

# History Teaching Approaches Preferred by Turkish and Russian History Teachers

Osman Akhan<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Social Studies Education, Faculty of Education, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

\*Correspondence: Social Studies Education, Faculty of Education, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey. Tel: 90-242-227-4401/4629. E-mail: osmanakhan@akdeniz.edu.tr

Received: February 4, 2020

Accepted: February 10, 2021

Online Published: February 16, 2021

doi:10.5430/wje.v11n1p62

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v11n1p62>

## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the opinions of Turkish and Russian history teachers regarding teaching of history, and to present, on a comparative basis, the understanding of history in the two countries as well as the methods of history teaching preferred by the teachers there. The research was designed as a case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The sample consisted of 13 Turkish and 13 Russian teachers working as history teachers in Turkey and Russia in the 2020- 2021 academic year. The convenience sampling method was used in the study. The data of the study were collected by correspondence via e-mail with a questionnaire form consisting of open-ended questions created by the researchers. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. When the results of the study are evaluated in general, it is observed that the Russian history teachers are more flexible in history teaching and attach more importance to innovative history teaching, while the Turkish teachers perform more curriculum-centered history teaching compared to their Russian colleagues. In addition, it can be said that Russian history teachers pay more attention to their professional development than Turkish history teachers, and they incorporate more historical thinking skills in classroom activities. It is possible to say that the results of the study originate from the objectives of history teaching in the two countries.

**Keywords:** history teaching, Turkish history teachers, Russian history teachers

## 1. Introduction

The discipline of history is a science that is based on teaching the positive and negative aspects of the past events as well as their causes and consequences. It acts as a bridge between the past and the present, and enables people to understand today by informing them of the past. The basis of many problems in the world lies in the depths of history. While history tells about the past, it also sheds light on the present. Therefore, the way to both understand the present and build a bridge to the future is to learn history correctly (Akhan, 2020).

History is not a discipline that creates myths, but rather it is a discipline that destroys myths, and it should be taught in our schools in this manner (Peterson, 2016). However, it is seen that three mistakes are generally made in the evaluation of historical events in the world. These mistakes involve “the ideological handling of historical events, the abstract examination of the events or phenomena discussed outside the general historical and world context, and the evaluation of historical events with today's understanding” (Kongar, 2010, p.14). Therefore, having witnessed two great wars, World War I and World War II, people realized that it is not possible to prevent wars with only political and economic measures, and came to the conclusion that ensuring permanent peace could only be achieved through education, science and culture. To attain this, the "Cooperation Intellectuelle" commission was established under the League of Nations in 1919 and "UNESCO" under the United Nations in 1945. The first sentence of the UNESCO Convention is as follows: "Wars begin in the minds of people. The defensive trenches of peace should also be established in the minds of people." (Saftan and Ata, 1996). This sentence gradually opened the door to a history education based on peace.

There is growing interest in history all over the World, and it is important to know and teach history. So the question arises: what is the purpose of history teaching? In fact, the objectives of history teaching are a controversial subject. Different circles, including historians, discuss how the past should be taught to younger generations. Some support

national perspectives, others support multiple perspectives; some prefer fact-based teaching, while others take an interpretive approach to history (Sakki & Pirttilä-Backman, 2019). Since history teaching facilitates social cohesion through the development of group identity, it supports the emergence of the concept of *nation* among national, ethnic and religious groups, especially in societies with a history of conflict, violence, and insecurity (Korostelina, 2010).

Teaching history helps students to form their identities and function as citizens for a democratic society (Barton & Levstik, 2004). If history is to contribute to students' personal development and preparation, it should teach them how to use their past knowledge for active citizenship so that they can orientate themselves to the present and the future (Straaten, Wilschut and Oostdam, 2019). In history teaching, students should be able to analyze the cause and effect relationships and the situations, see the true natures of the events and situations, and make analyses and critiques of the events. Students should use the information they have acquired during their studies in problem solving, synthesize and transfer information, and find original solutions (Vasilievich, 2015, p.4). At the same time, students should gain the ability to interpret history in a number of programs where topics of history are discussed and supported by documents. Students should be able to comfortably make comments within the framework of their knowledge and use different varieties of verbal expressions (discussion, interview) while conveying this information (Viktorovna, 2014, p.6). Another central goal of history is to develop historical thinking or historical reasoning skills. Therefore, the aim is to empower students to participate in active democratic citizenship and to encourage active critical thinking about history (Sakki & Pirttilä-Backman, 2019).

