2019). Additionally, it raises concerns over how well-equipped students are with the "general, transferable abilities" (Robinson & Garton, 2008) required for prosperous professional careers in the new globalised era and in rapidly expanding local employment markets (p. 96). One factor impeding the curricular push towards fostering critical thinking is the backwash effect of the UNT. According to the OECD (2007), "The UNT is used as the tool for assessing the quality of students' knowledge in Kazakhstan" (p. 43). People are unsatisfied with the quality and content of testing questions as a multiple-choice test cannot measure graduate students' actual skills. It indicates that our whole curriculum is based on knowledge that can be tested simply by multiple-choice, which does not prepare us for real-life (Jumabayeva, 2016). The lawmakers mandated new teaching strategies and updated the curriculum for teachers, but they continue to use the high-stakes UNT, which is counterproductive to the use of modernized pedagogies such as student-centred pedagogy. The stakes are high since the exam results are crucial for students' ability to enroll in universities, which also determines how well a school and its teachers perform (Azhmukhambetov, 2020). Additionally, teachers might "focus on the examination and to ignore aspects of the curriculum that are not tested directly and that do not contribute to better examination results, such as extended writing", as the case in the United States (Hill, 2010, p. 10). One of the most important times in the lives of the school graduates is when they are making intensive preparations for the UNT. The last year's curriculum is not studied by

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students the entire year. They neglect other curricular subjects as they study for tests, and as a result it leads to narrowing of the curriculum (Jumabayeva, 2016). The updated curriculum was created and introduced for the 2016–17 school year. Prior to it, the Updated Curriculum had already been tested in the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) network. The NIS curriculum put a strong emphasis on teaching students how to conduct research, solve problems, and exercise critical thought. Prominent educational institutions in Kazakhstan now include NIS schools, which are run by the autonomous educational organization "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools" (AEO NIS). AEO NIS's primary objective was to become "an experimental platform to develop, monitor, study, analyze, pilot, implement, and realize modern educational programs: primary (including the pre-school level), lower secondary, and upper secondary," as was set by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AEO NIS, 2018 p. 3). The accomplishment of specific goals and the continued growth of NIS schools have given rise to the new mission of bringing NIS experience into the mainstream schools. In order to gather, adapt, and incorporate the best regional and global methods, these schools were developed as cutting-edge educational institutions. The NIS curriculum evolved as the principal source of the strategies and regulations required for upgrading the curriculum in traditional schools. The curriculum is organized in a spiral structure and incorporates "the best national and international experience," implying grade-by-grade study in depth of a subject (AEO NIS, 2018 p. 5). The Updated Curriculum also refreshes the conventional methods of instruction, guaranteeing that teachers move away from learner-centered pedagogy toward teacher-centered pedagogy in order to foster in students critical thinking ability, problem-solving, and research.

According to the majority of earlier studies, the former Soviet Union's educational system was centered on a "sciento-technocratic" paradigm that emphasized teacher-centered learning, lecturing, memorization, outcome-based learning, and a lack of interactive methods (Burkhalter & Shegebayev, 2012, p. 62; Fimyar, 2014, p. 188; OECD, 2014, pp. 87-88). The Updated Curriculum sought to replace this paradigm and intended to integrate critical thinking skills, changing types of tasks and questions imposed, although the issues in teaching practices might occur that may inhibit the students' learning of critical thinking. This is the issue related to the alignment of the intended and enacted curriculum. The actual course material that students study in the classroom is referred to as the "enacted curriculum." The intended, assessed, and learned curricula are significant parts of the educational delivery system, although it is anticipated that the majority of learning will take place inside the implemented curricula. There are some policy tools, such as curriculum standards, guidelines, or frameworks that define the curriculum that teachers are supposed to teach when we say "intended curriculum."

One of the main reasons for the misaligned curriculum is the different beliefs of stakeholders related to the curriculum. Among the many factors that affect teaching, the teacher's beliefs are crucial (Kusaeri & Aditomo, 2019), as they are one of the most significant variables in developing students' critical thinking (Al-Issa, 2014). Hence, research about teachers' beliefs about critical thinking should be conducted. Taking onboard teachers' perspectives is crucial for the successful implementation of the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers will be able to interact with the materials more effectively if designers have a close relationship with teachers. Building trust between officials and teachers by the alignment of planned and enacted curriculum may lay the path for further collaborative work and smooth

changes in the future. Additionally, being a part of curriculum design will give teachers a sense of ownership that will help to interact with the planned curriculum adequately. As a result, the teaching process will be time-efficient.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' perspectives of teaching critical thinking skills in the History curriculum in lyceum schools and their views on the planned and enacted curriculum.

Having analyzed the content and objectives for each subject taught in Kazakhstani schools, humanitarian subjects were chosen because critical thinking is mainly defined as a goal in subjects such as Kazakh language, Russian language, English language and the History of Kazakhstan. The History of Kazakhstan is chosen as it is one of the mandatory subjects for all students, is assessed in UNT, and is focused on improving critical thinking skills.

1.4. Research questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do teachers understand critical thinking skills in the context of their subject specialism?
2. How do teachers integrate critical thinking skills into the History curriculum to develop students' critical thinking skills?
3. What are teachers' concerns and challenges regarding implementing critical thinking skills into History?

4. Does misalignment exist between the planned and the enacted curriculum? If so, how can it be overcome?

1.5. Significance

Syllabus designers and materials developers will potentially benefit from the insights generated by my research study because there is an urgent need to change the content, teaching methods and textbooks to address 21st century challenges. My research can also be used by educational policymakers, researchers and teachers because it examines and analyzes the current trend of 21st skills.

This study is important because it examines how History teachers conceptualize critical thinking and the instructional strategies they use to promote it. In the framework of Kazakhstan's educational system, this area is of essential importance because it is one that the former president identified as being directly relevant to the development of 21st-century abilities. The findings of this study can offer significant insights, such as about instructional strategies that foster critical thinking and enhance student learning and its alignment with the planned curriculum. Additionally, the results of this study can be used by teachers who are introducing critical thinking in other secondary schools in Kazakhstan. In order to help others to know about developments in designing curriculum, the participant teachers' perspectives may provide useful answers.

For policymakers from the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan, it would be good to study and look for gaps between the planned and enacted curriculum and develop practices of taking onboard teachers in designing curriculum within the local context. The insights of the study can help in-service teacher training institutions to enhance and update their programs and provide curriculum designers with real information about the enacted

curriculum which could be potentially helpful in improving the history curriculum. The importance of cultivating critical thinking and closing the gap between the planned and enacted curriculum in teaching critical thinking is ultimately emphasized heavily worldwide. Therefore the study findings are important not only in the context of Kazakhstan but may also be applicable in other teaching and learning environments that are undergoing significant educational reform that emphasizes critical thinking pedagogy.

1.6. Key terms

Critical thinking - a thinking process that helps to make wise judgments and conclusions; critical thinking is a cognitive process that involves assessing and evaluating data, arguments, claims, and beliefs.

Planned curriculum - curriculum developers, subject matter experts, and teachers create formalized, intentional educational programs called planned curricula that outline specific learning goals, objectives, content, and instructional strategies for a given subject or grade level to ensure that students receive a thorough and solid education.

Enacted curriculum - a curriculum that describes the real educational experiences and learning opportunities that take place in the classroom or other learning environments, as influenced by a variety of variables, including teacher instruction, student involvement, classroom culture, and other contextual factors.

Curriculum alignment - A clear and cohesive learning pathway for students in order for the curricular objectives, assessments, and instructional practices to come together logically and effectively.

1.7. Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the history of educational reforms and made a connection between the implementation of critical thinking, and presented the importance of alignments between the planned and enacted curriculum—which calls for an extensive awareness of teachers' perspectives for effective implementation of the curriculum.

The thesis consists of five chapters: Chapter 1, Introduction, situates the study in the country context, states the study problem and explains the purpose of the study and the questions the study seeks to answer. Chapter 2, The Literature Review, reviews and synthesizes the literature on the perceptions of teachers on critical thinking and teaching methods used to foster critical thinking. Furthermore, it discusses the History of Kazakhstan curriculum and issues with the planned and enacted curriculum. Chapter 3, Methodology, discusses the research design, how schools and teachers were selected and accessed, how data were gathered and analyzed and ethical issues.

Chapter 4, Findings, present the analysis of data and emerging findings. Chapter 5, Discussion the study findings are discussed in relation to the body of literature as a whole. Finally, Chapter 6, Conclusion, summarizes the research and offers suggestions and implications for the future. There is also information regarding the study's limitations and recommendations for further research.

1. Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the literature on critical thinking (CT) in relation to the Kazakhstani curriculum, particularly the subject of the History of Kazakhstan. I present definitions of CT as well as traits and abilities related to it. I also look at the principles of alignment between the planned and enacted curriculum for the History of Kazakhstan curriculum. The chapter aims to comprehend the critical thinking literature as a background for understanding teachers' conceptions of CT and identifying features of alignments or misalignments in the curriculum.

2.1. Conceptualizing the “Curriculum”

In educational research, the term "curriculum" has several different connotations. All of the courses a school offers may be referred to as curricula. According to Kerr (1999), the curriculum refers to all of the pupils' school-guided learning. According to Marsh and Willis (2003), a student's curriculum should contain all the learning opportunities they are given to develop their general knowledge and abilities. Marsh (2003) provides a more general definition of curriculum, which goes beyond content and extends to experiences: “curriculum is the totality of learning experiences so that students can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites” (p. 5). The curriculum is created to offer children the supervised learning and a variety of learning experiences they need to build the skills necessary to excel in both their academic and personal life.

Another approach divides the curriculum into three components that are taught in succession. The "official" or "planned" curriculum is what cultures believe is vital to learn. The "implemented" or "enacted" curriculum is what is presented in the classroom. The curriculum that has been "achieved" or "assessed" is what the pupils learn (Porter, 2002).

However, it is crucial to note that there will always be discrepancies between the “enacted”, “implemented” and “assessed” curriculum and that these are never completely aligned. The alignment of the curriculum between what is planned and what is actually taught is frequently impacted by things like teacher autonomy, student needs and interests, and resource limitations. To better fulfill the requirements of their pupils, these variables may prompt teachers to alter the curriculum, leading to differences between the intended and implemented curricula.

The curriculum is a vital part of the educational process. Henson (2015) highlighted that the curriculum is the key mechanism of how a school achieves its aims and objectives; therefore, concentrating on its planning and development is a top priority in the education reform process. In this respect, Qiquan and Liya (2013) observed that the most significant reforms in education on a global scale started with the curriculum. Capacity development of those in charge of developing the curriculum may be required to ensure they have the technical and practical skills, knowledge, and experience required to carry out the task (Stabback, 2016).

Another issue is about the different tiers of the government. In some countries, a centralized national curriculum exists, which is implemented by regional/provincial/state governments. In other countries, this might be done at the school or the local education authority level. According to Clune (1993), a centralized curriculum can harmonize all the contradictory and fragmented policy sources which also influence school curricula such as standardized tests, for-profit textbooks, and different types of teacher training. Furthermore, he noted that a centralized curriculum could not be controlled by regular teachers and administrators, implying that curriculum developers must be experts who have teaching

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experience and know the classroom realities. Accordingly, in Kazakhstan, educational programs and standards are monitored and developed by experts and curriculum developers in National Academy of Education. Finally, a centralized curriculum promotes equity because it gives low-income schools access to high-quality education (O'Day & Smith, 1993). Equality is the belief that a high-quality curriculum is a resource, particularly for low-income schools, or, more generally, that any system that cedes authority to local schools would lead to the development of high-capacity schools (O'Day & Smith, 1993). As regards equity, the gap in academic performance by region and the language of instruction, as in the case of Kazakhstan, continues to be an issue for improving the country's educational system (National Testing Center, 2020).

On the other hand, a centralized approach may eliminate the chance for the curriculum to be flexible and practical in a world that is changing quickly. Fullan (2007) notes that enabling educators to use "innovativeness" in the classroom is expected to occur in a decentralized curriculum regarding pedagogy, subject matter, and possibly even objectives. Hannaway (1993) also notes that a strong standardized curriculum may be the only regulation that hinders creative change. Central authorities would anticipate schools and teachers as the primary sources of innovations if they delegated decision-making authority over the curriculum to the school level. These changes would not be applied consistently throughout the educational system, but rather would be tailored to the requirements of particular students and local communities (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, schools that want to change their curriculum and have the resources to do so can almost do anything they want, even if it means working within the constraints of the current policy requirements (Levin, 1988; Sizer, 1989, as cited in Clune, 1993). In contrast to a standardized curriculum, which is ambiguous

about the relationship between policy and practice, installing new initiatives locally concentrates specifically on instructional changes in schools (Clune, 1993). Moreover, a crucial process of aligning curricula with regional requirements and a diverse student population will unavoidably be blocked if the endeavor to standardize curricula succeeds in the face of adamant opposition (Clune 1993). OECD (2014) reported:

When analyzing competencies of central and local government bodies in the development of the State Compulsory Educational Standard of the Republic of Kazakhstan (SCES) and related educational plans and programs, one cannot but notice the ideas of common public policy in the field of education, strict regulation of requirements to the content of education, and centralized approach to the creation of these documents, which is inherent in all these documents (OECD, p. 54).

The Kazakhstan context could benefit more from a mixed approach as textbooks become more commercialized and each school creates its own operational educational plan, and it is critical to draw attention to local differences as there is a gap existing between rural and urban areas. According to Afzal Tajik et al. (2022) a large disparity between rural and urban locations in terms of educational infrastructure, teacher quality, and educational resources, has an impact on the standard of instruction and academic results for rural kids. As an illustration, the educational system in Finland includes both centralized and decentralized strategies (Creese et al., 2016, p. 8–9). In an effort to promote student equality, the Core Curriculum offers national-level guidance, whereas locally designed curricula place emphasis on the diversity of local settings. In the same vein, in terms of ethnic and linguistic diversity,

which are on the political agenda, is one of the issues related to equity and inclusion in Kazakhstan (Bridges, 2014).

