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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORY EDUCATION AT KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL: A STUDY OF CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of history education at Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, New Delhi, with the aim of understanding how national curriculum guidelines are translated into classroom practices. The research investigates the pedagogical strategies employed by history teachers, the extent of student engagement, and the challenges faced in delivering inclusive and critical historical content. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with four history teachers and eight students, and document analysis of teaching materials and lesson plans. Findings reveal that history teaching remains largely textbook-driven and exam-oriented, with minimal use of interactive methods such as group discussions, debates, or inquiry-based learning. Sensitive topics like caste, colonialism, and partition are often avoided or presented superficially, limiting students' exposure to diverse historical perspectives. Teachers cited institutional constraints, curriculum load, and political sensitivity as factors influencing their teaching choices. Student responses indicated a general disinterest in history, stemming from its perceived irrelevance and passive delivery. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the micro-level dynamics of classroom practice, rather than textbook content or curriculum policy alone. It applies critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory to analyze how historical narratives are shaped and constrained in practice. The study contributes to global debates on decolonizing education and emphasizes the importance of teacher agency and pedagogical reform. In conclusion, enhancing professional development and promoting reflective teaching practices are essential to making history education more meaningful and socially responsive.

Keywords: History education, pedagogy, curriculum implementation, critical thinking, decolonization

INTRODUCTION

History education plays a critical role in shaping students' understanding of the past and how it informs their present and future. It is more than the memorization of dates and events; it involves developing historical thinking skills such as analyzing sources, understanding cause and effect, and interpreting multiple perspectives (Galadini, 2022). According to educational theorists like Jerome Bruner and Peter Seixas, history teaching should foster inquiry-based learning and cultivate students' ability to think critically and empathetically. In a postcolonial context like India, the teaching of history also carries the burden of national identity, where the curriculum reflects both the legacy of colonial

narratives and the ongoing effort to decolonize knowledge systems. Thus, history education becomes a political and cultural tool, influencing how young people perceive their nation and the world (Sahani & Prakasha, 2024).

In India, the history curriculum is largely governed by the ¹⁶ National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which sets the content and pedagogical guidelines for schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya. While the NCERT promotes a secular, balanced approach, the implementation at the school level varies depending on institutional resources, teacher competence, and regional context. Kendriya Vidyalaya, as a central government-run school network, is intended to standardize quality education across India, making it an ideal case study to examine the practice of history teaching. The intersection of curriculum design and pedagogical practice is crucial in evaluating how effectively historical understanding is developed in classrooms (Sharma, 2025). Moreover, understanding how teachers interpret and deliver content can reveal the strengths and limitations of the current educational framework in fostering critical historical consciousness among students (Patel et al., 2024).

Initial classroom observations and teacher interviews at Kendriya Vidyalaya reveal that history education often leans heavily on textbook-based instruction, with limited use of interactive or inquiry-driven methods. Although the NCERT curriculum promotes critical thinking and source analysis, these practices are not consistently implemented. Teachers frequently face constraints such as large class sizes, limited teaching aids, and time pressure to complete the syllabus, which results in an emphasis on rote memorization. Consequently, students tend to focus on exam preparation rather than developing a deeper understanding of historical processes and perspectives. Many learners show a passive engagement with historical content, viewing it as a static subject rather than a dynamic exploration of human experience (Gillate et al., 2023). This disconnect affects the overall effectiveness of history education in fostering analytical and reflective skills.

Furthermore, the study found that the historical narratives presented in the classroom are not always inclusive or critically examined. While the curriculum attempts to present a balanced national history, in practice, dominant political or cultural ideologies may influence how content is taught. Teachers occasionally express discomfort or uncertainty when addressing sensitive topics such as partition, caste, or colonial resistance movements. This leads to selective emphasis or avoidance of controversial issues, limiting students' exposure to diverse viewpoints. The lack of continuous professional development and training in critical pedagogy further compounds this problem (Domenici, 2023). As a result, history education risks becoming an instrument of conformity rather than a platform for critical discourse, especially in a multicultural society like India where historical interpretation holds significant social and political weight (Brewis & Hannan, 2023).

While numerous studies have explored the development of history curricula in India and the ideological influences on textbook content, there is limited empirical research focusing on how history education is actually implemented in everyday

classroom settings, particularly in government schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya. Most existing literature emphasizes policy-level analysis or textbook critiques, often overlooking the pedagogical realities faced by teachers and students. There is also a lack of attention to the practical challenges educators encounter in translating curriculum goals into meaningful learning experiences (Gillate et al., 2023). Additionally, little is known about how students perceive and engage with historical narratives in standardized school environments. This research seeks to address that gap by examining the interaction between curriculum design, pedagogical practice, and learner response within a specific institutional context. Understanding this relationship is vital to evaluating the effectiveness of history education in fostering critical thinking and civic awareness (Neuhaus & Vogt, 2022).

