

# Shaping Future History Teachers: Evaluating Historical Thinking Skills and Learning Innovations

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## Abstract

The problem of lack of historical thinking skills training among prospective history teachers poses a challenge to effective history education. This study aims to address the problem of a lack of training in historical thinking skills among prospective secondary school history teachers by evaluating their level of training and perceptions of innovation in history education. The study used grounded theory-based qualitative analysis involving 65 prospective history teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of History Education programme at PGRI University Yogyakarta from 2021 to 2023. The training was classified into three levels: none, declarative, and applicative, and analysed in the context of participants' views on curriculum models and educational innovation. The results of the analyses showed that most prospective history teachers were still at the declarative level of knowledge, with only a minority reaching the applicative level, which indicates a deeper understanding of pedagogical content. Those who reached the applicative level were mainly actively involved in innovative history learning courses, which provided critical perspectives on curriculum content and practical teaching experience. This research contributes to history education by emphasising the importance of integrating historical thinking skills into teacher training programmes. It addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing an evidence-based framework for evaluating and enhancing the pedagogical readiness of prospective history teachers. Additionally, it demonstrates the positive impact of innovative educational practices in developing these essential skills, offering valuable insights for curriculum developers and educators aiming to improve history teacher education.

**Keywords:** Historical Thinking Skills, History Education, History Learning, Learning Innovation, Teacher Training.

## Introduction

Historical thinking skills are a key element in history education as they help students understand past events and enable them to analyse and evaluate historical contexts critically (1, 2). These skills include interpreting historical sources, understanding causal relationships between events, and applying that knowledge in a context relevant to life today (3–5). In education, historical thinking skills provide a foundation for students to develop a deep understanding of history as a discipline, supporting the development of broader critical thinking abilities. This approach needs to be promoted in two ways: first, by applying a critical and problematic approach to the content and objectives of history education in schools, and second, by challenging the false dichotomy between content-focused teaching and competency-focused teaching (6). Both approaches show that history education's content and competence aspects are closely intertwined and cannot be separated. The recognition of the

importance of historical thinking skills is not limited to the national sphere but has become a global concern. In many countries, historical thinking skills training for prospective history teachers has been identified as a top priority in history education curriculum development (7). International research shows that effective teaching in history requires mastery of the material and the ability to guide students in analysing, interpreting, and evaluating historical evidence (8, 9). Therefore, training that integrates theory with practice is crucial in preparing teachers who can impart these skills to their students. Although historical thinking skills are recognised as an important component of history education in the Indonesian context, training for prospective history teachers still faces significant challenges in effectively developing these abilities (4, 10). These challenges include the lack of time in the teacher education curriculum to explore and practise these skills and the discrepancy between

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theory and practice in integrating historical thinking into classroom teaching. In addition, a key problem identified is that most prospective history teachers can only reach a basic knowledge level of historical thinking skills without being able to apply this knowledge deeply and practically in a teaching context. This basic knowledge includes understanding the fundamental concepts and theories associated with historical thinking skills. Still, it is not accompanied by the ability to apply them in real classroom situations (11–13). Most existing studies have discussed the theoretical aspects and importance of these skills conceptually. Previous research on historical thinking mainly focuses on three main schools. The Anglo-American tradition emphasises a practical and empirical approach to historical thinking (14, 15), focusing on the formation of specific historical competencies (13, 16–18), including Canadian research (13, 19, 20). In contrast, the German approach is more theoretical, concentrating on 'historical awareness' and developing competence models that integrate cognitive abilities with applying historical knowledge for personal orientation in the present and future (8, 10, 21–23). The Dutch perspective combines these approaches by suggesting historical thinking as an educational goal, integrating various competencies from other models (24, 25). This research has expanded to other regions, including Australia, Brazil, Portugal, and Spain, each contributing a unique perspective to the field (20, 26). Other research has also shown that history teachers who have a strong epistemological understanding of the nature of historical knowledge are more effective in teaching historical thinking (27). Preparing future history teachers by training them to adopt historical thinking requires a process that sometimes exceeds the time allocation available in the university teacher education curriculum. However, time should be utilised for learning (28, 29). Ensuring prospective teachers develop this understanding during their training remains challenging. The tendency to adhere to traditional teaching methods, even in countries with a strong tradition of competency-based education, such as Canada and the Netherlands, highlights the need for further research and innovation in teacher education (30–32). Previous research shows that although historical thinking skills are important in global history education, their practical application