2.2. Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is necessary for contributing positively to our society. On the basis of inaccurate or partial information, the majority of people can be misled. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that critical thinking is one of the most commonly discussed educational competencies in contemporary times. It is also considered essential for logical reasoning, decision-making, argumentation, and problem-solving (Butler et al., 2012; Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990). A general definition of critical thinking is a complex ability that incorporates problem-solving in the presence of ambiguous information (Ventura et al., 2017). We can identify misconceptions, underlying issues, and new opportunities in practice by using critical thinking and reflection (Noonan, 2013, p. 177). Paul and Elder (2003) presented critical thinking as “that mode of thinking – about any subject, content, or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them” (p. 1). Paul and Elder (1997) state, students who want to learn how to improve their thinking skills must master two key aspects of thinking. They must be able to recognize the "components" of their thought processes and evaluate how well they employ them. For example, Xu (2011) mentioned that Paul and Elder's (2001) framework of critical thinking fosters reasoning and meaning making, as the learner attempts to construct meaning, and this may entail questioning, debating, and making an effort to comprehend others' viewpoints. This certainly applies to all subjects taught in school, which include language learning. Here, communication can be viewed as the exchanging of meanings, whereas literature is intended to, among other things,

stimulate, challenge, provoke thoughts, and involve emotions.

Students need to be given the opportunities to develop lifelong learning and critical thinking abilities to gather and process information in a constantly changing world if they are to succeed in a highly technical society (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). To this aim, there is general agreement that critical thinking enables people to become problem solvers who are also engaged and effective lifelong learners (Kincheloe, 2004; Lai, 2009). Additionally, using critical thinking can make learners more proactive as critical thinking is ranked higher in Bloom's taxonomy which classifies learning stages such as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and on top of all, creating original or new work (Mulnix, 2012; Elder & Paul, 2006, p. 48). Halpern (2014) and Ruminiski and Hanks (1995) also emphasized the significance of these components. In keeping with this line of reasoning, they added useful recommendations such as the necessity of knowledge “acquisition, retention, and retrieval as well as problem-solving, decision-making, and creative thinking” (p. 58). Additionally, higher critical-thinking abilities are linked to greater political participation (Guyton, 1988), and students who receive critical-thinking education are more inclined to embrace scientifically based concepts (Rowe et al., 2015). In a collection of research literature, the term "critical thinking" refers to reasonable, thoughtful thinking that focuses on activities, people, or beliefs (Ennis, 1993).

The literature frequently links ideas of critical thinking to the use of logic and the capacity to draw sound conclusions (Doddington 2008, p. 109). According to Moon (2008), critical thinking that involves metacognitive activity (thinking about one's own thinking) or that addresses critical thinking "as a way of being" is "deeper" than critical thinking that merely addresses skills and procedures (p. 56). Moon (2008) highlights that along with

thinking about knowledge itself, metacognition also involves thinking about one's approach to using knowledge and a larger understanding of epistemology. For instance, the skills or component approaches to critical thinking primarily deal with a relatively 'surface' understanding of critical thinking as an operation seen in the literature. Conceptions that are "deeper" focus on critical thinking as a way of life, including metacognitive processes, as the assessment of any assumptions, and so forth (Moon, 2008).

Many other thought leaders in the industry agree on the significance of critical thinking, skills, practice, and the requirement for reflection on both the part of the instructor and the student. "Clarity, correctness, precision, consistency, relevance, solid evidence, strong arguments, depth, breadth, and fairness" were described as characteristics of critical thinking by Scriven and Richard (1987) in their talk to The National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking (p. 9). According to Elder and Paul (2009), fairness and empathy are also qualities and aspects of critical thinking. It should be noted that Elder and Paul (2009), two influential members of The Critical Thinking Community, added to their definition of critical thinking the significance of setting a habit of applying those skills to direct behavior in addition to information, belief-provoking, and processing skills. Similarly, Van Gelder (2005) agreed that students needed to practice using the abilities after learning them. He asserts that to cultivate critical thinking, there must be a complete focus on progress, which entails performing exercises to raise performance that is regulated, repeated, guided, and given immediate feedback (p.43).

In addition, Moon (2007) discovered a link between critical thinking, opinion expression, and academic assertiveness. Academic assertiveness includes the thinker's confidence, their "voice" in academia, and their ability to understand, integrate, and

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communicate difficult concepts and behaviors (p 77). Finding an acceptable "voice" or manner of communication to participate in debate or critical thought is one of the aspects in academic assertiveness. The ability to have and articulate an opinion, as well as the "creation of a sense of voice, mind, and self" were thus thought to be referred to by the term "voice" (Belenky et al., 1986 p.18, as cited in Moon, 2007). Moreover, it refers to a person's general capacity to feel respected and at ease in their own self, along with their ability and willingness to express their thoughts (Gilligan, 1998). The ability to voice one's opinions, in particular, can support academic assertiveness, which enables students to be certain in a variety of real-world circumstances and to communicate clearly and critically.

Furthermore, as critical thinking enables people to investigate data, assess problems from several angles, and generate well-informed viewpoints, this skill is crucial for fostering peace and tolerance. In the words of Brookfield (2019), critical thinking enables us to distinguish between correct and faulty information, recognize prejudice, and assess arguments for and against a given perspective to reach a justifiable conclusion. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2006) emphasize that critical thinking fosters cognitive humility, open-mindedness, and empathy, all of which are essential for creating tolerant and harmonious relationships. Additionally, there is a connection between filtering information and critical thinking, and every one of us needs, at times, to rely on the advice of professionals, as you can use a variety of filters provided by critical thinking to evaluate expert viewpoints before you decide to believe them (Browne & Keeley, 2007; Suter, 2011).

These definitions are related to each other, and the traits discussed are the fundamental traits that 21st-century students should possess. Critical thinking encourages students to be lifelong learners, creative thinkers, and proactive students who will have

greater political participation. Being able to think critically promote students' logical thinking, quickly identify misconception, solve problems, and work with scientifically based concepts. Moreover, every aspect of critical thinking training cultivates in students empathy and, most importantly, the capacity to reflect on one's own thinking.

2.3. Teaching History and Critical Thinking

Studying history can be a novel way to develop students' critical thinking skills. Studying historical events fosters the spirit of critical thinking (Brophy, 1992; Reed, 1998). Thornton (1997) highlights that history provides knowledge from the past, the opinions of various people who lived in different eras and environments, and insights into the past. Additionally, studying history improves one's ability to communicate, process information, read critically, and think independently. Encouraging students to question the past, interpret evidence, draw reasonable conclusions about historical events, and autonomously form informed opinions contributes to creating a knowledgeable and civil society (Thornton, 1997). This view is supported by Wineburg (1991), who writes that a variety of historical interpretations provide the core of historical thinking (Wineburg, 1991). Demandt (1984) also theorizes that history students improve their understanding of both what really occurred and why it occurred by reflecting on historical scenarios that were in the minds of decision-makers.

Furthermore, Paul (1992) claimed that instruction that does not advance human rationality should actually be referred to as training rather than education. Paul (1992) also presents the difficulty high school history teachers face in helping students acquire higher-order knowledge and critical thinking abilities in their various subject areas: teaching critical thinking in the strong sense means teaching so that students explicate, understand, and

critique their own deepest prejudices, biases, and misconceptions, thereby encouraging students to discover and contest their own egocentric and socio-centric tendencies (pp. 280-281). Egocentric is the “natural human tendency to view everything within the world in a relationship to oneself, to be self-centered” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 213). Meanwhile, socio-centric is interpreted as the “natural human tendency to view everything within the world in a relationship to a group, to be group-centered” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 213). Only if we experientially challenge our inevitable egocentric and socio-centric habits of thought can we hope to genuinely think rationally.

However, the issue with teaching critical thinking lies in wrong interpretation which inhibits the development of students' high-order thinking skills. Bain and Mirel (1982) argue, "the main problem with predominant curriculum reforms is that they have focused on the teaching of history, not the idea of history" (p. 332). Pattiz (2004) also states that a vast amount of academic studies suggest that students are not being taught how to think more critically in evaluating the validity of numerous statements that directly relate to a wide range of issues, events, people, and/or ideas in the field of social studies education in general and historical education in particular. Students' replication of discrete pieces of knowledge (such as dates and names) on static assessment tools (such as multiple choice, true or false, and matching) is the predominant method of training in this subject (Pattiz, 2004). In the same vein, Wiggins (1993) notes a didactic curriculum (teacher-centered instruction) that ends in objective assessment (multiple choice, true or false, and matching) is not only irrelevant but also damaging to students because it implies that knowledge and information should be applied in a way that is inconsistent with how it is actually used in real-world contexts.

Similarly, the emphasis on historical research, historical interpretation and analysis,

chronological thinking, and historical issue analysis and decision-making in each level of K–12 education in the US, Germany, and the UK contrasts with Taiwan's tendency to place more emphasis on historical understanding than historical thinking (Yang, 2007). In the context of Kazakhstani mainstream schools, learning the subject “History of Kazakhstan” also presumes memorizing names and dates and preparing for the final examination, the UNT, which has the format of multiple choice. At the end of grade 11, students take the combined upper secondary school exam and university entrance exam known as the UNT. Standardized examinations used to make critical judgments about students, such as promotion, graduation, or enrollment in specialized programs, are referred to as high-stakes assessments. The alignment and implementation of the curriculum are significantly impacted by the emphasis on high-stakes assessments. According to studies, high-stakes exams have an impact on both the subject matter and teaching methods used in classrooms (Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Stiggins et al., 2004). Instructors focus more time than they do on areas that are not assessed and align their lessons to the curriculum that has been tested. This practice, also referred to as "teaching to the test," might lead to a more focused curriculum (Au, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Furthermore, some studies claim that high-stakes exams can have a detrimental effect on the quality of learning by encouraging memorizing drills and examinations rather than teaching students how to think critically or solve problems (Au, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Linn, 2003).

Furthermore, the growth of a humanistic and moral civilization depends on the capacity for critical thought, which is enabled by open-mindedness. Particularly in forward-thinking, democratic nations, it is imperative to convey these two interconnected abilities to students (Bar-Tal et al., 2021). According to Richardson (2002), it is evident that the system

of education identifies the core curriculum, which essentially identifies the kinds of skills that should be integrated and the educational system is one of the most important tools for national socialization, and "national subjects" (Smith & Vaux, 2003, p. 31) are evident examples of how education facilitates patriotism and nationalism.

In Kazakhstan, the subjects, namely "Kazakh Language", "Kazakh literature" and "History of Kazakhstan" are taught from 1-11 grades as a compulsory subject. Moreover, one of the new disciplines is "Geography of Kazakhstan", offered to 9 graders which focuses on Kazakhstan and this subject is different for other graders who study general "Geography". Another new subject promoted in Kazakhstani's educational system is "Abaytany" which encourages students to study and explore one of the prominent figures of Kazakh land. According to the instructive and methodological letter and, the aim of the subject "Abaytany" is to foster the study of the Kazakh language, the history of the homeland to be patriotic and promote the importance of preserving the national code (NAO). When I was a student, we were encouraged to respect our national attributes by memorizing their authors, learning the national anthem by heart, and singing it together every Monday with the whole school before classes.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, reformulating the "History of Kazakhstan" subject took on a variety of forms. The ability to revisit Soviet history and reevaluate how Kazakhstan's history was taught in textbooks and classrooms during this period provided Kazakhstani historians with a huge opportunity (Kissane, 2005). Kazakh History had more instruction time and topic focus than World History, and additional time was also allotted for studying the Kazakh language (DeYoung & Bakhytkul, 1996).

In the first ten years of Kazakhstan's independence, the majority of educational reforms accepted explicitly acknowledged both human rights and national self-determination. The main emphasis has been on de-Russifying the information and interpretations of history and reviving the once-displaced heroes of Kazakhstan with the goal to revive or establish a sense of national identity and nurture patriotism around Kazakhstan as an independent republic. Strong ideological forces and influences still have the capacity to push history in one of two directions: either toward nationalism or toward inclusivity and the democratization of knowledge. (Kissane, 2005). According to Bar-Tal et al. (2021), nationalism might lead to narrow-mindedness and blind patriotism, and today's educational institutions struggle to strike a balance between the encouragement of critical thinking abilities and various national values, which appear to be contradictory.

2.4. Teaching Practices and Strategies

Collaborative and Cooperative Learning

Collaborative and cooperative learning are instructional strategies that are heavily emphasized (Thayer-Bacon, 2000; Abrami et al., 2008; Heyman, 2008; Bailin et al., 1991; Paul, 1992, as cited in Lai, 2011). Collaborative or cooperative learning is supported by Thayer-Bacon (2000), who highlights the importance of students' relationships with one another when improving their ability to think critically. Group projects foster the development of CT traits like assurance and openness (Hajhosseiny, 2012). Techniques like questioning, discussion, pair and group work could be used to encourage collaborative learning (Burkhalter, 2016).

Fabian (2015) describes CT as interpersonal communication participant activity or Moon (2008) views CT as social interaction and a process that fosters the ability to respond

constructively, accept others' viewpoints, and take responsibility for oneself (Burkhalter, 2016). So, a collaborative kind of engagement could be a technique to demonstrate that the same concepts can have various points of view, each of which may be significant.

Case Studies

This strategy entails examining real life situations that pose a difficulty or problem. Facione (2011) states, "Case studies allow students to engage in critical thinking by analyzing complex situations and making informed decisions based on evidence and logical reasoning" (p. 60). Case studies provide students with an issue or circumstance that is complex and contextually rich, which can inspire them to think more critically and analyze things more thoroughly (Halx & Reybold, 2005). Case studies can operate as a link between theory and practice, allowing students to observe the way concepts and principles apply in authentic scenarios and fostering critical thinking about how to implement what they have learned in real-world settings (Facione, 1998).