Barton (2004) states that students' learning of history begins to develop outside the school from an early age through the conversations they have with their relatives, trips they make to museums or other historical places with their families, popular publications and electronic media. He argues that the knowledge and interest gained as a result of these experiences are the resources that educators can use. Nichol (2003), on the other hand, maintains that students are capable of engaging in historical thinking with the support of their teachers. In addition, Harnett (1993) emphasizes that teachers play an important role in helping the development of students' historical thinking skills. Drie and Boxtel (2004) hold that historical reasoning, one of the historical thinking skills, can be regarded as an important goal in history teaching. Considering all these benefits of history teaching for students, how history is taught gains importance. Demircioğlu (2007) points out that there are two fundamental approaches to history teaching. The first approach concerning history teaching involves the teaching of history for the purpose of transfer of citizenship and identity in line with a traditional understanding. The second approach, on the other hand, is an approach that is based on providing students with a scientific perspective and high-level thinking skills. Considering these two approaches, it would be appropriate to examine how different countries handle history teaching.

In Turkey, it is observed that history teaching involves predominantly transfer of knowledge of history and culture (Demircioğlu, 2006). In Russia, on the other hand, history education is generally used as an important tool in the process of strengthening and developing national identity under state control. The state assumes that the role of an educator is to impose a patriotic culture on a mass scale. The history curriculum in Finland emphasizes the global context and global values, human rights, equality, democracy and international cooperation as a strategy in history teaching. History education in Austria aims to develop multiple perspectives and thinking skills for a pluralistic society. In France, history is, traditionally, a high-status subject to consolidate national pride and identity. The history curriculum in Italy tries to develop multicultural diversity and dialogue due to its historical heritage and geographical location. The history curriculum in Germany includes both multiple perspectives and identity-related topics in addition to carrying signs of a return to German history for a national approach. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the history teaching curriculum is based on both critical thinking skills and identity-related objectives (Sakki & Pirttilä-Backman, 2019).

It could be concluded that all countries want their students to study their national history and past events experienced on an international level, to learn from them and to direct their future accordingly regardless of the field in the education system in which they are raised. History has been the most important guide for numerous phenomena and leaders to date. It has been the greatest guide and power of many statesmen such as Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Roosevelt, the US president, Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, Churchill, the British Prime Minister and Gandhi, the founder of India (Akhan, 2020; Şıvgın, 2009). It could be inferred that the people who shape the destinies of their countries are mostly those who know best why history cannot be ignored and should be taught to young generations properly. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to determine the opinions of history teachers in Turkey and Russia regarding history teaching and to present, on a comparative basis, the understanding of history in the two countries and the methods favored by the teachers in the teaching of history.

## 2. Method

This qualitative study was designed as a case study in order to reveal the opinions of Turkish and Russian history teachers on history teaching. Case study is an in-depth description of a limited system (Merriam, 2018). Case studies are used to explain, describe, and discover phenomena that are supposed to be causally connected (Yin, 1984). Hence, this method was used in the present study in order to discover and explain the opinions of the history teachers regarding history teaching.

### 2.1 Sample

The sample of this study consisted of 13 Turkish and 13 Russian teachers teaching history in Turkey and Russia in the 2020/2021 academic year. The Turkish teachers served in secondary schools affiliated to MNE (Ministry of National Education) in Turkey, and they were reached via telephone. The Russian teachers, on the other hand, were reached by e-mail through a history teacher at a private school in Antalya. Participation of the teachers in the study was on a voluntary basis, and the official permission was obtained. Convenience sampling method was used in the study. The main purpose of using this sampling method is "to provide speed and practicality to the researcher" (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2008). In qualitative studies, the sample size is chosen according to the method used. Interviews with approximately 30 people can be considered sufficient for the sample for in-depth interviews with a specified theme (Nastasi, 2015 cited in Başkale, 2016). Accordingly, the number of participants reached in the current study was thought to be sufficient based on the opinions of the experts in the field.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The research data were collected with a questionnaire form consisting of open-ended questions created by the researchers in accordance with the relevant literature and the opinions of the faculty members, who were experts in history education. The data were collected by correspondence via e-mail. "Conversations via e-mail can be online or in-depth and involve multiple e-mail exchanges without needing to be simultaneous" (Creswell, 2018; Meho, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2008). After obtaining the expert opinions for the open-ended questions, the questions were reviewed by 2 Turkish and 2 Russian history teachers who were outside the sample as to their intelligibility. Then the question form was given its final form. The interview questions prepared for the Russian teachers were translated into Russian by two language experts who were fluent in both Russian and Turkish. The responses of the teachers were translated into Turkish by the same language experts. In addition to these language experts, a history teacher who taught at a private school in Antalya was also asked for his assistance in the implementation of the study and in reaching the Russian teachers since he had a good command of both Russian and Turkish.