in teacher education curricula often receives less attention. This is especially true in Indonesia, where the education system struggles to bridge the gap between theory and practice (25, 33, 34). Therefore, this study offers an innovative approach by combining an in-depth theoretical analysis with a practical evaluation of the application of historical thinking skills in history teacher candidates' courses. The main novelty of this study lies in the way it not only explores the theory underlying historical thinking skills but also directly assesses how these skills are applied in a real lecture environment. As such, this study makes an important contribution to expanding our understanding of the effectiveness of teaching methods used in history teacher education programmes, especially in the Indonesian context. The relevance of this research is very clear in the Indonesian educational context, which is currently facing the challenge of implementing competency-based education with the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum (2, 35, 36). This research significantly supports the transformation of history education in Indonesia by emphasising the importance of historical thinking skills and evaluating their application in the classroom. This research is relevant to the development of history education and broader efforts to improve the quality of national education that focuses on developing student and teacher competencies. Therefore, this research is positioned to identify and further analyse the aforementioned problems and find solutions that can improve the quality of historical thinking skills training for prospective history teachers in Indonesia. Thus, this study aims to analyse the level of discourse in historical thinking skills after completing theoretical and practical lectures in undergraduate history education programmes and explore the perceptions they face in connecting theory with practice in history education.

## Methodology

This study explores the knowledge and views of secondary school history teachers about their experience of training that combines theory and practice to characterise historical thinking skills. Through analysing their responses, this study adopted a qualitative approach (2, 37). This qualitative approach aimed to identify what the prospective history teachers learnt and how they reflected on their learning experiences.

## Research Design: Context and Participants

This study involved 65 history teacher trainees from the Bachelor of History Education programme at PGRI University Yogyakarta, Indonesia, consisting of 27 males and 38 females. The students came from the semester levels of the academic year, namely 2020/2021, 2021/2022, and 2022/2023. As part of the final assessment, each student was required to complete a written assignment after a period of practical teaching training experience in schools. This analysis focuses on 65 students from the last three academic years to understand the background of their previous disciplinary training in Senior High School. From the total participants, 80% (52 people) had a background in Social Science, 13.85% (9 people) came from Natural Science, and 9.23% (4 people) from Language. The sample selection method in this study was non-probabilistic, using a convenience sampling technique or available sampling, where participants were selected based on availability and ease of access, especially among prospective history teachers for secondary school education. Although this selection was accidental, the process followed the accessibility principles described by Flick (38).

### Data Collection Instruments

The instrument used was a written exam administered during the last session of the "History Learning Innovation" course, proposed as a final evaluation activity, between October and early November in 2021, 2022 and 2023. The exam was conducted in class, without the possibility of consulting additional material, except in 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The exercises are written in real-time electronically during these sessions, and students can access them. For information, everyone has three hours to write, except for 2021 in the context of the pandemic, which has four hours, and the answers must be uploaded in the virtual classroom of the subject.

The exam presents ten short historical sources on Indonesian History: four primary sources (texts and images) on the political-ideological foundations of the New Order regime and six secondary reports on the features of the dictatorship in terms of social support, repression and propaganda. He asked three questions from these sources: (a) Analyse the following sources.