Debates

Students can effectively use their critical thinking skills through dialog (Socratic methods), flipped learning, debate, and other educational activities, problem-based learning, and collaborative group work. (Fung & Howe, 2014; Narmaditya et al, 2018; Rodriguez-Dono & Hernandez-Fernandez, 2021; Smith et al, 2018; Wediyantoro et al, 2020). Among them, the debate is a commonly used method, especially in social science-related courses in universities. This strategy provides contrasting viewpoints on a specific topic in an organized manner. According to Beyer (1995), "Debates encourage critical thinking by requiring students to evaluate opposing viewpoints and make informed judgments based on evidence and logical reasoning" (p. 53). It invites participants to publicly discuss and critique the

benefits and drawbacks of various topics. Debaters must persuade others to support themselves in debate activities, which advances their comprehension of topics and improves self-reflection (Tetlock, 1992). Debaters were also supposed to be able to identify the weaknesses in their arguments by facing intellectual conflicts and resolving disagreements to reach a consensus (Dundes, 2001).

According to Bartanen and Frank (1991), debate is a method for critical thinking, which involves obtaining and analyzing information. A debater learns to be skeptical of claims. A good debater understands how to acknowledge and dispel opposition to a position and that there are other sides to problems and topics.

Learning argumentation and participating in debates are highly valuable and relevant for developing abilities such as analysis, critical thinking, organizational competency, problem solving, research ability, and confidence in presentation (Church, 1991). Church (1991) not only actively supports the previous conclusions, they also broaden the advantages of debate relative to time (p. 7). Moreover, debates, project-based learning, Socratic or higher-order questioning, role-playing, and various engagement technologies are just a few of the methods that McCombs and Miller (2007) list as strategies to promote critical thinking.

Questioning

Because they are simpler to create, lower level questions do not inspire pupils to use a higher level or higher order thinking (Tienken et al., 2010). Tienken et al. (2009) concentrated on the methods of questioning and they noted a discrepancy between the cognitive processes engaged when a recall or lower-level questions were asked vs higher-level questions that needed students to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate. CT is frequently

developed via the questioning method (Almulla, 2018; Marzano, 1993). To foster students' critical thinking, the questions should be "open-ended" (Browne and Freeman, 2000, as referenced in Almulla, 2018, p. 21), "suitable" (Collier et al., 2002, p. 16), and "exciting" (Haynes & Bailey, 2003, as cited in Snyder & Snyder (2008, p. 95).

Collier et al. (2002) state that educators generally concentrate on low-level thinking questions to gauge students' comprehension, which is also evident in the Kazakhstani educational setting (Ibragimova, 2017). According to Browne and Freeman (2000, cited in Almulla, 2018), frequently posing open-ended questions helps students stay motivated and improves their ability to use a variety of resources to identify those that are reliable and use their CT abilities (p. 18). These theories were supported by Almulla's (2018) study, which found that by asking open-ended questions frequently, students greatly improved their CT skills.

Several types of discussion and dialogic methods could use questioning strategies (Brown & Kelley, 1986; Hajhosseiny, 2012; Hemming, 2000, as cited in Almulla, 2018). To spark conversation, Mayer (1986, as cited in Moon, 2008) also advises asking "controversial and difficult" questions (p. 150). Hence, one method for fostering CT and one that can be used in a variety of activities is the questioning technique.

Group work

According to Fung's (2014) study, which was done in two Hong Kong schools, encouraging CT with group work activities had a considerable beneficial effect on pupils' CT skills. There is considerable evidence to support the claim that group work helps pupils develop critical thinking (Davidson & Worsham, 1992; Klimoviene et al., 2006). Galton et al. (2009) asserted strongly that group work holds a favored position in maintaining higher

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cognitive level interactions compared to whole-class conversations based on their findings in the classroom. Positive significant associations between motivation scores and group work were identified in the Pell et al. (2007) study. Johnson and Johnson (1985, 1999) conducted a series of empirical investigations on cooperative group work and clearly discovered that group learning experiences improve both student achievement and attitudinal behavior.

Nevertheless, according to Tama (1989), some teachers prioritise imparting knowledge more than developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, certain teaching techniques that include a "learning to think" component in the curriculum must be taught to teachers (Tama, 1989, p. 5). Similarly, Rodd (1999) asserts that for critical thinking skills to be taught across the curriculum, the focus needs to be made on professional development activities that aid teachers in understanding and using them.

Similar to this, Cassum et al. (2013) report that study participants cited a lack of in-depth understanding as well as attitudes related to what critical thinking is and how to guide it in an environment where the "majority of institutions in Pakistan still promote rote learning" as a barrier to fostering critical thinking (p.61). Astleitner (2002), Half & Reybold (2005), and Tsui (2006), among others, underlined the lack of adequate training for integrating critical thinking into teaching practice. While independence and the lack of external oversight allow for extraordinary freedom, they also deprive instructors of any substantial assistance (Gestsdóttir, 2021).

Effective strategies to promote critical thinking in the classroom include discussion, case studies, group projects, collaboration, debates, and questioning. These methods help students acquire the abilities they need to assess arguments, examine information, and establish their own judgments. These techniques can be used by educators to assist students

in becoming independent, active learners who can engage in critical thought and make wise decisions in both their personal and professional life.

2.5. Kazakhstani Curriculum

The status of the "History of Kazakhstan" in the school curriculum underwent dramatic changes and different debates emerged about the revision of its contents since independence. I summarise research on the content and meaning of the subject for different periods below.

1980-1990

Kozhakeeva et al. (2022) conducted an analysis of this issue using records from the Republican Central Archive. The educational programs carried out in higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan at that time were conducted following the programs approved by the authorities of the USSR. In addition, it is written in the archive document that the educational and methodological works of the department are based on the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism (Cary, 1976; Lisovskaya & Karpov, 1999 as cited in Kissane 2005, Kozhakeeva et al., 2022), and decisions and resolutions of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party. This is because the main goal of the ideology of the Soviet government was to "Russify" the Kazakh youth (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022).

1991-2000

Kozhakeeva et al. (2022) inform that since 1991, historical educational thought in Kazakhstan has been developing in a completely new direction. According to Kissane (2005), the project's goals between 1992 and 1994 included revising former Soviet school curricula and educational instructions, establishing new government standards, starting to publish

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updated textbooks with new material that included more details on Kazakhstan's history, removing links to Marxism-Leninism, and addressing colonization from a critical stance. Kazakhstan's 1992 Law on Education marked the first time that new state requirements had been adopted. Students must "know their own culture, values, and traditions," according to the 1992 History Programme (Ministry of Education, Republic of Kazakhstan, 1992, p. 3).

Post-Soviet educational policies were implemented between 1995 and 1998 through new initiatives, revised curricula, and new history textbook volumes that had a limited number. A focus on pedagogical transformation was made in policy discussions (Kissane 2005). However, the program received criticism for not paying enough attention to methodologies or teaching. The program was criticized for not providing enough support for teachers to really execute the new objectives in the classroom. New resources or new textbooks did not support the modifications to the program. In other words, the policy was provided to teachers with expanded topic coverage and pedagogical practices but did not provide the tools required to implement them. This potential for implementation would have failed without adequate support. The Ministry must give teachers a mechanism for introducing new content, according to the director of the history program and a co-author of the standards for teachers. He was extremely critical of the 1992 program overall for a failure to adequately address the crucial concerns relating to changes in content and for ignoring instruction (Kissane 2005).

A shift towards additional content and an emphasis on teaching about the East may be seen in the history programs for 1999 and 2000. The program's director emphasized the necessity for history to provide more information and opportunities for learning in regions

that were previously neglected in Kazakhstan but are, in his words, "integral components of the history of the Kazakh territory" (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022).

In 2001, after the first 10 years of teaching the history of Kazakhstan under the conditions of independence, all new textbooks for grades 5 through 11 in republican schools had already been published (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022). But in March 2000, a new president of the Altyntsarın Kazakh Academy of Education was chosen to succeed the previous leader. It's interesting to note that the new Academy President wanted to replace outdated editions with updated textbooks in all schools by 2003. He thinks Kazakhstani students do not properly comprehend history from the textbooks written before 1991 (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022).

However, N. Nazarbayev, the first president of Kazakhstan, in his article "Social modernization of Kazakhstan: twenty steps towards a universal labor society" showed the history of Kazakhstan as a "languishing/mundane", "boring", "messed up/ mixed" subject (Nazarbayev, 2012). Moreover, in his article, Omirbek (2013) states that the textbooks on the history of Kazakhstan are being changed and supplemented. However, the quality of the textbook contents still requires improvement. He highlighted the necessity to revise the teaching content of the history of Kazakhstan subject at school. Firstly, the repetition of educational materials in textbooks reduces the student's interest and – creates contradictions of historical facts between textbooks of different classes. Other main problems he identified in textbooks included (1) Incompatibility between textbook content to the age of students, (2) contradictions between the updated curriculum and the topics in the textbook, (3) content contradictions between alternative textbooks approved for the same class. The inconsistency of the alternative textbooks of the same class approved by the Ministry of Education and the inaccuracy of historical facts is causing great difficulties in the course of education.

Additionally, complex information in textbooks is difficult for students to learn. For example, textbooks do not always specify the historical time of the information provided and at times textbook information has little historical value for students but is difficult for students to learn (Omirbek 2013).

Furthermore, in an interview with Kozhakeeva et al. (2022), the scientist B.A. Kalysh presented his specific proposals on theoretical and methodological issues in improving the content of the subject "History of Kazakhstan":

In order to rewrite the history of Kazakhstan, it is necessary to create a team of authors and attract qualified specialists. The stages of the history of Kazakhstan were written with the consequences of communist ideology; we need to change all of them. We have almost no theoretical and methodological foundation. We should also open a special department for them and teach special subjects. Due to the lack of theoretical and methodological methods of domestic history, we are following the ideology and methodology of contemporary Marxism. If we had our own theoretical-methodological method, we would write our history correctly without missing anything. We are a country of the Turkic world, descendants of the Turkic civilization. We need to introduce new theoretical and methodological methods again (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022, p. 179).

He continues that the most important thing is that the history of Kazakhstan curriculum in secondary schools and higher educational institutions should be separated. Currently, the subject is repeated in middle and high school teaching. In this regard, it is necessary to revise the typical curricula of the subject (Kozhakeeva et al., 2022).

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In January 2021 of this year, the current President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, K. Tokayev, expressed supporting the initiative "On writing a textbook for universities on the subject of the history of Kazakhstan." He also shared his opinion about the content level of the currently published textbooks and educational tools in the subject of "Kazakhstan History". He noted that the quality and content of educational materials and textbooks are not fully adequate because the conditions for writing them are not created for our scientists.

In 2022, a congress of history teachers was held in Petropavlovsk. More than 300 history teachers, historians, methodologists, heads of research institutes, and a number of higher educational institutions took part in the congress. Former Minister of Education Askhat Aimagambetov told what recommendations historians have made: (1) "In the 5th grade, the history of Kazakhstan that was previously included in the school program and topics that are accessible to students of this age should be restored; (2) the content of the curriculum of the subjects "History of Kazakhstan" and "World History" is suggested to be updated. In this regard, teachers and scientists proposed a comprehensive study of history from ancient times to modern times from the 6th to the 11th grade and changes in the distribution of material by class. Thus, one of the concrete decisions made at the congress related to the curriculum is that the history of Kazakhstan and World history textbooks will now be wholesome and standardized for all schools of the country.

Since independence, the content of the History of Kazakhstan has had the same issues, and even now, the question of updating its contents is on the agenda. As mentioned before, neither new resources nor new textbooks were used to support the program changes. Teachers were given policies that covered more ground and employed better pedagogical methods, but they were not given the resources necessary to put those policies into practice.

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Several suggestions and recommendations have been made and new programs have been implemented, but the content of the subject “History of Kazakhstan” still needs comprehensive changes and improvements.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Kazakh and Russian are both recognized as official languages in Kazakhstan, and Kazakhstan is a multilingual nation. Nonetheless, Kazakh-medium schools have struggled, particularly in remote areas, due to the dominance of Russian-language educational materials. According to the UNDP, many schools that educate in Kazakh are in need of high-quality textbooks and instructional resources. These difficulties can lead to high official and unofficial costs for students seeking a decent education in Kazakhstan, in addition to inadequate facilities, learning materials, and teaching settings. The current textbooks are frequently out-of-date, inadequately translated, or inappropriate for the regional setting. This disadvantages Kazakh-speaking students in comparison to Russian-speaking ones. According to the research conducted by Ayazbayeva (2017), several textbooks in Kazakh needed to be corrected.

2.6. Planned and enacted curriculum

The term "planned curriculum" refers to the viewpoints and methods used by curriculum developers, which in turn are influenced by governmental policy and educational goals. Enacted curriculum refers to the ideas and procedures that teachers actually use in the classroom. Better achievement of curricular objectives will emerge from greater alignment between the two, while poor alignment between the planned and implemented curricula serves the opposite purpose.