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the collected data. After the findings obtained and analyzed, they were presented in an interpreted form in order to describe the data in a systematic and clear way, to explain and interpret these descriptions, and finally to arrive at some conclusions within a cause and effect context (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis of the research and to eliminate the bias of the researcher, the coding was performed with the help of two field experts besides the researchers, and the analyses continued until the researchers came to an agreement. The intercoder reliability was calculated with the reliability formula "P (Percentage of Agreement %) = [Na (Agreement (96)) / Na (Agreement (96)) + Nd (Disagreement (7))] X 100" suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), and the intercoder reliability was found to be 93 %. In addition, the findings were supported with direct quotations from the teachers' opinions (with abbreviated forms such as TT1: 1st Turkish Teacher; RT1: 1st Russian Teacher ...).

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 The evaluations of the history teachers in the sample on why they preferred to be history educators

In order to better interpret the understanding of history teaching of the teachers in the sample, they were first asked why they became history educators. The answers given by the teachers are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Reasons for History Teachers in the Sample for Choosing History Education

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	Because it is my area of interest	
	It was a profession I had dreamed of	
	I was impressed by my history teacher	
	Achievements in our history	
	Because I think the field is important	
	My belief in the importance of history teaching	
	It was my dream	
	My interest in teaching	
	My interest in history	
	Because I find it interesting	
Russian History Teachers	My love for history	
	My love for my history teacher	
	Because I like children	
	An interest bequeathed by my family	
	Thanks to my grandfather, who made me love history	
	My desire to learn	
	My participation in history olympics	

Considering the reasons why history teachers chose history education in Table 1, it can be said that both the Turkish history teachers and the Russian history teachers generally chose their profession willingly and enthusiastically. Some of the teachers' answers are as follows:

I think that history teachers influence and enrich people and societies significantly. TT5

During my high school years, I was very impressed by my history teacher and the way s/he taught. My interest in history started in those years thanks to that teacher. TT11

I was interested in history from an early age. Different cultures and their histories, especially our culture, caught my attention. I was curious about the world, people, societies, cultural elements and I enjoyed reading. I decided to pass these on to future generations. TT12

I was interested in history from an early age because there were many history books at home, and various historical topics were discussed regularly. Then, thanks to my teacher who I think was an excellent teacher, this interest grew at school and prompted me to choose this profession in the future. RT2

My love of history started at school, and I loved my teacher and the way my teacher taught history. (Actually thanks to him/her, I loved history very much). S/he always explained the interesting facts recorded in history in a language that was intelligible and accessible. Why did I become a historian? I ask myself this question even today. I am a teacher, then a historian and a social scientist. I am far from being an expert in history, and there is so much more to deal with and learn. There are many other things that I would like to study or see with my own observations and then share my knowledge with students. RT6

Human history is interesting; it really feels interesting to know people, children and history of interesting events. The desire to learn interesting things made me choose this profession. RT9

### 3.2 The Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample on the History Education They Received

The history teachers in the sample were asked to evaluate the history education they received. The responses given by the teachers are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample Regarding the Education They Received

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	Traditional history education	
	Based on sources	
	A nationalistic history education	
	A biased history education	
	An authoritarian history education	
	An impartial history education	
	I learned to look at phenomena from different angles	
	I learned to develop a systematic approach	
	I learned how to evaluate political conflicts	
	I saw different interpretations of events	
Russian History Teachers	I saw the strengths and weaknesses of leaders	
	I saw the richness of sources	
	I learned to discuss alternative perspectives	
	I created my own mindset	

Considering the evaluations of the history teachers regarding the education they received in Table 2, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers received a more traditional and authoritarian history education. On the contrary, the Russian history teachers received their history education in a richer learning environment where they could discuss and question. Some of the teachers' answers are as follows:

I do not think I had a biased history education, because while the subjects were being explained, the sources were specified. Yet, I can say that I had a traditional history education. TT2

There were times when I was subjected to a biased history education in my own history education. There can always be people who think differently, who interpret and emphasize what they think in their own way, and there will always be. But historiography requires being impartial. I try to raise my students with this understanding. TT5

I remember my professors sharing their personal views on some issues approaching them in an emotional manner. But this was never enough to change my understanding of history. Maybe with the effect of the education I received, I can say that I am teaching our national history with national feeling and enthusiasm. TT9

Our lecturers directed us to different points of view. Various documents and sources were cited on the formation of liberal democracy. With their help, we learned these views. RT1

Since the teachers had different ideological and political views, they enabled us to gain different perspectives. However, this was not shown as an iöposition, but rather to have us gain multiple viewpoints. RT10

The aim of the history teacher is to form the children's own historical thoughts and worldviews. I had such an education. This training benefited me hugely. RT13

### 3.3 The Evaluation of the History Teachers in the Sample on Their Professional Development as History Educators

The teachers in the sample were asked how they ensured their professional development as history educators. The responses given by the teachers are shown in Table 3.