For each source, you should write a text that briefly indicates its nature, its main ideas, and the historical context in which it is located; (b) Name and explain the characteristics of the New Order dictatorship. Use the information from the sources to answer this: (c) How is the New Order democracy different from the Reformation democracy that prevails in Indonesia today? How would people's lives change under both types of political regimes? Use credible sources in your answer! After analysing the form and approach of the exercise, participants had to answer four questions explaining why: (a) In your opinion, what teaching model does this exercise address and to what extent is it an educational innovation? (b) To what extent is learning based on core and historical competencies considered in this exercise? If yes, can you mention which historical competencies are addressed and how? (c) Draft a simple evaluation rubric that can be applied to it. (d) Given your training and experience in practice, discuss what facilities and difficulties you went through to teach history lessons in secondary schools today using the historical learning competencies. When writing the answers to these questions, the participants had taken two History Learning Innovation courses that covered related content. They discussed the uses and purposes of history teaching and learning models, the concept of innovation, and the approach of historical thinking as a way of innovation. Similarly, students have completed their teaching practice and have information about the presence or absence of such approaches in the classroom. Therefore, their responses inform their learning profile in the content.

### Analysis and Categorisation

In this study, we used texts as the main data source for empirical analysis (38). We chose to apply an open coding strategy to the discursive elements in the texts based on the Grounded Theory methodology described (39). This approach allowed us to explore and extract analytical categories from the data collected in detail. Through an in-depth analysis of 65 documents, we managed to identify relevant categories relating to historical and discursive thinking. Specifically, we categorised four levels of training on the exam to categorise historical thinking, as described in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Training Levels and Application of Historical Thinking Skills

History Thinking Level	Description
Level 0-None	It does not address the issue: it does not recognise historical thinking competence.
Level 1-Basic declarative	Recognises and explains historical thinking in general terms, finds some aspects of historical thinking but cannot design a rubric and only distributes marks for questions.
Level 2-Moderate-declarative	Recognises and explains historical thinking but does not know how to evaluate it: design a very general rubric that may allude to them but does not specify the level of development.
Level 3-Basic applicative	Recognises and explains historical thinking without assessing them as a whole: designed a rubric to determine the level of development in at least one aspect of historical thinking.
Level 4-Complex applicative	Recognises, explains and knows how to assess aspects of historical thinking: designs a rubric with developmental levels in two or more aspects of historical thinking.

About the participants' discourses collected in response to questions no. 1 (relating the analysed exercises to didactic curricular models, practical or critical models, and educational innovations) and no. 4 (argumentation about the difficulties and degree of classroom validity of the historical competence approach based on observations of existing practices), the following categorisation was obtained from an in-depth analysis, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2:** Discourse on the Relationship between the Analysed Practice and the Learning Innovation

Level of Practice Discourse	Description
Level 1-None	No information provided
Level 2-Methodological discourse	This paper shows practice's relationship to practical or critical curricular models without in-depth argumentation. The innovation relationship applies to education with changes in methodology and existing resources.
Level 3-Critical discourse	Adequately argues the relationship of the practical or critical curricular model. Link the innovation both to methodological changes and to an important focus on content and objectives, linking it to social issues relevant to critical citizenship training.

**Table 3:** Comments on the Difficulty of Taking the History Competency Exam

Level Exercise Comment	Description
Level 0	Did not recognise or comment on difficulties
Level 1	Recognises difficulties in teaching history learning innovations and describes them, not to mention their practice
Level 2	Debating the difficulties in teaching history learning innovations and explaining based on experiences from their practice in classroom learning