Curricular implementations change and evolve over multiple temporal stages, starting with the ideal represented by official policy and ending with what was written, what the teacher intended, and what was really implemented (Brown, 2009). Furthermore, a lot of curricular research explores how standards and instruction, or (most frequently) assessment, are aligned (Porter, 2002; Webb, 2007). It is pivotal that the different components of an official written curriculum convey the same idea (Porter, 1991; Spillane et al., 2002, p. 418). Moreover, Schmidt et al. (2005), refer to curricular coherence as a different type of alignment inside the formal written curriculum. According to this definition, subject standards are cohesive "if they are articulated over time as a sequence of topics and performances consistent with the logic and, if appropriate, hierarchical nature of the disciplinary content from which the subject matter derives" (p. 528). Additionally, Valverde et al. (2002) highlighted that textbooks and teaching materials were referred to as "mediators" between the intended and implemented curricula. However, the social studies (history, geography, economics, civics and sociology) texts have been criticized by academics as being insufficient for decades (Allen, 1971; Anyon, 1979; Banks, 1969; Gagnon, 1987; Giannangelo & Kaplan, 1992; Loewen, 1995; Van Sledright, 2002, as cited in Hickman &

Porfilio, 2012). The necessity to structure history education curriculum in accordance with learners' levels of cognitive and intellectual development has received significant attention in studies in this field (Safran & Imşek, 2006; Dilek, 2007; Dilek & Alabaş, 2010, as referenced in Aslan 2020).

Furthermore, the teacher considers the materials impractical when the developer tries to provide a variety of solutions to address a variety of hypothetical practical circumstances. The cycle continues to repeat itself (Schwartz, 2016), becoming a huge problem. The curriculum writer's reluctance to be practical or realistic about the learning and teaching process in the classroom frustrates the instructor, who is frustrated by the developer's unwillingness to "stick to the program." As Ferrini-Mundy & Floden (2007) stated, problems with educational reform typically result from a number of alignment errors. The connection between teachers' and subject-matter specialists' opinions and the material has also been studied. Porter (1991) mentions the extent to which a subject-matter expert would coincide with the materials that the normative documents mandated. In light of this, a normative document may be supported by a variety of authorities, including the legislation, social standards, the planned curricula for present instructors, or the advice of an expert (e.g. by being written by experts).

According to Brown's strategy (2009), teaching is an activity closely connected with design; curriculum resources are used to deliver complex instructional ideas, and teachers' aim is the interaction with these tools and uses the resources selectively to design the teaching process. Brown also states (2009) sheet music and curriculum materials are similar, as they are both designed to convey "rich ideas and dynamic practices", but it relies significantly on interpretation (p. 21). The most important and frequently ignored educational

materials are inactive things that can only be brought to life via the interpretation and application of a practitioner; their usage requires skill. Schwartz (2016) also raises the question of the effective model for a written (planned) curriculum. He is concerned that the majority of teachers do not use a written curriculum as the only resource for teaching in the classroom and consider it as limited. They sense a genuine disconnect between the suggestions made in the guides and the realities of the classroom. Therefore, they do not use the instructions provided in curriculum guides (Shkedi, 1998).

Another important aspect, as previous research shows, is the wording of national policy documents, which is one important factor that affects curriculum implementation (e.g. Fullan, 2001; Graybeal, 2010). The language of national policy documents is a crucial component that influences execution, according to previous studies (e.g. Fullan, 2001; Graybeal, 2010). It will contribute to the wording of the official curriculum to ease the implementation process for teachers. Also, officials and curriculum designers will pay attention to the problem of the language of national policy. A study focusing on the clarity of the reform message communicated in the Swedish formal written curriculum found that the curriculum lacks definitions, justifications, and examples. Some characterizations offer scant details about three of the key ideas, but even the most straightforward characterization (of "problem-solving") falls short of a definition (Bergqvist, 2017).

Further, the reform message is communicated using unclear language. So, the formal curriculum does not effectively convey the reform message (Bergqvist, 2017). The reform message must be clear, according to the most vigorous findings of the standard written curriculum (Altrichter, 2005; Ferrini-Mundy & Floden, 2007; Fullan, 2001). For instance, a lack of clarity might result in assimilation or highly varied interpretations of the same

information (Sztajn, 2003), a lack of challenge, and teachers not feeling required to adapt (Gregoire, 2003). The objectives must be made apparent, for instance, by using definitions, specific examples, stories, and interpretations (Hill, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002).

Understanding the curriculum designers' beliefs and perceptions of 4C skills, particularly critical thinking, will help to interpret the notions in a written curriculum clearly.

Furthermore, Anderson (2002) identified the three main curriculum elements, namely “objectives (also known in today’s vocabulary as content standards or curriculum standards), instructional activities and supporting materials, and assessments (including standardized tests).” (p 257). The triangle's sides present connections between related pairs of elements: objectives with assessments (side A), objectives with instructional activities and materials (side B), and assessments with instructional activities and materials (side C). My research focuses on the relationship between objectives with instructional activities and materials to a certain extent.

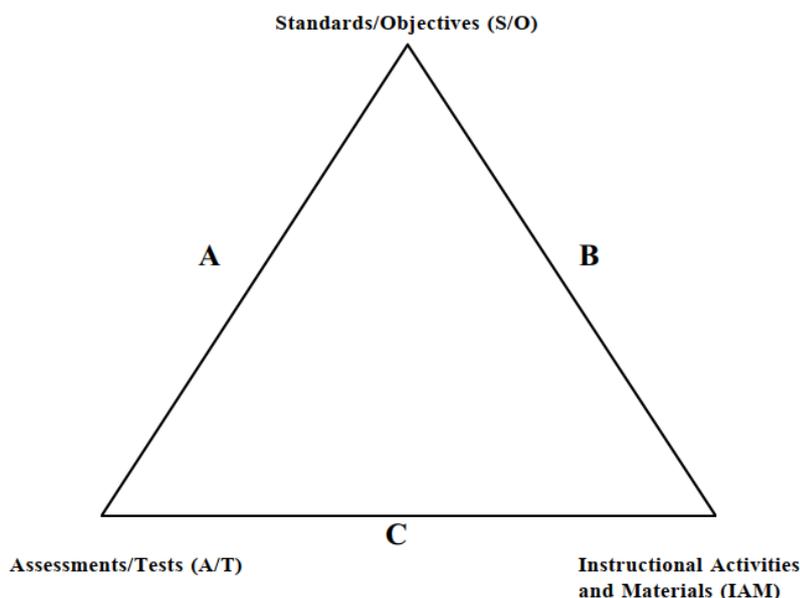
Several scholars looked at the connection between instructional activities and materials and assessments (side C), which they also described as content coverage and learning opportunities (Burstein & Elia, 1994,1993; Good et al., 1978; Kim, 1993, Muthen et al., 1995). In other words, how well does the test reflect the key learning objectives? According to studies by Buckendahl et al. (2000), Kendall (1999), and Webb (1999), this question is still crucial.

With respect to my study focus, there have been several studies of the relationship of objectives to instructional activities and materials. To categorize these investigations, however, no broad phrase has been chosen. Ippolito (1990), for instance, investigated how instructional materials and "criterion objectives" related (p. 1). Similarly, NC HELPS (1999),

looked at how the curriculum was taught to make sure that it adhered to the requirements of the North Carolina "Standard Course of Study." Finally, Pickreign and Capps (2000) contrasted the "geometry language" contained in K–6 textbooks with that found in documents containing math standards. The complete triangle in Figure 1 is a representation of curriculum alignment, according to this research paper. Therefore, for curriculum alignment to be successful, there must be a clear connection between objectives and assessments, between objectives and instructional activities and materials, and between assessments and instructional activities and materials.

Figure 1

Relationships among Standards/Objectives, Instructional Activities and Materials, and Assessments/Tests.



Note. Retrieved from "Curricular alignment: A re-examination." by L. W. Anderson *Theory into Practice*, 41(4), 255–260.

Moreover, there can be discrepancies and content issues in textbooks. For example, According to Lintner & Macphee (2012), "The pictures that are presented in the textbook don't depict actual events or true feeling. Kids need to witness an accurate depiction of what actually transpired" (p 265).

Critical thinking is one of the most frequently mentioned educational competencies which contributes to the wholesome development of a student and studying history is a novel way to develop this skill. However, data from several studies identified the issue with defining and incorporating critical thinking into the curriculum. Moreover, much of the available literature on planned and enacted curricula deals with the question of alignment as the gap between officials and schools may deteriorate education at different levels, namely the failure to fulfill the actual needs of teachers and students. Alignment of the planned and enacted curriculum is essential for teaching "History of Kazakhstan" incorporating critical thinking and better alignment between the two will lead to the improved achievement of curriculum goals.

Teachers' beliefs and vision are important for effective curriculum implementation, which focuses on total alignment between the planned and enacted curriculum. Moreover, a clear understanding of the curriculum by designers will help the teachers to engage with materials effectively. The issue of teachers who do not follow the official instructions can turn into distrust between officials and teachers. As a result, different aims and visions in teaching students may negatively affect the learning process on a social and personal level. The field of curriculum needs to think about solutions for this issue, and this research will contribute to understanding teachers' and curriculum designers' perception of integrating

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critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan curriculum and alignment of planned and enacted curriculum in the Kazakhstani context.

3. Methodology

The focus of the research is on teachers' perceptions of constructing and implementing critical thinking skills in the History of Kazakhstan in Kazakhstani lyceum schools in the context of updated curriculum reform. This study also explore the alignment between planned curriculum enacted curriculum regarding critical thinking skills in two lyceum schools in Astana. Teachers' perceptions of critical thinking can provide researchers with unique information and shed light on challenges and benefits. The qualitative research design was used to answer the central question: "What do teachers understand about critical thinking skills in the context of History of Kazakhstan?"

3.1. Research Design

Based on the type of problem, the study can be approached either quantitatively or qualitatively (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach was employed to conduct this research as my study explores the teachers' understanding of critical thinking skills in the context of their subject specialism. Qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the subjective domain of human experience (Creswell, 2014). Silverman (2009) notes, "Interest in subjectivity and the authenticity of human experience is a strong feature of some qualitative research" (p. 6). Qualitative research is the most effective approach for obtaining information as it allows me to deeply explore the teachers' perspectives.

A basic qualitative design is noted for its flexibility, ability to create personal connections, and capacity to comprehend context. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of respondents, basic qualitative design frequently entails personal contact with participants. By taking this technique, researchers can get to know their subjects better, which can improve the validity of the data they gather (Patton, 2014). Furthermore, the

necessity of comprehending the context in which study participants live and work is emphasized by basic qualitative design. With this design, it is possible to gain a deep understanding of the ways that various social, cultural, and historical aspects influence participants' viewpoints and experiences (Charmaz, 2014). Flexibility is also another benefit of basic qualitative design. Qualitative research is flexible and can be changed as the research process progresses based on new information. This is helpful when a researcher has to look into an area that hasn't been thoroughly studied or when the study issue is exploratory (Creswell, 2013).

As Leavy states (2014), qualitative research helps identify people's subjective experience and gain a thorough knowledge about the issue, I used a qualitative approach in my study. Commenting on the peculiarities of qualitative research, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) notes: "Qualitative researchers are not putting together a puzzle whose picture they already know. They are constructing a picture that takes shape as they collect and examine the parts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). As noted by Frankel et al. (2012), qualitative research is particularly interested in how things happen, and I, as a researcher, was interested in observing the interpretations that individuals make of particular words (Frankel et al., 2012). As my research focuses on teachers' understanding of one of 4C skills, critical thinking, using this research approach is well suited for my exploration.

3.2. Research Site and Research Sample

The purposeful sampling method was used in my study as I selected certain individuals intentionally to explore the central phenomenon which is "critical thinking" (Creswell, 2014). The criteria used to select individuals and sites was how "information rich" they were (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Two mainstream schools were selected in Astana from

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which I selected five teachers who teach the History of Kazakhstan. These two schools are lycums. In the beginning it was planned to select only one school. But teachers did not want to participate in the research in that school. I had to select teachers from another lyceum. Mainstream schools were a focus as the student body at mainstream schools is often more diverse comparing to schools for gifted students, which can result in a wider range of viewpoints and ideas. As children are exposed to various methods of thinking and solving problems, this can help them develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, students at a mainstream school are exposed to a wider range of real-world issues and circumstances, which might present more opportunities for critical thinking and they are more in need of this skill. I am interested in finding out teachers' perceptions of critical thinking regarding planned programs and their actual practice.

Homogeneous sampling was used which is one of the types of purposeful sampling which enables researchers to describe certain subgroups in-depth (Creswell, 2014). Miles and Huberman (1994, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) stated that “homogeneous sampling focuses on groups with similar characteristics” (p. 28). The selected teachers are the ones who teach the History of Kazakhstan in mainstream schools. The table below shows the information about participants

Table 1

Information about Participants

	Gender	Year of experience	Participation in professional development
Ulzhan	Female	2 years	No
Dina	Female	23 years	No

Maksat	Male	22 years	No
Askar	Male	2 years	No
Ayganym	Female	22 years	No

3.3. Data Collection Tools

Interview

The interview is used to collect data to answer the research question, enabling exploring the teachers' perspectives and practices in depth. The main instrument was the qualitative interview based on semi-structured questions (See Appendix A for the interview protocol). Probing and open-ended questions were asked to identify the teachers' views, perceptions, and practices in-depth without limiting the interviewee. Interviewees could "voice their experiences" and "describe detailed persona view" through open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014, p 218). Fontana and Frey (2000) defined semi-structured interviews as "one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 645, as cited in Creswell 2014, p 46). In total, I interviewed five teachers. The interview covered teachers' perceptions of integrating critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan curriculum, their practices, and teachers' view on the planned and enacted curriculum.