Considering how history teachers ensured their professional development according to Table 3, it can be said that while the Turkish teachers ensured their professional development by reading, the Russian teachers tried to ensure their professional development by attending vocational courses, traveling and watching. Some of the responses are as follows:

I read to remember what I learned at school. The recent release of historical films and books has also increased the students' interest in history. For this reason, I also give more examples in classes and follow the publications on history so that they can relate to what they watch and read. I have a rich library. In addition to improving myself, I use these sources to show examples in the lessons and to relate to the subject of the lesson by reading sample passages from those books. TT7

I often watch historical programs. I try to participate in conversations broadcast live by asking questions as a viewer. In addition, I created a book of sample quotations by re-reading many sources I read during my school years. As the relevant topics come, I try to give information directly by quoting first hand sources. So I think I get more attention from the students. TT13

I try to keep abreast of new approaches related to the investigation of specific topics, so I have read a lot of scientific historical literature (mostly domestic, of course, but also foreign in translation). I try to cite sources as often as possible in the classroom, and as far as the volume of material and the amount of time allocated to it allowed. In terms of methodological training, I attend webinars and online courses. I also make extensive use of the opportunities offered by the internet because modern electronic devices provide access to a variety of historical sources and literature, as well as modern methodological developments. RT7

For my personal development, I take a variety of courses; it is never too late to learn - we can say that this is my belief in life. I use textbooks, internet sources and additional literature (sources) for preparation. I watch historical films, artworks (they can be used as examples of life), I like to visit museums, I feel amazing emotions when I visit Moscow and St. Petersburg and now when I talk about historical sites or architectural structures in history lessons, real images appear in my memory. I can convey all the emotions I am experiencing at that moment to the children. RT11

**Table 3.** The Ways by Which History Teachers in the Sample Ensured Their Professional Development

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	I constantly read	
	By following the history magazines	
	By visiting historical places	
	By watching historical documentaries	
	I read historians who influence my opinion	
	Publications about history	
	I attend vocational courses	
	I follow websites	
	I watch documentaries	
	I follow my foreign colleagues	
Russian History Teachers	I participate in professional competitions	
	Scientific historical literature	
	I participate in online courses	
	I visit museums	
	I visit historical places	
	I follow the blogs of famous historians	
	I read books	
	I use my own website	

### 3.4 The Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample on Their Countries' Understanding of History Teaching

The teachers in the sample were asked to evaluate the understanding of history teaching in their countries. The responses given by the teachers are shown in Table 4.

Considering the history teachers' evaluations regarding their countries' understanding of history teaching according to Table 4, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers mostly gave answers with reference to the problems experienced in history teaching, while the Russian teachers made evaluations by emphasizing the importance attached by their country to history teaching. Some of the teachers' responses are as follows:

The history of a nation with a history of thousands of years is very difficult to teach and learn as it spreads over a vast geography. The information in the high school level books is very academic and lacks coherence. While trying to teach such an extensive history, we can deal with the subjects in a way that encourages students to take lessons and is interesting rather than scientific. However, the curriculum pushes students to rote memorization. Understanding the importance of history instead of loading information will enable them to access the information they will really need. TT4

The teaching of history in our country is performed in the form of a curriculum-based subject teaching without comments and discussions due to shortage of class hours and too many topics, leading to a lack of practice. Although our recent history is offered as a compulsory course at all school levels, I think that transfer of this heavy curriculum does not produce sufficient effect on the students. TT7

There is not enough research on our history, but everyone talks about it. There is not adequate examination of

sources. In addition, a content can be prepared that allows students to willingly learn history instead of repeating the information by detailing the same subjects continuously from primary school. TT11

An important state policy towards history teaching in schools has been striking especially in recent years. The state tries to educate the young generation in a patriotic spirit, which I think is absolutely important and necessary. You need to know your history, be proud of your ancestors' accomplishments, and value their creations. Therefore, the priority for the state is to preserve history and to ensure the continuity of our country's past for generations. RT3

In our country, special attention is paid to history, because this issue aims at formation of spiritual and moral development, by contributing to the development of active educational and cultural values, spiritual traditions and cognitive activities. In this way, students create their own world views, learn to understand the importance of education and self-education, and an active civic position and patriotic views are formed (love for their homeland). They understand the value of civil society, they understand and acknowledge that Russia is a multinational, multi-faith state. RT6

In the Russian Federation, special emphasis is placed on teaching the history of Russia. It aims to improve the research competencies of students in their schools and to create a single cultural and historical site of the Russian Federation. Our state prioritizes the patriotic education of schoolchildren and the ability to think independently. Greater attention is paid to history; theme parks are built, and patriotic events are organized. RT11