## Results

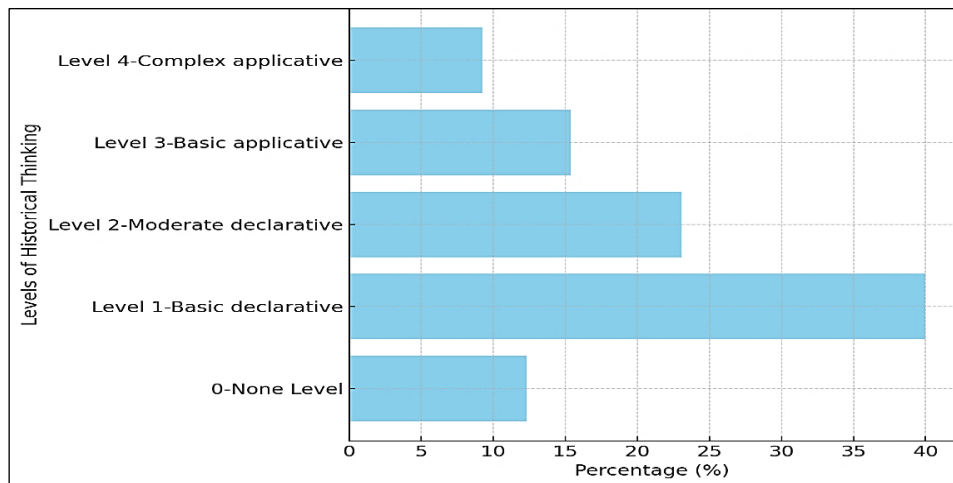
### Levels and Discourses in Historical Thinking Skills

In this section, findings from the quantitative analysis are presented, focusing on the level of historical thinking among the students. Table 4 and Figure 1 provide a detailed breakdown of the levels of historical thinking skills demonstrated by the 65 students who participated in the study. This table

provides an overview of the distribution of students across different levels of historical thinking. Table 5 and Figure 2 illustrate the variation in students' historical thinking levels over three years, from 2021 to 2023, highlighting trends and changes in their critical skills development. The data from Table 4 have been visualised in Figure 1 to understand better the distribution of historical thinking levels among the students analysed.

**Table 4:** Knowledge Level of Historical Thinking among Analysed Students

Levels of Historical Thinking	Quantity (Percentage)
0-None Level	8 (12.31%)
Declarative Level (1-2)	41 (63.08%)
Level 1-Basic declarative	26 (40%)
Level 2-Moderate declarative	15 (23.08%)
Applicative Level (3-4)	16 (24.62%)
Level 3-Basic applicative	10 (15.38%)
Level 4-Complex applicative	6 (9.23%)
Total	65 (100%)



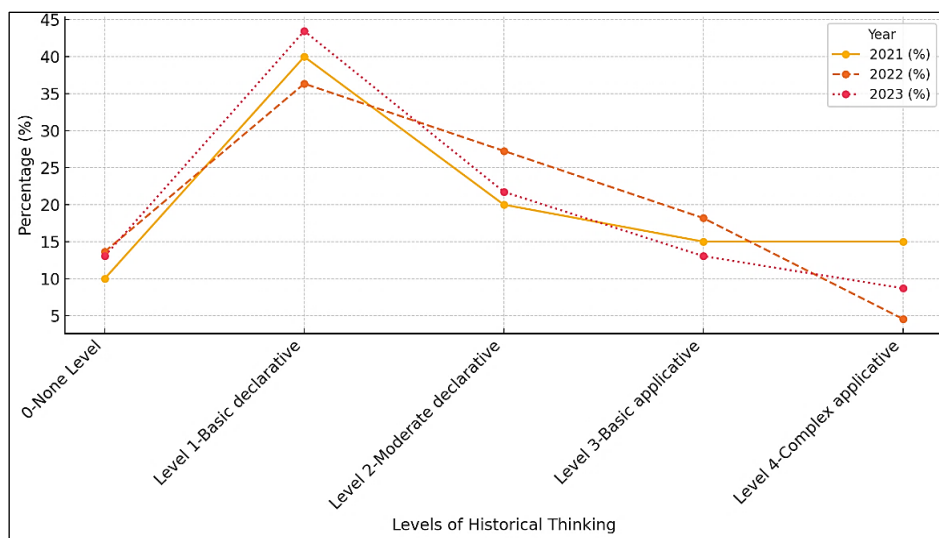
**Figure 1:** Knowledge Level of Historical Thinking among Analysed Students