Furthermore, Given (2008) and Menter et al. (2011), among others, indicate that interviews are the best method for learning about participants' perceptions, understandings, and experiences. There are various forms of interviews, or "modes," including face-to-face, telephone, and video (Menter et al., 2011). Face-to-face interviews were chosen for this study. In-person interviews can be used for contextualization because the interviewer can delve more into the interviewee's responses based on non-verbal cues or contextual

information by asking follow-up questions. Moreover, if there are any questions or concerns during the interview, it is simpler to explain them and find an answer in person. This can aid in your understanding of the position's obligations and duties as well as the values and culture of the business.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Ethical principles and standards are important components of research. First, the description of the research procedure was provided to the review board of Nazarbayev University and approval was gained to conduct fieldwork (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the principals first and then gatekeepers who helped to contact the participants. I called the principal of two schools and told them about my research and obtained permission. Then my gatekeepers were head teachers for scientific and methodological work who gave me teachers' telephone numbers and organized a meeting with them. I held a meeting with teachers to explain my research and invited them to be my participants. They were acquainted with the purpose of the study, their rights, potential benefits, and possible risks. The selection of participants was on a voluntary basis and they were provided with a consent form prior to the interview which the participants signed on the day of the interview.

The teachers were interviewed in the online and in school (four online, one in an empty classroom). Furthermore, the time and location were agreed upon. All interviews were conducted in Kazakh, according to the participants' preference; the shortest interview lasted 30 minutes, the longest interview lasted 110 minutes. An audio recorder was used, with the participants' permission, to tape the interview. Afterwards, I transcribed the audio data and

translated the transcripts into English. All five interviews were conducted between the 22nd of December and the 7th of February, 2022.

3.5. Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2016), data analysis through coding and presenting themes are essential in processing the data. This will aid a researcher in thoroughly examining and classifying the data. As Cohen et al. (2016) state, “Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participant definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities.” (p. 184).

Firstly, I transcribed the data in Kazakh manually. Then thoroughly read the transcript several times to gain a deeper understanding of it. Secondly, I highlighted the key sentences and added comments to help in my analysis. Creswell (2014) highlights that “coding is the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (p. 244). So coding was the next interesting part of the analysis. I used the HyperResearch program for coding. After coding, I looked carefully to see some relationship between the codes, and r similar codes were combined. Then I categorised them under certain themes and explored connections between them. Themes (also known as categories) are a collection of comparable codes that collectively represent the main concept in the database (Creswell, 2014). I spent additional time categorizing them thoroughly to see a clear picture of the data. For example, codes are “historical conscious”, “thinking differently in terms of time”, “critically assess the historical events”, “critical thinking as metacognition”. These codes were combined under one “teachers’ understanding of critical thinking” theme (see Appendix

C for Codes). Furthermore, several themes were created and analyzed in Findings and Discussion Chapter.

3.5. Ethical Issues

Ethical procedures and standards are significant in every step of the research process. Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2006) highlight that ethics should be a primary concern (as cited in Cogen et al. 2007). In the meeting with the school administrators, the importance of educational research projects was conveyed. The participants received the consent form prior to the interview, where the rights and rules of the research process were written (See Appendix B for Consent Form). The convenient time for participants was chosen to escape the risks of spending personal time during work time. The aim of the study was conveyed clearly and individuals participated voluntarily. Interviewees were aware of the duration of the study and the requirements of participation were clearly stated.

Pseudonyms of people and schools are used, and real names are not revealed. Interviewees had the right to skip or not to answer the question they find inconvenient. Additionally, I gave them the full right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Only I had access to all the data collected and it was saved on my computer in a password-protected folder. According to NUGSE regulations, I will safely destroy the data and consent forms after three years post the completion of the study.

4. Findings

This chapter presents findings related to Kazakhstani History teachers' perception of integrating critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan curriculum. The analysis of data identified four significant themes: 1) understanding of critical thinking, 2) Teachers' practices of fostering critical thinking skills, 3) professional development for teaching critical thinking, and 4) barriers to the development of critical thinking.

4.1. Teachers' Understanding of Critical Thinking

All my participants expressed that critical thinking is the ability to express an opinion. Ayganym further adds that critical thinking is knowing whether one's opinion is right or wrong and, if there is a correct point of view, thinking about whether it has any benefit or not.

Furthermore, participating teachers link having an opinion central to critique. For example, Ulzhan and Dina highlighted that the one who has an opinion could formulate criticism. Criticism enables people to evaluate and analyze information systematically and logically, which is a crucial component of critical thinking. Paul and Elder (2006) stated that criticism involves "analyzing and evaluating claims, arguments, and evidence to make judgments about their truth, validity, and usefulness" (p. 81).

While Askar also associates critical thinking with the ability to think, he further associates critical thinking with speaking frankly, and the ability to draw conclusions from a large amount of information in a short period of time. Moreover, he states that CT is also about making the right decision in a short time and CT is related to functional duties, regulation, and decision-making. According to Halpern (2014), decision-making is the process of analyzing information or facts and making a choice or action based on that evaluation.

Ulzhan also concurred with Askar's idea, arguing that filtering information is an aspect of critical thinking: "It is better to filter any process without directly accepting it". She took an example of dangerous financial pyramids in Kazakhstan and emphasized that "people have no filter":

People have no filter; they cannot think critically about it; who is the organizer? What is behind it? What success will be achieved by doing it, or what are its shortcomings? By questioning things, we should think critically.

Financial pyramids are deceptive investment schemes that promise consumers high returns on their money, but in reality, the profits of the earlier investors are paid using the funds placed by the later investors. They are very common in Kazakhstan. If there aren't sufficient new investors to cover the promised returns, the scam will surely fail, and the organizers will steal the investor's funds. In Kazakhstan, financial pyramids have been a persistent issue that has resulted in countless instances of people losing their whole life savings. The government has taken steps to stop these frauds and educate the populace about the dangers of participating in them.

Ulzhan, Dina, and Maksat conceptualize critical thinking as seeing both sides of received information. Ulzhan's answer illustrates such kind of description:

In today's society, the regime changes quickly in the blink of an eye, as was the case in Afghanistan. Therefore, one should be ready. Children are taught that there are two sides to every story.

In this instance, Ulzhan is not referring only to historical events, but also to life situations. Askar also believes that critical thinking is asking questions that lead students to think to form their own individual opinion. Ulzhan also refers to critical thinking as "not hurrying and calmly answering the given information", meaning before responding, students need time to comprehend the information. Similarly, Maksat, who has extensive experience

teaching in public schools, understands CT as considering all sides of incoming information before commenting and being tentative in their comments where there is insufficient evidence to form a categorical opinion or comment:

I think that critical thinking means not accepting something directly as it is seen, but accepting it considering all sides. For example, not understanding directly at incoming information, but sorting and analyzing. Nowadays, there are many situations in life where people gain information as they see it; they don't know the reasons, they don't know what caused the action, and people immediately write a comment, for example, a negative comment. Therefore, before writing a comment, it would be better to know the incident completely or write a comment as a prediction.

As for “prediction”, Maksat mentioned making predictions can inspire creative thought and problem-solving, which is also connected to critical thinking. Making predictions involves a type of cognitive forecasting that enables us to picture probable outcomes and the variables that might impact them. This can pique curiosity and inspire creative responses to challenging problems (Makridakis, 2017).

In the same way, Ayganym refers to critical thinking as an analysis of historical situations and events, expressing opinions forming historical research skills, and teaching students to make an evaluation and prediction:

You need to analyze the data, and you need to create your own concepts and learn; that's what I think critical thinking is. It is necessary to offer predictions about what would happen if this were the case.

Furthermore, Maksat provided an example and linked critical thinking to media literacy and he believes poor analysis can lead to misinterpretation:

We get information from WhatsApp chats, which we do not differentiate, sort, or think about. It's just simple critical thinking, where we spread the message from one chat to another without thinking whether the first source is true or fake. Sometimes, even when extremism and terrorism are on the rise, for example, it is said that information that is not understood is supposed to be spread to eight people by seven people, and that information may be an invitation to terrorism. As a result of not thinking and not being able to differentiate and sort information, such mistakes occur.

He also highlighted critical thinking as a “requirement of modern times” and a relevant skill not only for students but for the senior generation too. Furthermore, Ulzhan believes critical thinking is essential for students to think independently and not be influenced by parents who try to transmit their own ideologies or beliefs to their children:

Parents bind their children only with their thoughts. He [sic] wants to change his [sic] mind, but it is related to his [sic] upbringing at home. For example, if the parents are communists, they will make their children think communism is right. My father liked communism; he thought it was normal. We also need some freedom. A child needs freedom to think freely, or when he [sic] evaluates the current regime if his [sic] parents are doing well, for them everything is fine, no mistakes were made, everything is fine in terms of development, after independence, leading the child to believe that we are achieving success. Therefore we should tell the child openly about information; the child should think objectively and evaluate.

Ulzhan noted not only the importance of teachers' role in building critical thinking skills but the role of parents, which sometimes can have a detrimental effect on students' ability to think freely. Another teacher, Dina, explained that critical thinking is evaluating historical resources correctly, as it can affect students' perception of history. One of her students lost interest in studying history, as one of her colleagues misinterpreted the historical event. Furthermore, Dina conceptualizes critical thinking as the objective selection of terms and systematization:

Nowadays, we have a lot of content of history and unnecessary periods. It poisons the brains of children in particular. All of them should be removed. It is necessary to leave those dates that have a real historical significance that really makes Kazakh think. There is no need for insignificant information.

Furthermore, Maksat, Ulzhan, and Ayganym see critical thinking as thinking differently regarding time and link it to historical thinking. Maksat states that critical thinking is required to form historical consciousness and historical thinking since it is necessary to

think about any event keeping in mind the time when it happened and comparing the past and present. Consequently, he asserts that one should not think about the way people think now but think about the way people thought at that time when evaluating historical events and people. In the same vein, Ayganym reports that differences and similarities exist between the past and present. If the student was at that time, what idea, suggestion, or conclusion would they make?? She thinks that if students form their opinion that way, it contributes to their critical thinking. Judging a variety of events that occurred in the past may have totally different outcomes depending on the interpreter. The person who lived in that time and a modern person can see certain historical events from a different angle and interpret facts, opinions, theories, and attitudes diversely. Askar states that critical thinking is connecting historical events with today's events and being able to learn from past mistakes.

4.2. Teachers' Practices of Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills.

All participants mentioned six concepts mentioned in the instructive and methodological letter and a few other methods that make these concepts applicable, such as fishbone, triad, jigsaw, and SWOT. The method mentioned most by history teachers was "cause and effect." "Cause and effect" is applied to identify what important factors influenced political processes in a certain historical period. Ulzhan stated that this method is suited for learning uprisings in history. She also mentioned identifying advantages and disadvantages as a part of the learning tool, and SWOT analysis was also one of the methods.

Ulzhan uses "compare and contrast," revealing similarities and differences, which is another concept indicated in the instructive and methodological letter for history subjects:

In older classes, we give information, for example, about Baurzhan Momysuly, when they ask what his tactics were, and they can compare it with the tactics of other commanders of that time, for example, Zhukov. In such a comparative perspective, the student evaluates how strong a commander Baurzhan Momysuly was, whether

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his level is unique to us, or whether his tactics, in general, are the most advanced tactics among world commanders. We should not consider Baurzhan Momushul through one lens; we should take it to the international level and can they compare?

Ulzhan and Askar report that principles such as “compare and contrast”, and “change and continuity” help better unfold the topic in the class and compel students to ask deep questions. They claimed that parental reports suggest said that students' level of thinking has increased and the usage of these methods has expanded students' horizons. Letting students engage in this way helps them to form critical thinking skills. Introducing critical thinking gradually and reinforcing it across several lessons was viewed as beneficial, as described by Maksat in the following quote:

And it can be effective if working with these concepts is shown on the basis of several lessons. The students in the class I have been teaching for two years know how to summarize the results of high-level tasks. And the new classes do the tasks based on only one example, but by showing them different examples, the level of thinking can be developed during a year.

Maksat emphasized that the skill of critical thinking is not immediately executed or developed; if the students understand your teaching style, they should understand how to respond to you in class, how to work, and what requirements teachers have. He states that students understand how to do analysis and synthesis sooner if the students know what is expected.

As for teaching elements, Ulzhan stated that students already have certain information about the topic, and she will ask what they know and listen to students' opinions first while the teacher keeps her thoughts secret. After that, the teacher helps students clarify and develop the topic, and students can change their initial opinions.

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Having a purpose in life is key to having happy and mature life, and having a purpose is important in every aspect of one's life. Ulzhan related the (critical) analysis of historical events with identifying a purpose in personal life:

Why was there an uprising? What is our general goal? We need to know it. There is a purpose to learning about any process. We will explain it. The child understands what the goal is, then the skill is formed, and then he [sic] uses it in life. We say functional knowledge again and again; what is the purpose of Kenesary and what was the situation after the uprising? By defining his [sic] goal, he [sic] also will be able to define his [sic] own goal in the future.

Dina reports in the passage below that the main method she uses is based on original sources and key terms. She emphasizes that teaching history without original sources will be "kitchen table talk." For example, she states that referring to only original sources makes students think critically about the historical event:

For example, in most data, everyone praises themselves. For example, the Chinese never say that the Huns defeated them; they say that the Huns are bothering us. China does not say that it built the wall to protect itself from the Huns. There are cartoons like Mulan. For example, in the cartoon Mulan, everyone knows, if you watch, the Hun is represented as a wild person, then I will make the children think, asking questions what do you think? What kind of politics is going on here?

Dina also gave an example of Chinggis Khaan; students know Chinggis Khaan as a ruthless warrior. Nevertheless, he was the one who severely punished those who violated the rights of young women and widows. The teacher quotes data, but data can contradict, and there can be some data written subjectively, not objectively. She says that when students try to discuss and reflect, she says to prove it, there is history only as evidence. Dina connects critical thinking with the ability to think and reading as pivotal to making students think. She states that students should be engaged in reading literature. In the same vein, Maksat also highlights the significance of an integrated approach to understanding and teaching critical thinking:

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Critical thinking is generally a combination of several subjects; we can add the subject of the Kazakh language, Geography, and Worldwide history then, and then we can find out how much he [sic] was able to see the event as a whole.