**Table 4.** Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample on Their Countries' Understanding of History Teaching

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	Heavy curriculum - limited class hours	
	Knowledge-based history teaching	
	A nationalistic understanding of history teaching	
	Curriculum-based	
	Lacking in practice	
	Teaching without discussion	
	Rote history teaching	
	Insufficient source research	
	Preserving history	
	Ensuring the continuity of the past	
Russian History Teachers	Supporting spiritual and moral development	
	Patriotic history teaching	
	Developing the ability to think independently	
	Aiming to increase the quality of history teaching	
	Aiming to improve research competences	
	Patriotic activities	

### 3.5 The Evaluation of the History Teachers in the Sample on Their Own Understanding of History Teaching

The teachers in the sample were asked to evaluate their own understanding of history teaching. The responses given by the teachers are shown in Table 5.

According to Table 5, considering the history teachers' evaluations on their own understanding of history teaching, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers generally conducted a curriculum-based history teaching and tried to devote a little time to active learning methods. In addition, the Turkish teachers stated that they offered information-based education because they attached importance to doing tests in history teaching due to the test-based education system. Considering the understanding of history teaching of the Russian history teachers, it can be said that except for one teacher, they attached more importance to innovative history teaching. Some of the teachers' responses are as follows:

I follow the path I determined in line with the curriculum. The class hours of our lesson are inadequate, and the subjects are very heavy. I try to raise their interest and curiosity in history by using the question-answer method as much as I can, by having students watch documentaries, movies and videos on the smart board. TT2

I strive for students to love history. While doing this, I make sure that they read historical books and publications as the best option. As part of the constructivist approach, I want them to imagine what they read and display empathy. In talks we have on this, I try to increase the historical thinking skills of the students as well as their historical

knowledge. TT7

To be frank, the anxiety about what will be asked in the exams pushes children to discuss subjects in history teaching by doing tests. Therefore, considering the shortage of the class hours, I have to teach information-based classes. TT 12

To teach history, I employ the most acceptable use of critical thinking technologies, i.e. the use of a problem-based teaching method, and the solution of project problems. I make use of generally accepted standards in teaching, but there are subjects that allow you to use a creative approach. For me, these are primarily issues related to cultural history. These types of subjects are perfect for involving students in design and research activities, allowing them to enjoy more freedom. RT5

In my classes, I try to help students "feel" the history and recreate it with the help of emotions, sounds and images. I try to find additional materials and special tasks for each topic. For example, certain times and events help students appreciate books of fiction better. Historical songs and pictures are sometimes useful. RT9

I try to give students complete freedom to express their points of view. I aim for them to see the photograph of a complete world by seeing different points of view. RT11

**Table 5.** Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample on Their Own Understanding of History Teaching

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	Curriculum-based history teaching	
	I teach knowledge-based classes by giving tests	
	Question and answer method	
	Documentaries, movies, videos shows on the smart board	
	I have conversations on history	
	I want them to read history books and publications	
	I want them to dream and empathize	
	I aim to have them love history	
	I teach in traditional ways	
	I use discussion methods	
	I aim for them to see different points of view	
	I pay special attention to the formation of critical thinking skills	
	I use historical sources, maps, memories etc.	
	I do a problem-based teaching	
Russian History Teachers	I use documentaries	
	I encourage them to express their opinions	
	I direct them to design and research activities	
	I attach importance to cultural history	
	I encourage them to discuss their positions	
	I show the solutions to project problems	
	I am heavily committed to classical history teaching	1

*3.6 The Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample Concerning the Way They Teach the "Cold War Period" in Their Classes*

The history teachers in the sample were asked how the presence of a Russian and/or American citizen in class would be reflected in their teaching while they were teaching the "Cold War Era" subjects in their lessons. The responses given by the teachers are shown in Table 6.



**Table 6.** The Evaluations of the History Teachers in the Sample on the Way They Taught the "Cold War Period" Topics in Their Lessons

Group	Codes	f
Turkish History Teachers	I teach impartially	
	I teach whatever the curriculum requires	
	I allow different opinions	
	I do not teach differently from other topics	
	I make them use historical skills	
	I do not make use of a different teaching method	
	I teach impartially	
Russian History Teachers	My teaching does not change	
	I teach carefully	
	I allow them to argue	
	I direct them to engage in courteous dialogues	
	I find the topic interesting	
	I think it will contribute to the students	
	I do not make clear comments	
	I use sources from both sides	
	I emphasize democratic values	
	I do not make jokes	

The history teachers in the sample were asked how they taught the Cold War Era in their classes. According to Table 6, the Turkish teachers in the sample stated that they explained the topic objectively as it was specified in the curriculum like other subjects. Similarly, the Russian teachers stated that the subject was explained impartially like other subjects in the history of the country. They did not treat it as a sensitive or special topic, and even interpreted the possible differences of opinion and discussions as a way of strengthening the teaching of the subject.