**Table 5:** Levels of Knowledge and Use of Historical Thinking Skills among University Students

Levels of Historical Thinking	2021	2022	2023
0-None Level	2 (10%)	3 (13.64%)	3 (13.04%)
Declarative Level (1-2)	12 (60%)	14 (63.64%)	15 (65.22%)
Level 1-Basic declarative	8 (40%)	8 (36.36%)	10 (43.48%)
Level 2-Moderate declarative	4 (20%)	6 (27.27%)	5 (21.74%)
Applicative Level (3-4)	6 (30%)	5 (22.73%)	5 (21.74%)
Level 3-Basic applicative	3 (15%)	4 (18.18%)	3 (13.04%)
Level 4-Complex applicative	3 (15%)	1 (4.55%)	2 (8.70%)
Total	20 (100%)	22 (100%)	23 (100%)

Figure 1 presents the development of historical thinking skills among students to make it easier to understand. Furthermore, Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of these skills in 2021, 2022, and 2023 to explore the development of historical thinking skills among university students over time. The results show relative stability in college exam rates over the three years (2021-2023), with no significant changes, as noted in Table 5 and Figure 2. This is despite constraints in exam-taking conditions, including the years after the new normal pandemic, when access to interaction began to open up (2022 and 2023) and the years when distance learning became the norm due to the Covid-19 pandemic (2021). These findings

indicate a consistent pattern in the level of college training provided by undergraduate history education programmes and the extent to which history students in college training utilise it. From the data presented (Table 4 and Figure 1), it can be seen that the declarative level profile, with a percentage of 63.08%, dominates and is almost twice as much as the applicative level profile, which is at 24.62%. These two levels and their characteristics require more in-depth evaluation. In the group of student participants with the declarative level profile (as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1), starting with observing that most (40%) of them have basic knowledge of historical competence.



**Figure 2:** Levels of Knowledge and Use of Historical Thinking Skills

They understood and could define historical competence but did not explicitly relate it to the context of the analysed exam - or at least not to all the aspects tested. The exam highlights explicitly the "use of historical sources and evidence", "historical empathy", "historical time", and "historical relevance" (40, 41). The group with basic declarative level knowledge did not specify which exam questions covered the historical competencies they identified, nor did they provide a scoring rubric to measure possible learning outcomes. They only offered a grade distribution based on general form and content questions. This suggests that they have gained an understanding of historical thinking only at a very basic level, a basic theoretical understanding that is not practical for classroom application.

The second group in the medium declarative level category, which accounted for about one-fifth of the total participants (23.08%), was at an intermediate level of declarative knowledge close to the ideal in historical thinking. This group could identify the historical competencies in the exercise quite well and indicate where they were discussed. Almost all of the historical competencies presented in the exercise were found by them, signalling that they had a sufficient understanding of the discipline of history. However, their expertise was limited to the theoretical level as they could not create a thorough evaluation instrument. They provided rubrics that allocated marks based on form and content relating to some historical competencies but failed to include key indicators

to demonstrate their ability to direct history learning, i.e. to show improvement in historical competencies. This topic is explained in general lecture sessions in history education programmes, in a general context, and specifically in terms of competencies such as source use, historical empathy, and historical causality. They have not learnt how to design rubrics for such evaluations, so they lack the necessary skills to integrate them into classroom teaching to assess and guide students' learning effectively. As a result, they have not achieved the minimum level of didactic knowledge in the discipline of historical thinking, which is necessary to implement the competency-based approach to history effectively.

The group that achieved a disciplined didactic understanding of historical thinking through practical application in exercise answers comprised a smaller percentage of participants, 24.62%, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. This group identified, located and explained all the historical skills in the exercises and designed rubrics that indicated levels of progress. There is a difference in this group between those at the basic level (15.38%), who focus on progress in historical competencies, and those at the complex applicative level (9.23%), who can effectively assess discursive use in two or more historical competencies. Frequently discussed historical competencies included the use of historical sources and historical empathy, for example, comparing life under President Soeharto's

dictatorial regime with the current democratic reform period.