Maksat uses the “fishbone” method to determine the cause and effect of an event. The student should be able to write the reason, the consequences, and the conclusion of a historical event. Ayganym reports that using different methods and understanding the importance of history helps students not to consider history as a boring subject. Even though she understands the importance of different methods, she does not use a large variety of methods. Ayganym often uses "think, pair, share", "active learning", and "jigsaw" methods. She says that she creates tasks according to the six concepts and tries to teach the students what they need to know based on the six concepts. The six concepts that were presented in the instructive and methodological letter are: 1) change and continuity; 2) cause and effect; 3) consecutively; 4) similarity and difference; 5) importance; 6) interpretation”. Nevertheless, she claims that she is limited in terms of method and her lack of English language capacity is one of the reasons for the limited range of methods she uses. She believes that English language comprehension can help her be aware of the range of methods available in the English language on the internet.

Askar mentioned Bloom's taxonomy helps students to understand and use the knowledge developed and it also contributes to everyday life:

I see how the student develops, it is not necessary to know the facts and the name; thanks to taxonomy and principles, a person takes from life what he [sic] needs and sees what they know how to use.

Dina reported general principles of teaching such as reflective teaching, preparing individualized learning materials, level assignments, considering learning styles, and feedback practices.

Overall, teachers understand the importance of using different practices for developing critical thinking, but the methods they apply are mostly limited to “cause and effect” and “compare and contrast”. Most of the participants agree that implementing critical thinking in the classroom has a spiral effect and a good understanding of expectations for the task. They also consider an integrated curriculum as key to teaching critical thinking, as this skill requires wholesome knowledge. In the next section, I discuss the main reason for the poor range of methods and the low level of practice in developing critical thinking.

4.3. Barriers to the Development of Critical Thinking

The main barriers to the development of critical thinking mentioned by the teachers include topic misalignment in instructive and methodological letters and textbooks and the quality of the content in textbooks. Additionally, all participants need methodological support due to a shortage of resources.

Dina and Ulzhan report that some textbooks provide too little information. Ulzhan specifically highlights the ninth grade and the lack of information about prominent Kazakhstani people:

If we look at the ninth grade, there is little information about prominent people, where Tashchenov is, where Konaev is, and where Shayakhmetov is in that period. They are people who worked really hard in politics, and they should be in the book. That's why we don't need to shorten the history.

Ulzhan also says the same thing with Tauke Khan, whose biography is brief, with no information about his heroic deeds. When you shorten it, it shortens too much, “it will end with just one fragment”. Thus the student still has many unanswered questions. Since there is no time allocated for it in the program, those questions will remain unanswered.

It is important to mention that the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) are a network of secondary schools in Kazakhstan with the mission of offering the best possible

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education to the nation's most gifted and intelligent students. The subjects covered by the NIS textbooks are diverse and include mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and foreign languages. To guarantee that students obtain a challenging and real education, they are authored by knowledgeable educators and subject professionals. The high academic quality of NIS textbooks is one of their main benefits. The books are intended to challenge students intellectually and academically while challenging them to think critically, come up with original solutions to issues, and hone their analytical abilities. For one to succeed in the global knowledge-based economy, certain talents are necessary.

Dina, who has twenty years of teaching experience, criticized NIS books saying that there are too many pictures in textbooks and considerably less content:

Various pictures in NIS textbooks should be removed. Yes, it should be an artistic picture and it should consist of 25 percent; the rest should be relevant content. For example, the NIS textbook is very beautiful, but there is no content. It is good if an educated teacher comes and teaches, but if an ignorant teacher comes and only looks at books, neither the child nor the teacher will understand anything. There is a teacher guide, but the problem is it is the same as the book for students.

She is also not satisfied with Atamura's books which have too much content. She recommends combining both (NIS and Atamura) so that the text is brief and clear, interesting to the student and the materials and data are interesting. So teacher wants textbooks to have relevant content, comply with the instructive and methodological letter for history teaching, and present "relevancy", but textbooks they have to use have abundant and unnecessary content. However, a novice teacher Askar, reports that NIS textbooks have advantages over Atamura books because of their interesting and concise content. Additionally, he states that NIS books gradually guide students through manageable content rather than Atamura books. NIS books also have pictures which are visual aids that help engage students. Teachers' views on this issue are contradictory which might be related to differences between an

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experienced teacher and a novice teacher or because the two teachers have been schooled differently since older teachers are expected to have been schooled during the Soviet times and younger ones either entirely or partially schooled after the independence of Kazakhstan.

Furthermore, Ulzhan states that the school is short of valuable history books written by Arab travelers, books using data from Europe, and books by Ibn Fatla, Rashid al-Din, and Plano Carpin. She wishes that such works are compiled for them in Kazakh, and made accessible so that history can be looked at "through medieval eyes". Nevertheless, Ulzhan is fully satisfied with the historical concepts that are represented in instructive and methodological letters, as she is in favor of "less factual knowledge". However, Askar says is inclined towards factual knowledge as high school students should be prepared for UNT.

In general, my study found that teachers need support in methodology; for instance, Ulzhan states that she used to see that her old teachers used to have little booklets about the methodology of teaching history and wished to have those:

If we look for them now, we will not find them. These include, for example, powerfully designed assignments that look in-depth. We do the task in 10-15 minutes, and there would be deep-thinking tasks for children if they were organized in one book. If the government has increased the number of instructions on the subject of history, there are tasks, but it is not enough. Sometimes there are books that I like, but they are in Russian.

When asked what resources she uses, an experienced teacher responded, "My personal library, my research path, and what I've gained over the past nine years". She thinks that nowadays, many teachers are not interested and don't want to spend their time. Therefore, there should be textbooks as a methodological guide for those people. The tasks should be related to real data. Before there were workbooks, there were atlas maps that contained references. She refers to the textbooks with a beautiful picture as "PR", but their significance and content are very low. She described textbooks as either look beautiful books

with several pictures and very little content or either have six-page-long content covering one small event. In other words, textbooks need to strike a good balance between pictures and the length of content.

Dina is also concerned about dialect in the textbooks which makes it difficult. She believes that the history textbook should be written in pure literary language.

The next barrier relates to the official document as Maksat reports that information in state instructive and methodological letters is unreadable and training materials are not intended for re-use:

There is a lot of information available, but you can find the basis of the content of training material, but you don't understand it. Its peculiarity is that it is translated from one language to another because it was translated from Russian to Kazakh and from English. For example, the training presenters come with one or two slides, attach their slides, and he [sic] knows what to say based on that. We also have such slides, but we do not know what is behind them. The content of the state instructive and methodological letter of the subject is complete, but if someone does not explain it, it is not clear what is in it.

Additionally, Maksat says that if it is distributed to older teachers or young teachers, they will not be able to understand the content, even if they read it once or twice. The teacher recommends that given information should be considered comparatively, how it was in the past, how it is now, and its differences and similarities.

Misalignments are another issue that was revealed by all the participants. One of the teachers mentioned the inconsistency of the topic with the textbook and the problems it causes because of high stake UNT exam:

The learning objectives and topics specified in the program are not in the textbook, but the textbook is called a resource, and they say that we should not rely on it, and then when we come to UNT, we rely on the textbook again to prove our answer. There is such a contradiction. We rely on the information in the textbook when we appeal to the argument. And there are topics that are not in the textbook.

Ayganym also reports that topics in UNT do not match with the textbook; before, they used to go through it paragraph by paragraph, but now the topic in the program at State compulsory education instructive and methodological letter is different; if the book does not match, we have a problem when we give the materials for teaching. This explains why teachers had difficulty finding additional resources for the learning objectives that were provided in the program. Some issues teachers faced included problems with teaching the concept of proof and argument to the student and finding specific documents and handouts that present facts and arguments.

Ayganym states that in the past, they used to get the same evidence from the Chrestomathy, now it is available only for the 10th grade, and when it is given in the materials for the 8-9th grade, sometimes historical documents are given under the paragraph (as evidence), and when it is not, then they have to look for additional materials. Dina also states that Quarterly summary assessment (ТЖБ) also gives a task related to the data and facts, but it is not in the book and mentions that it used to be a book of Chrestomathy. In Chrestomathy, the data and facts are given separately and now there is no textbook that will have important data and facts. It is a problem because history is about data and facts.

Ulzhan says that historians should unite in the region, and there should be a system for teaching history:

Students from another school (city) study the topics differently, then we need to add it to the new classroom setting. Differences are still visible, even if we are reading the same history.

Another issue that all teachers reported was the problem with the sixth-grade book, which starts in the 6th century and ends in the 17th century that is from the time of the Turkish Khaganate to the development of the Kazakh Khanate. Thus the child has to learn

about one whole era in “one lesson, which is very extensive, very difficult for a child” reports Maksat.

The Minister of Education, Askhat Aimaganbetov, raised that issue last year, and there were discussions about the need to adjust the content and standardize the textbook. It is important to highlight that the creation of the textbook has become a state order.

Maksat thinks the problem lies in the historical thinking of individuals; each person writes it according to their way of thinking and point of view. He is concerned “What are historians basing their views on? Regarding the materials historian found, did he [sic] go to China to study, or did he [sic] go to Russia? Where did he [sic] get them? At school, information came from the textbook of the author of Ayagan.” Maksat refers to that as a “big flaw”.

Maksat hopes that they will be able to deal with this now the history of Kazakhstan is being written at a certain level, say five volumes of books, if all historians, when writing a book, will only take it from this book without looking for other information, like Khromasov. If a group is organized by the state and this group will write the book, let the rest of the historians take it from there. It is said there are around five volumes that Maksat does not remember exactly. It was mentioned at the August conference.

Askar also offered an interesting observation, stating a lack of connection between the subject History of Kazakhstan and World History. Students cannot compare and connect national and worldwide events. Thus, it constrains their ability to think critically.

Finally, teacher capacity development and training in fostering critical thinking emerged as a barrier. One of the teachers said that critical thinking seems to be a complex

process in the education system, and it is paid less attention in terms of professional development:

They talk about it or hold seminars, but I think it's rare. Critical thinking is a problem that has been talked about for ten years; I think that teachers do not pay much attention to it. Perhaps because I was a young professional, I did not pay much attention to critical thinking. I can't tell you exactly what strategies are available now.

Maksat has not heard about professional development courses on critical thinking over the past four or five years. He states that there were seminars where teachers shared their experiences, and he also learned by himself. He highlighted that teachers need the help of specialists who have a good foundation in critical thinking. He noted that teachers are mainly open to learning, but no courses exist.

Dina reports that online courses held by Nazarbayev Pedagogical Center, Orleu use fancy and beautiful words but present nothing new. She is familiar with these theories in her years introduced by Makarenko, Amonashvili, Magzhan, Zhumabayev, Zhusipbek Aimautov, and Satbaeva long ago. One of the teachers stated that she did not attend the professional courses on critical thinking, while other teachers reported that they attended training in general terms, such as functional literacy, but nothing specific about critical thinking.

Topic misalignment in instructional and methodological letters and textbooks, a lack of methodological assistance, and restrictions on professional courses are among the biggest obstacles to the development of critical thinking stated by the teachers.

4.4 Summary

In conclusion, all my participants expressed that critical thinking is the ability to express an opinion. They also presented critical thinking as filtering information, making criticism, speaking frankly, drawing conclusions, seeing both sides of received information,

asking questions, making predictions, analysis of historical situations and events, linking critical thinking to media literacy, and comparing past and present. They also believe that critical thinking is a requirement of modern times and a relevant skill not only for students but for the senior generation too. However, my research identified that teachers have a basic understanding of critical thinking as well lack methodologies and strategies to foster this skill as they confessed.

All participants mentioned six concepts that are mentioned in the instructive and methodological letter and a few other methods that make applicable these concepts such as fishbone, triad, jigsaw, and SWOT. The main barriers to the development of critical thinking mentioned by the teachers include topic misalignment in instructive and methodological letters and lack of good books for additional reading, a limited number of books in the Kazakh language, and the quality of the content in textbooks. Additionally, all participants need methodological support due to a shortage of resources and professional courses.

5. Discussion

This chapter's main emphasis is on interpreting the data in light of the research questions regarding the conceptualization of CT by history teachers in one of the Lyceum schools, their pedagogical strategies for fostering students' CT skills, and concerns regarding curriculum alignment. The chapter also discusses teachers' training for developing CT and discusses my study findings in relation to the existing literature in the field of CT. The discussion is divided into three sections: Teachers' Conceptualizations of Critical Thinking, Pedagogical Methods for Developing CT in Students, and Curriculum Alignment.

5.1. Understanding of Critical Thinking

It is important to note that prior research indicates that teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding directly affect their educational practices (Fullan, 2001, as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2009; Chen & Wen, 2018). Participants of this study conceptualize critical thinking as expressing one's opinions, filtering information, and analyzing historical events.

Most participants understand critical thinking as expressing one's opinion, allowing students to share what they think. As a result, Moon (2007) discovered a link between academic assertiveness and voicing one's viewpoint, having a voice, and critical thinking. However, none of my subjects were aware of this connection. The thinker's self-assurance, her "voice" in academia, and her ability to understand, integrate, and communicate difficult concepts and activities are all components of academic assertiveness (p. 77). Finding an acceptable "voice" or manner of communication to participate in debate or critical thought is one of the aspects in academic assertiveness.

Accordingly, the word "voice" was understood to refer to the capacity to have and communicate an opinion and to the 'development of a sense of voice, mind and self' (Belenky et al., 1986 p.18, as cited in Moon, 2007). It is also the phrase used to define one's overall capability to feel acknowledged and comfortable as an individual with opinions and the ability and willingness to voice them (Gilligan, 1998). Being able to express opinion particularly can contribute to academic assertiveness, which gives the students confidence in different life situations, and enables them to communicate effectively and think critically.