The history teachers in the sample were also asked how the presence of a Russian and/or American citizen in their classes would be reflected in the way they taught the subject. All the teachers stated that they would explain the topic objectively and impartially. Some of the responses are as follows:

I like to listen to students with different views. The Cold War period is an important topic that helps students to increase their skills of historical analysis. I think it would be useful to have students discuss the circumstances of the period on an issue that also affected our country. Having an American or Russian citizen student does not affect my teaching, because I conduct a neutral history education. I do not lecture in an attitude that implies the rightfulness of either side. For this reason, I do not have a special way of teaching different from other subjects. TT7

Although it may seem delicate in terms of subject content, it is actually very advantageous in terms of showing historical analysis. For this reason, it causes no problem when explaining the subject; on the contrary, it enriches classes in terms of allowing the discussion of different ideas. If I had biased students, I would say that I respect them even though I disagree with their opinions. I remind them that their views of events should be impartial, and that historians should generally approach events objectively. Likewise, I have had Russian or American students. My narrative has never changed, after all, our curriculum is already impartial. TT12

Our textbooks have a very objective approach on both sides. Therefore, there is nothing anyone can take offense. Even students from different countries see a very objective narrative of history. Of course, although they express different opinions with their own national feelings while talking about such a subject, I welcome them with great maturity and congratulate them for their courage to express their ideas at school age. If I had Russian and American students, I would have them talk and share their opinions. We had foreign students at our school. I did not have any problems because I taught the events as they were, based on the curriculum and objectively. I even got help from them about the meaning and pronunciation of foreign words. TT10

The subject of the Cold War is not a central issue that deserves extra attention to me as a teacher. In my opinion, there has always been conflict and competition between countries and this is normal. Therefore, I do not change my narrative much in the teaching of this subject. I just do not make clear comments on such matters. With my students, we analyze the reasons shown by both Soviet and Western historiography. The important thing here is to know how to approach, with sources from both sides, to the formation of ideas about what exactly should be done to prevent a repeat of such conflicts. In fact, I can say that the students took this phenomenon with no emotion, unlike adults.

RT3

In creating the image of the Cold War, I try to create a holistic perspective in school-age children of the political, ideological and economic conflict between the USSR and the USA, which determines the content of an important period in world history. I explain it in a completely neutral and natural way. I would not joke about it, even if I could make a joke normally. Well-read students make attempts at asking provocative questions, initiating a deeper conversation than the teaching material suggests. I think the subject is really interesting and controversial. Students tend to believe that both sides are guilty in this matter. RT7

It would be very interesting to have a discussion between Russian and American students on this topic. The role of the teacher should be to correct and direct the discussion in the right direction. Most of the students do not go deep into this subject; they perceive it as a distant past. By revealing the negative socio-political and moral-psychological consequences of intolerance, hostility, insecurity, ideological conflict and aggression peculiar to social life during the Cold War, I contribute to the orientation of the student's personality towards democratic values in interpersonal and interstate relations. RT10

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

When the results of this study are taken into consideration, it could be concluded that the Russian history teachers are more flexible in history teaching and give importance to more innovative history teaching, while the Turkish teachers do more curriculum-centered history teaching due to the history education they received.

In order to better interpret the understanding of history teaching of the history teachers in the sample, they were first asked why they became history educators. Considering the reasons why the history teachers chose history education, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers and the Russian history teachers generally chose their professions willingly and enthusiastically. Likewise, learning and teaching new things by traveling through history, being able to navigate past lives with historical empathy, and being able to view events from different angles were important factors in choosing the profession of history teaching.

Considering the evaluations of the history teachers about the education they received, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers received history education mostly according to the traditional, authoritarian and nationalistic understanding of history. On the contrary, the Russian history teachers received their history education in a richer learning environment where they could discuss and question alternative and different views. These results of the research also coincide with the objectives of Turkish history teaching (MNE, 2018) and objectives of Russian history teaching (fgos.ru. sred, 2009; fgos.ru.osnov., 2010). In addition, Akhan, Babaev, and Çiçek (2019) revealed in their studies that Russia's educational goals are based on more universal and humanitarian values compared to the Turkish education system. In Akhan and Çiçek (2019), it was observed that Turkish students expressed good citizenship in a more nationalist framework than Russian students while Russian students expressed good citizenship more universally. The researchers explained these results with reference to the difference in classroom practices.