Participants at the basic application level generally concentrate on one of the two competencies and demonstrate adequate formative evaluation skills. They also taught heuristic and creative use of sources and helped students understand historical context to avoid presentism. The more complex application level, although a minority (9.23%), assessed two or more historical competencies with accurate rubrics, emphasising the use of sources and historical empathy, as well as ethical aspects and historical relevance, such as the importance of historical memory and critical perspectives on the past in present-day Indonesia. The group also paid attention to historical time, applying flexible and creative approaches to President Soeharto's legacy and the regime's continuity without being tied to a single point of view.

In terms of the results achieved at the categorised discursive level, i.e. the level of knowledge and use of historical thinking skills among students between 2021 and 2023, there is a clear correlation between the level of understanding and application of historical competence, reflecting variations in the use of theoretical and practical lectures provided by PGRI University Yogyakarta's history education study programme. Four main characteristics were identified based on the group's declarative knowledge of historical thinking in understanding and using historical competencies. Firstly, most students (63.41% or 26 out of 41) associated the exam with a conventional teaching approach, favouring a more traditional curricular model. This was seen from their less in-depth explanations, signalling a generalised understanding of the curricular model. Secondly, almost half of this group (36.59 % or 15 out of 41) limited the discussion of educational innovation to methodological aspects, such as the increase in cognitive complexity appropriate to historical competence or the use of new motivational resources. Thirdly, they could not explore the difficulties encountered when implementing this approach in the classroom or share their practical experiences. Fourth, of this group for which educational information was available (30 out of 41), the percentage of graduates from social sciences was lower (58.54 %) than the overall average of graduates. It is

important to consider this illustrative example of group discussion for further analysis.

### **Students' Perception of Linking Theory with Practice**

In addition, some of the student comments collected are interesting to present, especially their perceptions of history learning innovations. While the majority of comments recognised the importance of the elements of the critical curriculum model in the exam, not all students associated this critical approach with innovations in history learning or historical thinking competencies, with the main focus on changes in methodology. For example, one commented that "educational innovation is not merely concentrating on the content taught, but on the way of teaching to acquire that knowledge, i.e. learning how to learn from history" (student number 11, male); in addition, another commented "innovation means applying new methodologies based on research, which override the use of textbooks and conventional memorisation methods, as demonstrated by this exam" (student number 24, male); there was also the comment "innovation means going beyond the conventional traditional methods by applying active methodologies that enhance research-based learning" (student number 29, female); and another comment "innovating means applying methodologies that can motivate students" (student number 46, male).

Compared to the descriptive level, those who reached the applied level or had disciplinary didactic knowledge in historical thinking had four specific characteristics. Firstly, almost all of them (10 out of 16 students) provided in-depth and relevant arguments on how the exam related to practical didactic models (through the use of sources and the creation of narratives, as well as the utilisation of historical empathy and critical approaches) such as investigating diverse aspects of the New Order period including repression, the role of women, propaganda, and its legacy, as well as its relationship to the present and relevant social issues, and distinguishing between democracy and dictatorship. Secondly, they generally (9 out of 16 students) broadened the definition of educational innovation, not only limited to methodological changes but also involving transformations in the way content is taught and used in the classroom, related to

important social issues to develop critical citizenship. Thirdly, most (7 out of 16 students, or 43.75 %) were able to detail the difficulties in implementing historical competencies in the classroom, particularly regarding the challenges faced by students and teachers, with some students even referring to their own experiences during practical teaching training in schools, highlighting the intensive utilisation of the training period. Fourth, regarding their previous education, based on the available data (12 out of 16 students, or 75 %), the proportion of social science (history) graduates remained almost unchanged or even slightly increased (75 %) compared to the overall average recorded. Again, it is important to consider specific examples from this discussion for further research analysis.

One student commented, "Innovation in education is not only about methodological changes but also encompasses new approaches to lesson content to create meaningful, competent and critical learning. Innovation is not just about changes in tools and methods, but about how and for what they are used, as well as the role of the teacher in the process"; he argued that the exam under discussion was "innovative not only because of the collaboration with sources and research proposed, but because of the way those sources are used and selected one of the innovative elements, for example, is the way of dealing with conflicts, topics, and the relationship between the present and the past" (student number 7, female).