Furthermore, several teachers mentioned that one should filter incoming information, especially in the era of social media and an unpredictable world. Similarly, according to Browne & Keeley (2007), each of us must occasionally rely on the guidance of experts, although not every expert opinion is equally beneficial. Therefore, using critical thinking gives you a range of filters to run expert opinions through before you can trust them. We may choose experts more wisely when we use critical thinking. Moreover, according to Suter (2011), the capacity for critical thought also enables us to filter and assess the constant flow of "cases" (claims for and against significant issues) produced by news outlets.

One of the teachers, Maksat, provided an example and linked critical thinking to media literacy and believes poor analysis can lead to misinterpretation: when extremism and terrorism are on the rise, for example, simply spreading certain WhatsApp messages may be an invitation to terrorism. As previously argued (Reeves et al., 2018; Reynolds & Parker, 2018, 2017), developing critical thinking skills is a key strategy to combat young people being groomed online for acts of radicalization. This will enable young people to assess written or visual information online as well as circumstances where what appear to be "friendly" men perceive them online.

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The promotion of critical thinking and digital literacy is considered as a crucial ability in UNESCO's (2016) handbook for teachers in combating violent extremism, and a recent article from Lenos & Krasenberg (2017, p. 3) asserts that critical thinking (media literacy) is the "weapon that we should arm everyone with."

Next, the participants Maksat and Ulzhan create a link between critical thinking and being critical in media consumption. It is important to know the common features of these two concepts. A 1995 academic study that focused on members of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication demonstrated the connection between media studies and the philosophic perspective of critical thinking (AEJMC). Ruminski and Hanks (1995) found that the words "analyze" and "evaluate" were commonly used by AEJMC survey participants when defining the term "critical thinking" in their report. These and other study findings were categorized. Words that fall under the category of "processing information," a key idea of critical thinking as defined by the American Philosophical Association. The common definition of media identifies four fundamental abilities, two of which are analysis and evaluation. In the report's conclusion, it is stated that "Responses to the open-ended question asking for definitions of critical thinking assume critical thinking skills are mainly skills in the analysis of information" (Ruminski & Hanks, 1995, p. 8). This is the outcome of media literacy which educators want their students to learn. As a result, my participant follows the right path in understanding critical thinking.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that the history subject is also capable of explaining current events highlighted by seven out of eight educators. Similarly, history gives pupils a solid foundation to stand on in society as critical thinkers, and it equips children with the knowledge and skills they need to make a well-

informed opinion on controversial topics and may even help them to realize that the reasons behind current events are not always as they seem (Gestsdóttir et al., 2021).

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by one of the participants in my study and those described by participants in the Gestsdóttir et al. (2021) study. Participants of this study stated that they used comparisons to understand the cause and influence of the past, as well as periods and historical phenomena, and interpreted evidence from sources while using that information. However, the teachers of this research often times urge their students to use critical thinking, while the teachers in my study do not mention or highlight the terms critical thinking and historical thinking in the classroom.

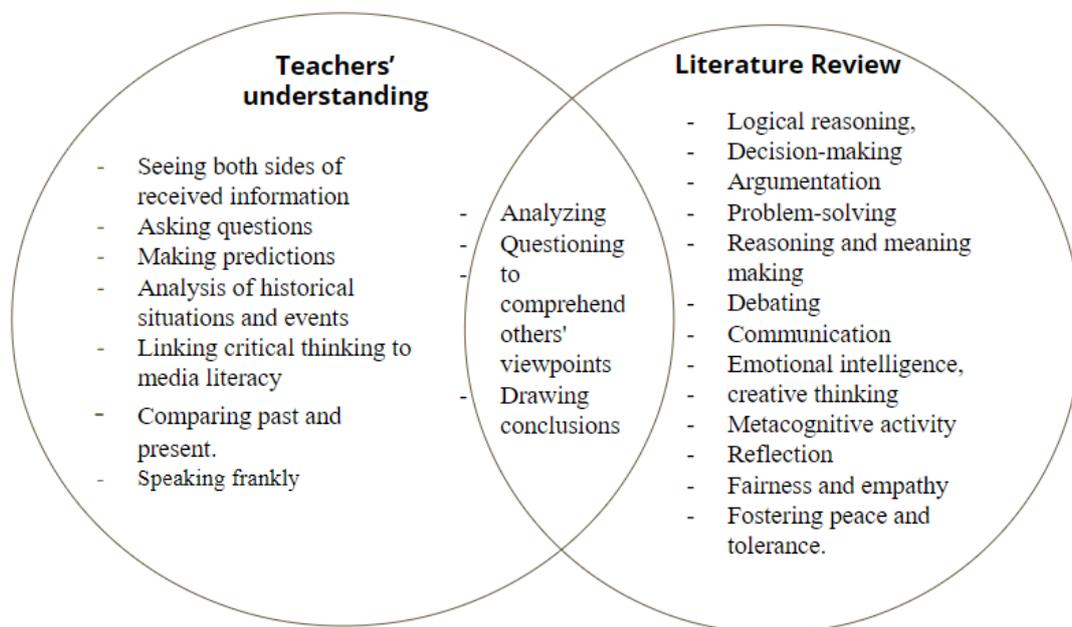
Furthermore, one of my participants stated that working with sources is the most important skill in teaching history, supporting the findings of Gestsdóttir et al., (2021). Another similarity is that participants from both research studies remark necessity of considering situations from the viewpoint of past individuals (Gestsdóttir et al., 2021). Likewise, it was necessary for both my study participants and Gestsdóttir et al.'s (2021) participants to make history engaging for students. Furthermore, Gestsdóttir et al. (2021) stated that none of the participating teachers described how historical knowledge is created in-depth, and they mostly talked in very basic terms about teaching methods and other pedagogical difficulties. This finding broadly supports my work as the importance of focusing on the source materials and historical terms was highlighted by only one teacher.

One of the participants reported the effect of parents' biased historical perspectives about controversial topics on students and their roles as a teacher in steering students in the right direction by fostering critical thinking. On the other hand, teachers' perspectives on historical events also significantly impact students' perceptions, as one of the participants

reported. Teachers are the ones who can help students to interpret historical events and smooth corners to keep peace in the classroom. Additionally, my participants highlighted the need for critical thinking because students' high engagement in digital platforms and their lack of media literacy lead them to interact with unreliable and fake sources of information. According to Vella (2020), history revolves around interpretation, and "history to mean anything must be more than a rehearsal of facts, it must include an interpretation of facts" (Clark, 1967, p 42). Moreover, teaching history to students can influence and even transform their perspectives. According to certain empirical studies, certain pedagogical ideas and praxis/teaching techniques can actually have a positive impact on students' attitudes, values, and behavior (McCully, 2005a, 2005b, as cited in Vello 2020; McCully & Pilgrim, 2004). Although my participants did not mention this, it appears that teachers are also peace mediators and interpreters of history knowledge and the ones who can facilitate students' thinking and the formation of students' values.

Figure 2

Literature Review VS Teachers' understanding



My research identified that the teachers' understanding of critical thinking in History of Kazakhstan is basic and limited. According to literature review the notion of critical thinking is wide and diverse, as a result teachers' conceptualization of critical thinking is different from existing concepts. Figure 2 shows the teachers' conceptualization and how critical thinking presented in literature review as well as the common ground.

5.2. Teachers' Practices of Developing Critical Thinking Skills

According to the literature, several strategies are presented that help foster students' critical thinking abilities, such as collaborative learning, problem-solving, writing and reading critically, reflection, waiting time, questioning, mentoring, and extracurricular activities. In my study, teachers' practice mainly draws on collaborative learning and the principles presented in the National Standard. Six principles that are listed in the Standard were all mentioned by the participants, although my participants especially highlighted

“cause and effect” and “compare and contrast”, as well as a few more collaborative learning techniques, including the fishbone, triad, jigsaw, and SWOT.

Thayer-Bacon (2000), who emphasizes the significance of students' relationships with others in developing critical thinking abilities, supports collaborative or cooperative learning. During group projects, CT characteristics like self-assurance and openness are developed (Hajhosseiny, 2012). The activities my participants used were comparable to those found by Bonk and Smith (1998, as cited in Lai, 2011), such as think-pair-share, round-robin discussions, student interviews, roundtables, gallery walks, and “jigsawing”. Methods like fish-bones are also used by my participants (Bonk & Smith, 1998; Van Gelder, 2005, as cited in Lai, 2011, p.36). The majority of participants in a previous study by Kasembekova (2020) indicated using collaborative learning strategies as well. Although critical thinking, as the literature suggests, can be taught in diverse ways, my participants mainly apply collaborative learning, which might limit the effectiveness of teaching CT.

It's interesting that professors rarely bring up or emphasize the abilities that will be taught in the subject. However, one of the participants stated that teaching critical thinking in history subject is possible to develop if students are aware of your teaching style and it is embedded gradually in the classroom. Similarly, Vella (2020) emphasizes that the teaching style served as a facilitator for the student's learning, which took place gradually, piece by piece, and one thing at a time.

5.3. Issues that Hinder the Development of Critical Thinking

Participating teachers were not satisfied with the content of the History subject, stating either “too little information about important events” or “abundant unnecessary content” creating challenges for teachers in fostering critical thinking among students. This

finding is consistent with Lintner and Macphee's (2012) study, where the majority of participants said that the information offered for each chosen topic in each participant's history textbook was, at the very least, insufficient. When discussing the idea of selectivity, several participants suggested that the content of the textbook may have been influenced by, among other things, the enormous amount of information that could have been included.

As mentioned in the literature review, the consistency of the many parts of an official written curriculum is crucial (Porter, 1991; Spillane et al., 2002, p. 418). One teacher said that the history textbook does not cover the program's learning objectives and topics. Moreover, it causes problems regarding high stake UNT exams as the content of UNT is not in the content of textbooks. Most studies argue that it is essential to synchronize the curriculum and final exams to prevent adverse effects on teaching methods (Costa, 1991; Tener, 1995; Rodd, 1999, as cited in Collier et al., 2002, p.37; Lattimer, 2015). My participants also believe that misalignment between textbooks and final exams causes difficulties in finding additional materials to teach history. These results reflect those of Omirbek (2013), who also found contradictions between the updated curriculum and the topics in the textbook, content contradictions between alternative textbooks approved for the same class, and inaccuracy of historical facts impacting the teaching of history in general and the teaching of critical thinking in particular.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated inadequacies in the textbook's information, and the additional materials were pointed out by certain participants (Lintner & Macphee, 2012) and have questioned the accuracy of historical representations found in textbooks. Indeed, scholars have criticized the inadequateness of social studies (history, geography, economics, civics and sociology) texts

for decades (Allen, 1971; Anyon, 1979; Banks, 1969; Gagnon, 1987; Giannangelo & Kaplan, 1992; Loewen, 1995; Van Sledright, 2002, as cited in Hickman & Porfilio, 2012).

Another concern that all teachers mentioned is the sixth-grade book, which begins in the sixth century and ends in the seventeenth. This finding was also reported by Omirbek (2013) who reported inadequacy of the educational material in the textbook to the age of the students. In the same vein, studies in this area have placed a major emphasis on the need to structure history education curricula in accordance with learners' levels of cognitive and intellectual development (Safran & Şimşek, 2006; Dilek, 2007; Dilek & Alabaş, 2010, as cited in Aslan 2020).

Furthermore, my study indicated that teachers, except one novice teacher, are concerned about unnecessary pictures in textbooks. Similarly, addressing the images found in the textbook, participants of another research stated. The illustrations in the textbook don't depict actual occurrences or real emotions. According to Lintner and Macphee (2012), Students needed to get a real picture of what actually occurred.

5.4. Teacher Training and Capacity for Teaching Critical Thinking

My research found that teachers needed a multifaceted understanding of critical thinking and had limited opportunities to access advanced training. Participants reported that there were no courses dedicated to critical thinking in teaching history. The training they received was mainly devoted to general themes such as functional literacy and active learning methods.

If teachers lack the knowledge and skills necessary to teach critical thinking effectively, it will lead to the underdevelopment of these abilities among students. As a result,

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critical thinking abilities are not taught. According to Tama (1989), some teachers prioritize teaching students facts above teaching them how to think. Teachers must receive training in specific teaching strategies that incorporate a "learning to think" component into the curriculum (p. 5). Similarly, Rodd (1999) also states that emphasis needs to be placed on professional development activities that help teachers gain insight into the understanding and implementation of critical thinking skills so that they can be taught across the curriculum.

In a similar vein, Cassum et al. (2013) state that their study participants mentioned a lack of depth knowledge as well as attitudes related to what critical thinking is and how to guide it in an environment where the "majority of institutions in Pakistan still promote rote learning" as a barrier to fostering critical thinking (p.61). Many writers in the United States (Astleitner, 2002; Half & Reybold, 2005; Tsui, 2006) also noted the lack of proper training to integrate critical thinking into teaching practice. While autonomy and the absence of outside control afford remarkable flexibility, they also deprive teachers of any meaningful support (Gestsdóttir, 2021).

My participants defined critical thinking as the ability for giving an opinion, assessing information, and examining the past. The study also revealed that participants frequently mentioned discrepancies in the textbook content, issues with curriculum compliance with the officially published curriculum, and topic disparities on final exams which confirm the study's theory of misalignment between the planned and enacted curriculum. Moreover, the investigation of teachers' practices of improving their ability to think critically has shown that teachers often use only collaborative learning and principles mentioned in the instructive and methodological letter in their teaching, even though the literature showed the most widely used strategies include case studies, debates, questioning, and group work. According to the

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data, the main reason is the lack of professional developmental courses for teachers and the poor quality of existing courses.

6. Conclusions

A overview of the key conclusions from a recent study will be presented in this chapter, along with suggestions for further practice and investigation. This qualitative study looked at teachers' perspectives of teaching critical thinking skills in the History curriculum in lyceum schools and their views on the planned and enacted curriculum.