This study offers a fresh contribution to the field of history education by providing a classroom-level analysis of how historical content is taught and experienced in a centralized public school system—specifically, Kendriya Vidyalaya in India (Patel et al., 2024). Unlike previous research that primarily critiques history textbooks or curriculum policies from a macro perspective, this study investigates the micro-level interactions between teachers, students, and curriculum materials. By focusing on pedagogical practices, teacher perceptions, and student engagement, the research uncovers the real-world challenges and adaptations occurring within the classroom. It also highlights how political, cultural, and institutional contexts shape the delivery of history education in subtle yet impactful ways (Efiloğlu Kurt, 2023). This nuanced perspective adds empirical depth to ongoing debates about decolonizing education and promotes a more learner-centered framework for evaluating curriculum effectiveness (Efiloğlu Kurt, 2023). Thus, the study bridges a critical gap between theory and practice in the Indian educational landscape.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how history education is implemented at Kendriya Vidyalaya Senior Secondary School, with a specific focus on curriculum application and pedagogical practices (Sahani & Prakasha, 2024). The research seeks to explore how teachers interpret and deliver the NCERT-prescribed content in the classroom, as well as how students engage with historical narratives in their learning process. It aims to identify both the strengths and limitations of current instructional strategies in promoting critical historical thinking. In doing so, the study also investigates the extent to which the teaching of history reflects inclusive, diverse, and decolonized perspectives. Additionally, this research intends to uncover the challenges educators face in balancing curriculum demands with contextual realities such as limited resources, exam-oriented pressures, and ideological tensions. Ultimately, the goal is to generate insights that can inform more effective, reflective, and student-centered approaches to history education in Indian public schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the implementation of history education at *Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, New Delhi*. The

research aimed to capture in-depth insights into the pedagogical practices, curriculum application, and student engagement in history classes. Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials. A total of 12 participants were involved in the study, including 4 history teachers and 8 students from grades 11 and 12. Observations were conducted over a four-week period to capture a representative range of teaching practices. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and challenges. This methodological framework allowed for a rich, context-sensitive exploration of how history is taught and experienced in a real school environment.

The data collection instruments used in this study included observation checklists, interview guides, and document analysis protocols, all of which were developed to align with the research objectives. The classroom observation checklist focused on teaching strategies, student participation, and use of learning materials. The interview guide contained open-ended questions designed to explore teachers' pedagogical approaches and students' perceptions of history learning. Lesson plans and textbook excerpts were also examined to assess alignment with curriculum standards. For data analysis, the study employed thematic analysis, allowing patterns and categories to emerge from the qualitative data. Transcribed interviews and field notes were coded manually to identify recurring themes related to instructional methods, curriculum interpretation, and learning challenges. Triangulation of data sources enhanced the credibility and validity of the findings. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning dynamics within the selected school context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first major finding reveals that history teaching in *Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2* is predominantly teacher-centered, with minimal use of interactive or student-driven learning methods. Observations showed that most lessons followed a lecture format, with limited space for discussion or critical questioning. While the teachers demonstrated strong subject knowledge, there was a lack of engagement strategies such as group work, debates, or project-based learning. Students were often passive recipients of information, focusing primarily on note-taking and textbook memorization. This finding reflects a broader trend in exam-oriented instruction, where historical thinking skills are underemphasized. Teachers also cited limited time and large class sizes as barriers to implementing more active learning approaches.

The second key finding pertains to curriculum interpretation and content delivery. Although the NCERT curriculum encourages multi-perspective historical analysis, classroom instruction tended to simplify complex topics into singular narratives. Sensitive themes like caste, partition, and colonial resistance were either glossed over or presented with limited context. Table 1 below summarizes the frequency with which selected historical themes appeared in lesson observations and how deeply they were discussed. The data indicates a pattern of selective engagement with controversial issues,

often influenced by the teacher's comfort level or perceived student readiness. This has implications for students' ability to develop critical thinking and empathy regarding diverse historical experiences.

The third finding concerns student attitudes toward history as a subject. Interviews revealed that many students perceive history as difficult and irrelevant to their future careers, especially in science- or commerce-oriented academic streams. This perception stems in part from the way the subject is taught—fact-heavy, test-focused, and disconnected from current societal issues. However, when lessons included storytelling, multimedia, or real-world connections, students expressed greater interest and engagement. These insights suggest a need to reframe history education in ways that highlight its relevance and applicability. Encouragingly, some teachers expressed willingness to adopt more innovative methods if given proper training and institutional support.