Considering how the history teachers ensured their professional development, it can be said that the Turkish teachers generally ensured their professional development by reading works on history and visiting historical places. The Russian teachers, on the other hand, tried to ensure their professional development by participating in various historical activities, attending professional courses, visiting and watching. Accordingly, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers are less active than Russian history teachers in their professional development. The reason for this could be that the Turkish teachers are less interested in in-service professional development, and they receive less information or are not given adequate orientation about this subject before the service. Considering the history teachers' evaluations concerning their countries' understanding of history teaching, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers mostly responded by citing the problems experienced in history teaching and the national issues while the Russian teachers emphasized the importance their countries attached to history teaching.

Regarding the history teachers' evaluations on their own understanding of history teaching, it can be said that the Turkish history teachers generally conducted a curriculum-based history teaching and tried to devote time to active learning methods, even if just a little. In addition, the Turkish teachers stated that they gave information-based education because they attached importance to doing tests due to the examination system in history teaching. When we look at the understanding of history teaching of the Russian history teachers, it can be said that except for one teacher, they attached more importance to innovative history teaching; they used active learning methods and they implemented a student-centered history teaching. It is possible to reconcile these results of the research with the history education objectives of the two countries (MNE, 2018; fgos.ru. sred, 2009; fgos.ru.osnov., 2010). In his

research, Akhan (2020) revealed that of the history textbooks examined at high school level, Russian textbooks included activities aimed at providing richer historical thinking skills than Turkish history textbooks. This might indicate that Russian teachers are encouraged by textbooks to do activities. Unlike the results of the study, Groot-Reuvekamp, Boxel, Ros & Harnett (2014) revealed in their study on history teachers that teachers mostly used textbooks in their lessons.

The Turkish teachers stated that they explained the Cold War Era in their classes objectively as it was specified in the curriculum like other subjects. Similarly, the Russian teachers stated that the subject was explained impartially like the other subjects in the history of the country; they did not treat it as a sensitive or special topic, and even interpreted possible differences of opinion and discussions as strengthening of the teaching of the subject. The teachers were also asked how the presence of a Russian and/or American citizen in their classes would be reflected in the subject. All the teachers in the sample stated that they would explain the subject objectively and impartially. Similarly, Goldberg, Wagner and Petrović (2019) revealed that teachers' teaching on sensitive historical subjects did not change and they did not hesitate to teach. Hung (2018) stated in his study that controversial issues were not just about presenting content or information but a way of encouraging teachers and students to take new looks to see what was happening in society. Unlike the results of the study, Raudsepp and Zadora (2019) revealed in their work on history teachers that many teachers skipped sensitive topics and did not want to receive any training on sensitive topics. Brauch, Leone, and Sarrica (2019) also revealed, in their work on history teachers, that they presented cultural diversity in their classroom as a potential threat to handle while teaching sensitive historical topics.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Russian history teachers pay more attention to their professional development than Turkish history teachers, and they include historical thinking skills in classroom activities. It is possible to explain the results of the research with reference to the objectives of history teaching of the two countries. In consequence, it may be suggested that studies should be conducted focusing on the reasons for the differences reached here and the present study should be further expanded with studies on history teachers from different countries. In addition, interviews in future studies with teachers about their “lesson plans, activity studies and classroom practices” may be more explanatory for the understanding of history teaching in different countries.