The following overall question was addressed in order to accomplish the study's objective:

“How do teachers understand critical thinking skills in the context of their subject specialism?”

These are the following sub-questions:

SQ1. How do teachers integrate critical thinking skills into the History curriculum to develop students' critical thinking skills?

SQ2. What are teachers' concerns and challenges regarding implementing critical thinking skills into History?

SQ3. Does misalignment exist between the planned and the enacted curriculum? If so, how can it be overcome?

6.1. Summary of Major Findings

1. How do teachers understand critical thinking skills in the context of their subject specialism? Participants in this study define critical thinking as the ability to express one's opinions, evaluate knowledge, and analyze the past. Literature review present critical thinking as logical reasoning, decision-making, argumentation, problem-solving, reasoning and meaning making, debating, communication skills, emotional intelligence, creative

thinking, metacognitive activity, reflection, fairness, and empathy, fostering peace and tolerance. On the other hand, my participant define critical thinking as seeing both sides of received information, asking questions, making predictions, analysis of historical situations and events, linking critical thinking to media literacy, comparing past and present, and speaking frankly. The common notion of understanding is analyzing, questioning, comprehending others' viewpoints, and drawing conclusions. As a result, we can see that my participants' understanding of critical thinking is basic and limited. The main reason for that is the lack of professional courses and the vague representation of official documents.

2. What are teachers' concerns and challenges regarding implementing critical thinking skills into History? The research has also shown that textbook content, consistency of enacted curriculum with an official written curriculum, and content discrepancies in final exams are widespread issues mentioned by participants. The issues such as 'too little information about important events' or "abundant unnecessary content" in history textbooks provide difficulties for teachers in encouraging students to think critically. Another issue is the content of textbooks and content of high-stake-exam UNT are different.

3. How do teachers integrate critical thinking skills into the History curriculum to develop students' critical thinking skills? Although the literature showed the most widespread strategies included collaborative learning, case studies, debates, questioning, and group work, my investigation of teachers' practices of developing critical thinking skills has shown that teachers mostly use collaborative learning and principles mentioned in the instructive and methodological letter in their teaching. The participants all mentioned the six principles that are included in the instructive and methodological letter, but my participants also drew attention to "cause and effect" and "compare and contrast," as well as a few other

collaborative learning strategies, including the fishbone, triad, jigsaw, and SWOT. The study has also identified the issue of training dedicated to critical thinking in teaching history. Participants stated that most courses are dedicated to general teaching methodologies and there is no training dedicated to critical thinking.

4. Does misalignment exist between the planned and the enacted curriculum? If so, how can it be overcome? Although it is crucial to align the curriculum with the final exams to avoid any negative effects on the teaching strategies, inconsistencies of textbooks contents, official documents, and UNT are one of the main problems teachers face in fostering critical thinking in their students. This issue can be overcome by providing teachers with methodological support, resources such as books, and textbooks in Kazakh language. Additionally, working with teachers closely during implementing and planning curriculum may provide a wholesome view of enacted curriculum and make it practical in the classroom.

6.2. Limitations

The investigation was first and foremost limited to two lyceum schools in Astana. As a result, the findings do not comprehensively reflect teachers' perceptions of the history curriculum, critical thinking, and how history teachers foster critical thinking in their students across Kazakhstan. Starting extensive research projects with a larger research site and sampling is suggested.

The selection of participants who teach Kazakh is the next significant study constraint. It is likely that educators who specialize in teaching History in Russian would have new information on how to conceptualize and promote certain aspects of the implementation of CT. Additionally, because the study was mostly conducted through

interviews, the observations may have revealed visible features of instructional practices that could be investigated in future research.

Other than teachers, no other stakeholders were involved in the study. The effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum is also heavily influenced by the involvement of the student body, the parent community, local education departments, and the school administration. Additional research initiatives may delve deeper into the engagement and expertise of those stakeholders in the curriculum. In fact, there are key stakeholders. However, I could not include them. I was rejected by the President of the National Academy of Education to take interviews with curriculum designers to identify alignment of the planned and enacted curriculum.

6.3. Implications and Recommendations

Given the currency of the research topic in Kazakhstan as it concerns one of the major subjects, "History of Kazakhstan" in the school curriculum and as critical thinking is one of the most commonly discussed educational competencies in contemporary times, the research findings have contributed to current knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the History curriculum integrating critical thinking and particularly of school teachers' perception about it and factors that influence its implementation. Additionally, the research provides new insight into the relationship between enacted curriculum and planned curriculum in the history curriculum. It is the first study conducted to identify the teachers' conceptualization of the planned and enacted curricula in the history curriculum in the country. As alignment between the two is crucial, the research identified major misalignments and shed light on issues concerning textbooks and official curriculum

documents. My study highlights several implications and recommendations for educational policymakers and schools.

While politicians may acknowledge that teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of the curriculum, they should also evaluate the gap between teachers and the professional body that creates the educational curriculum. They might profit from applying the study's findings to simplify the process of adopting the new history curriculum. Most teachers participating in my study do not have a comprehensive understanding of the nature and function of critical thinking in the historical subject matter. By setting up professional development courses that are specifically focused on this aspect of the new curriculum and critical thinking skills or by publishing more and better methodology and teaching guides and handbooks with effective implementation guidelines and instructions on the embedding of critical thinking skills, policymakers can assist teachers in greater understanding how to integrate critical thinking in the history subject. The availability of additional teaching resources, such as lesson plans and teacher manuals, may also be advantageous to teachers, as according to my findings, there appears to be a lack of resources and methodological materials which become a hindrance for teachers. Moreover, in order to make the curriculum of History of Kazakhstan more relevant to the academic level of mainstream pupils, policymakers may also need to make significant changes to the contents of textbooks in History of Kazakhstan.

The importance of professional development and enhanced teacher collaboration was primarily needed for teachers, according to the research. Increased workload, the difficulty of the curriculum content, student diversity, lack of methodological support for teachers, and poor understanding of critical thinking may be simpler for teachers to manage if more

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effective professional development training in various areas is made available, as well as support for collaboration. Last but not least, as teachers struggle to successfully execute the curriculum because of resource shortages in the schools, politicians may stand to gain from increasing funding for them. Giving instructors access to more teachers, education personnel, and other human resources may help them manage their workload.

School administrators can also improve the implementation of the new curriculum reform by giving teachers time, opportunities, and other resources to develop their knowledge and comprehension of the new curriculum reform's components. Creating a supportive environment where instructors feel comfortable addressing concerns because they know they may get the assistance they need or work together to find solutions is one method to do this. In other words, school administrators should keep offering chances to develop a strong culture of collaboration both within the school and with nearby schools. Schools might, for instance, create manageable and compact professional learning communities. This might motivate educators to collaborate more on lesson plans, share resources, and seek advice from one another in person or online. As they proved to be very beneficial, schools may also continue hosting in-school seminars, workshops, and master classes focused on developing critical thinking in the History curriculum.

The purpose of the study was to explore teachers' perspectives of teaching critical thinking skills in the History curriculum in lyceum schools and their views on the planned and enacted curriculum. The teachers' understanding appeared to be simple and limited as well as a shortage of strategies used by teachers that foster students' critical thinking skills. The misalignments exist between planned and enacted curriculum, shedding the light on the issues like, poor textbook content, wording of official documents, discrepancies in textbooks

and UNT, textbooks and official documents. Identifying these issues is the first step towards solving them and to developing teachers' understanding and their teaching strategies of critical thinking can improve the teaching experience and students' learning processes as a whole. Overcoming misalignment between planned and enacted curriculum, also have a big impact on developing reforms, its smooth implementation in schools without big resistance.

6.4 Personal Reflection

The thesis writing experience was challenging at the same time thought-provoking and interesting for me. I discovered the power of deep thinking and analyzing while choosing the study topic while reading a variety of articles, organizing the data, and writing the thesis itself. Interaction and consuming only valid and reliable information have become part of my identity as a scholar. It helped me to make informed decisions and avoid misinterpretation in every aspect of my life. Interviewing participants also taught me how to effectively communicate with people to get rich data. It also showed me the art of interviewing people and its important nuances that should be taken into account, such as asking open-ended questions, active listening, and understanding social trends.

The whole journey of writing a thesis showed me what it is like to be a researcher and a possible career path in academia. The art of writing itself can be an extremely valuable experience and skill and I am willing to mention two aspect of writing: clarity of thoughts and self-expression. When we place our thoughts into writing, we are compelled to arrange them and place them into a logical and cohesive structure. Additionally, this process of writing is challenging, it is endless activity and there is no limit to perfection. On the other hand, as for self-expression, I learned to convey my thoughts, feelings, and ideas through writing. People who write for therapeutic purposes often gain a deeper understanding of

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themselves and their circumstances. As we see writing can be beneficial beyond the academic life and have a positive impact on personal life as well.

I am very grateful for this challenging and fulfilling experience which gave me the opportunity to be part of academic life and the journey of self-knowledge. I am filled with gratitude for that noteworthy achievement that shows my expertise of a certain subject and my capacity for contributing to the academic discourse.

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8. Appendix

Appendix A

Interview question for teachers

1. How long have you been a teacher ?
2. How do you understand critical thinking in History of Kazakhstan ?
3. In general, what teaching and learning elements or principles do you consider as significant or effective to develop students' critical thinking from your experience?
4. What professional development courses give the opportunity on the implementation of critical thinking in History of Kazakhstan? If so please explain.
5. What training courses or programs did you take to develop CT, and did it affect your perception of critical thinking
6. How do you practice the integration process of critical thinking in the subject History of Kazakhstan?
7. What are your concerns and challenges regarding the implementation of critical thinking skills in the History of Kazakhstan?
8. What is your opinion on differences that exists between the planned (official curriculum) and the enacted curriculum(real teaching process), in other words, differences in teaching practices and given textbooks, and state guidelines?
9. How can these misalignments be overcome?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Title: "Alignment between the planned and enacted curriculum: Teachers' perception of integrating critical thinking in the History curriculum in two lyceum schools in Astana"

Dear Participant,

I am Aibibi Nogaibek, a graduate student at Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education. You are invited to participate in a research study I am conducting. It is related to teachers' perspectives in teaching critical thinking skills. In this letter, you are provided with the information related to my research project.

The purpose of the interview is to explore teachers' perspectives on integrating critical thinking skills in mainstream schools in subjects of History of Kazakhstan. It aims to comprehend how teachers understand the concept of critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan subject and using the official documents, textbooks, and their realization in the real teaching process.

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview that will take about 40-60 minutes, at a place and time convenient for you. You will be asked several questions about your perceptions and any experiences of the implementation and understanding of critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan/integration of critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan. If you find some questions challenging, you are not required to answer them. If you permit, the interview will be recorded for collecting and analyzing the data.

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Furthermore, to better comprehend your understanding of critical thinking, I will interview you by asking open-ended questions. To better understand the topic I will take notes and analyze it later.

The information from the interview will be used in writing a research report. I may also present the findings at a conference or publish the study in a journal.

There are minimal anticipated risks for you in the study apart from your time. Others might see you participating in the study. Therefore, the interviews take place in a location that will be convenient for the interviewees and it can be outside of the school. In addition, you can fear that your school principal or colleagues will know about your experience and opinion. Please, feel assured that your answers will be kept confidential and I will use pseudonyms instead of your name and the name of your school will not be used in any written reports.

You will have the right to skip or not answer the question they find inconvenient. Additionally, the researcher should let the individuals have full right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Lastly, the participants can be interviewed both offline and online according to their preferences. All participant data, including yours, will be kept on NU Google Drive and only my supervisor and I will have access to it I will transcribe the interview myself.

The benefit of participation is for you to reflect on your practices and expand your understanding of the implementation of critical thinking in the History of Kazakhstan. Moreover, your participation will enable me to produce findings and insights that could be useful for the curriculum designers in implementing critical thinking effectively.

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Your participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to end it whenever you want without suffering any consequences.

If you have any questions about this project or would like any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Should any questions, concerns or comments arise regarding this project, please contact my supervisor, Professor Naureen Durrani from Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (naureen.durrani@nu.edu.kz).

If you agree to participate in the study "Alignment between the planned and enacted curriculum: Teachers' perception of integrating critical thinking in the History curriculum in two lyceum schools in Astana", sign this consent form, please.

I have carefully read the information provided;

I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;

I consent to take part in the interview;

I give permission for my interview to be recorded;

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and research supervisor 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: _____

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Appendix C

Codes and themes

Transcription	Codes	memos
<p>M.</p> <p>1. How long have you been a teacher?</p> <p>I have been a teacher for 22 years.</p> <p>2. How do you understand critical thinking in the subject "History of Kazakhstan"?</p> <p>Now, one of the features of the history subject is the addition of historical concepts from other subjects. I understand that the set of concepts such as "cause and effect", "change and continuity" is aimed at developing this critical thinking skill in students. It should be understood as one of the features of the history subject, which has introduced an updated curriculum. Because <u>in order to form historical consciousness and historical thinking, it requires critical thinking</u>, it is necessary to think about any event with the thinking of that time when it is happening in the vicinity of that time and <u>compare</u>. Don't think about the way people think now, think about the way people <u>thought at that time</u>. It should be connected with the events happening at that time. Critical thinking is needed then.</p>	<p>historical thinking requires critical thinking</p> <p>comparing times</p> <p>thinking differently in terms of time</p> <p>historical consciousness- CT</p> <p>the importance of critical thinking</p>	<p>Experienced teacher vs novice teacher</p> <p><u>Teachers's understanding</u> - theme</p>

Theme and codes

Understanding of critical thinking

cause and effect

similarities and differences

assessing information

gaining informed judgement

2. How do they practice it ?

methods

strategies

spiral

holistically

3. How trained or completed they are to promote CT?

sharing experience

lack of specialist training

4. Issues that hinder the development of CT

textbook

ambiguity in standards