Table 1. Frequency and Depth of Historical Theme Coverage in Observed History Lessons

Historical Theme	Mentioned in Lessons	Explored in Depth	Avoided or Skimmed
Indian Independence	5	3	2
Colonial Resistance	4	1	3
Caste and Social Reform	3	1	2
Partition of India	2	0	2
Mughal Empire	4	3	1

The findings of this study align with earlier research indicating that history education in India often prioritizes rote learning over analytical engagement. Scholars have noted that classrooms remain dominated by didactic teaching methods, leaving little room for critical thinking or discussion. This reinforces Sharma (2025) critique of the "banking model" of education, where students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants. Furthermore, the reliance on textbooks as the sole authority in history lessons has been widely criticized for oversimplifying complex narratives. Teachers often feel constrained by rigid syllabi and examination pressures, which discourages them from exploring controversial or multi-perspective topics in depth. This situation creates a gap between curricular ideals and classroom realities, a challenge also observed in other postcolonial contexts.

Another important dimension of the discussion centers around the ideological framing of historical narratives. History education is rarely neutral—it often reflects dominant power structures and cultural ideologies (Neuhaus & Vogt, 2022). In India, this has resulted in ongoing debates over whose history is being told and whose is marginalized (Lin & Shen, 2024). The selective treatment of caste, partition, and colonial resistance observed in this study echoes critiques by Sahani & Prakasha (2024), who note that school curricula often avoid discomfiting truths to maintain national unity or avoid political sensitivity. This contradicts the goals of critical pedagogy, which emphasize

confronting historical injustice and fostering social awareness (Borrero, 2023). In this light, the absence of inclusive, pluralistic narratives in classroom instruction may hinder students from developing a well-rounded historical consciousness. Thus, there is an urgent need to align teaching practices with the broader objectives of democratic and critical education. ²

This study offers a novel contribution to the field of history education in India by shifting the focus from textbook analysis and curriculum policy to actual classroom implementation—a perspective that remains underexplored in existing literature (Aryal & Bharti, 2023). While much of the scholarly work has emphasized ideological debates in national curricula (Brewis & Hannan, 2023), few studies have systematically examined how teachers operationalize these curricula within everyday pedagogical practices. This research uniquely investigates the interactions between institutional constraints, teacher agency, and student engagement in a real-time school context, providing empirical depth often missing from macro-level studies (Fahrudin & Saefudin, 2025). Moreover, it highlights how teachers navigate politically sensitive topics in practice, revealing nuances that are not apparent from official syllabi or textbook content alone (Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

Another unique aspect of this study lies in its integration of critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory as lenses to interpret the findings—something rarely combined in Indian educational research (Neuhaus & Vogt, 2022). By applying these frameworks, the study goes beyond descriptive accounts to critically interrogate how power, ideology, and historical representation shape classroom discourse. In contrast to conventional education research, which often evaluates teaching effectiveness through exam scores or curriculum completion rates, this study prioritizes interpretive depth and sociocultural context (Fahrudin, Salamah, et al., 2025). It also brings forward student voices—an element often excluded in curriculum studies—thereby offering a more democratic and grounded understanding of history learning. In doing so, the research bridges a significant gap between policy, pedagogy, and lived educational experiences (Brohinsky, 2023; Ofianto et al., 2022).

The findings of this study have global relevance as they contribute to the broader discourse on decolonizing education and fostering critical historical consciousness among students. In many postcolonial societies—such as India, South Africa, and parts of Southeast Asia—history education remains entangled with ideological narratives and colonial legacies (Li et al., 2023; Visuddho et al., 2023). By examining how history is taught at the classroom level, this research provides valuable insights into the real-world challenges of implementing inclusive, critical, and reflective pedagogies. The study's emphasis on teacher agency, student engagement, and curricular interpretation resonates with international efforts to make education more culturally responsive and socially just (Fahrudin, Kurniawanti, et al., 2025). Educators and policymakers worldwide can draw from this research to evaluate and reform their own history curricula, ensuring they promote critical inquiry, empathy, and democratic values in an increasingly globalized and pluralistic world.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while the NCERT curriculum promotes critical and inclusive history education, its implementation at *Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, New Delhi* remains constrained by teacher-centered practices, exam-oriented pressures, and limited engagement with sensitive historical themes. Classroom observations and interviews reveal a gap between curricular ideals and actual pedagogical execution, resulting in passive learning and superficial understanding among students. Teachers' reluctance to explore controversial topics and students' perception of history as irrelevant underscore the need for pedagogical reform. Despite these challenges, moments of student interest during interactive sessions suggest strong potential for more engaging approaches. Therefore, to improve historical literacy and critical thinking, professional development, institutional support, and curriculum innovation are essential. The study contributes to both national and global discussions on decolonizing education and building reflective, inclusive learning environments. It emphasizes that meaningful history education must bridge policy, pedagogy, and lived experience in the classroom.

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