## References

- Akhan, N. E., & Çiçek, S. (2019). An example for comparative social studies teaching: the perceptions of turkish and russian secondary school students towards “good citizenship”. *Bayburt Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14(27), 177-195. <https://doi.org/10.35675/befdergi.430390>
- Akhan, O. (2020). *Comparing the history curriculums and coursebooks at high school level in turkey, the usa and russia: (case of cold war period)* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Gazi University Graduate School of Education Sciences.
- Akhan, O., Babaev, A., & Yalçın, A. (2019). An example for comparative social studies teaching: turkish and russia social studies curriculums. *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 12(63), 746-762. <https://doi.org/10.17719/jisr.2019.3273>
- Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barton, K. C. (2004b). Research on Students' Historical Thinking and Learning. <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2004/0410/0410tea1.cfm?pv=y>
- Başkale, H. (2106). Determination of validity, reliability and sample size in qualitative studies. *DEUHFED*, 9(1), 23-28.
- Brauch, N., Leone, G., & Sarrica, M. (2019). ‘The debate almost came to a fight...’ results of a cross-national explorative study concerning history teachers’ shared beliefs about teaching historical sensitive issues. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 27(1), 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1566164>.
- Büyüköztürk, Ş., Çakmak, E. K., Akgün, Ö. E., Karadeniz, Ş., & Demirel, F. (2010). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Pegem A Yayıncılık.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2018). *Nitel araştırma yöntemleri: Beş yaklaşıma göre nitel araştırma ve araştırma deseni* (Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches) (4th ed.). (Trans. Edt.: Mesut Bütün and Selçuk Beşir Demir). Ankara: Siyasal.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Gardner, M., & Hyler, M. E. (2017). *Effective professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo, Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Demircioğlu, İ. H. (2006). Comparison and evaluation of general aims of the teaching of history between turkey and european union's countries. *Firat University Journal of Social Science*, 16(2), 133-146.
- Demircioğlu, İ. H. (2007). *Tarih öğretiminde öğrenci merkezli yaklaşımlar* (2nd ed.). Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Drie, J., & Boxtel, C. (2004). Enhancing collaborative historical reasoning by providing representational guidance. *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.18546/HERJ.04.2.02>
- Fgos.ru. sred. (2009). *10-11 Федеральные государственные образовательные стандарты* (10th-11th Grades Russian Federal Education Standards). Accessed on 13 June 2015.
- Fgos.ru.osnov. (2010). *5-9 Федеральные государственные образовательные стандарты* (5-9th Grades Russian Federal Education Standards). Accessed on 13 June 2015.
- Goldberg, T., Wagner, W., & Petrović, N. (2019). From sensitive historical issues to history teachers' sensibility: a look across and within countries. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 27(1), 7-38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1566165>
- Groot-Reuvekamp, M. J. D, Boxtel, C. V., Ros, A., & Harnett, P. (2014). The understanding of historical time in the primary history curriculum in England and the Netherlands. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46(4), 487-514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2013.869837>
- Harnett, P. (1993). Identifying Progression in Children's Understanding: the use of visual materials to assess primary school children's learning in history. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 23(2), 137-154.
- Hung, Y. H. (2018). 'Exploration of Teacher Life Stories Taiwanese History Teachers' Curricular Gatekeeping of Controversial Public Issues. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 70, 67-77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.003>.
- Kazmer, M. M., & Xie, B. (2008). Qualitative interviewing in internet studies playing with the media, playing with the method. *Information. Communication & Society*, 11(2), 257-278.
- Kongar, E. (2010). *Tarihimizle yüzleşmek* (3rd ed.). İstanbul: Remzi.
- Korostelina, K. (2010). Warof textbooks: history education in russia and ukraine. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43, 129-137.
- MEB (2018). Ortaöğretim Tarih Dersi Öğretim Programının Genel Amaçları. Retrieved 26 June, 2016 from <http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=344>
- Meho, I. L. (2006). E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: a methodological discussion. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10), 1284-1295.
- Merriam, S. B. (2018). *Nitel araştırma. desen ve uygulama için bir rehber* (3rd ed.). Trans. Edt. Selahattin Turan, Ankara: Nobel.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded source book* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nichol, J. (2003). Writing for Children: History Textbooks and Teaching Texts. *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 3(2), 1-30.
- Peterson, A. (2016). Different battlegrounds, similar concerns? The 'history wars' and the teaching of history in australia and england. *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(6), 861-881. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2015.1049978>.
- Raudsepp, M., & Zadora, A. (2019). The sensitive scars of the second world war in teaching european history. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 27(1), 87-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1566270>
- Rizatdinova, R. I. (2016). Рабочая программа учебного предмета «История» для 10- 11класса Базовый уровень (10-11th Grades History Course Study Program). Retrieved 27 December, 207 from <https://nsportal.ru/shkola/istoriya/library/2016/11/08/rabochaya-programma-uchebnogo-predmetaistoriya-dlya-10-11-klassa>

- Safran, M., & Ata, B. (1996). Barışçı tarih öğretimi üzerine çalışmalar, Türkiye’de tarih kitaplarında Yunanlılara ilişkin öğrenci görüşleri. *Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(1), 11-26.
- Sakki, I., & Pirttilä-Backman, A. M. (2019). Aims in teaching history and their epistemic correlates: a study of history teachers in ten countries. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 27(1), 65-85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1566166>
- Straaten, D. V., Wilschut, A., & Oostdam, R. (2019). Connecting past and present through case-comparison learning in history: views of teachers and students. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 51(5), 643-663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1558457>.
- Vasilievich, A. V. (2015). История России и Россия и мир 10-11 класс (10-11th Grades Russian and World History Program). Retrieved 27 December, 2017 from <https://nsportal.ru/shkola/istoriya/library/2015/10/28/rabochaya-avtorskaya-programma-po-istorii-dlya-10-i-11-klassov>
- Viktorovna, M. Z. (2014). Рабочая программа по истории (11 класс) на тему (11th Grade History Course Study Program). Retrieved 27 December, 2017 from <https://nsportal.ru/shkola/istoriya/library/2015/01/20/rabochaya-programma-po-istorii-profilnyy-uroven-11-klass-n-v>
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri* (9rd ed.). Ankara: Seçkin.
- Yin, R. (1984). *Case study research: design and methods* (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).