Another respondent interpreted this exam as being related to "the practical model through the use of sources and research by students, as well as the critical model through the relationship between past and present and the reflection expected from students, which are characteristics of innovation. Innovation is defined as a teaching method that places students at the centre of the learning process, encourages an active, critical, and reflective approach, and links content to current socially relevant issues" (student number 13, female). In the same context, another participant stated that "innovation is not just about replacing conventional methods but also about challenging past topics taught in class and linking them to current events" (student number 34, male);. At the same time, another emphasised that "innovation is often mistakenly interpreted as activities that demand the use of new technologies and self-

directed search without challenging the content, without asking questions or making connections to the present or the realities that students face daily" (student number 51, male).

Students from minority groups shared their experiences implementing didactic approaches in teaching history, including the challenges they faced in the classroom. They highlighted that students are often unfamiliar with learning methods that require source analysis and historical empathy, a practice rarely implemented in schools. This difficulty is attributed to students' passive learning habits, where they are more used to receiving and forgetting information rather than processing it deeply. Some participants revealed that changing students' ingrained ways of learning is very difficult, especially if they are used to learning methods that focus on memorisation from textbooks. This approach poses a significant barrier when implementing competency-based learning in history, which requires critical understanding and analysis of sources. There is resistance from students and some teachers to introducing this learning method, indicating the need for better education and preparation in implementing historical competencies from an earlier level of education.

Some interesting comments were made during student teaching practice in schools, such as core competencies or historical thinking, which many prospective history teachers view sceptically and consider abstract and unachievable. The history teachers often repeated this criticism, making it seem like a standard view. However, students reacted differently; they seemed enthusiastic and motivated to explore and present material from primary sources. This suggests a strong interest from students to engage more deeply with the subject matter, which contrasts with some teachers' attitudes towards teaching such competencies.

## Discussion

The results of this study show that learning innovation training does not always prepare history teachers to apply historical competencies effectively in the classroom. Although students had attended a programme of courses that combined theory and practice, not all of them could achieve the expected understanding and application of historical competence. This refutes the initial assumption that training in history learning



innovations will automatically provide the necessary skills to integrate historical thinking in the classroom (24, 34, 42). Many prospective history teachers have acquired theoretical knowledge and declarative understanding but still lack the practical didactic skills to effectively teach and assess historical competence. The key components in acquiring historical thinking competencies by prospective history teachers who have attended history learning innovation courses are influenced by various factors. The level of success of the training depended mainly on how effectively participants could apply the theoretical-practical concepts taught, which emphasised epistemological changes in the way history is understood and taught. Participants with previous social science educational backgrounds tend to utilise the course more successfully, as identified in previous studies (20, 23, 30, 31, 35, 43, 44). However, the presence of graduates from other social science fields who tend to have a more basic declarative understanding suggests that different academic backgrounds may influence mastery of the material (12, 13). Nonetheless, it cannot be confirmed that prior academic training automatically results in a more profound understanding or application of historical concepts. In other words, knowing does not necessarily guarantee the ability to apply them effectively; it requires deep understanding and practical skills in teaching.

Qualitative analyses of students' perceptions revealed a range of understandings of educational innovation. Some students associated innovation with methodological changes and the introduction of new teaching tools. In contrast, others emphasised the importance of a critical approach that links historical content to contemporary social issues (5, 45, 46). This difference in perception suggests that although students are exposed to innovative concepts, there is still a need to further link these innovations to the development of historical thinking skills explicitly. Comments from students who reached the applicative level reflect a deeper engagement with these ideas, suggesting that a more in-depth and practical approach to teacher training may be needed. Approaches that focus more on methods than critiques of content or history learning objectives have been identified in previous research as a common pattern, and few participants offered critical perspectives on

history learning materials and objectives (30–32). Thus, the ability to adopt a critical view and use practical experience effectively, particularly in the face of the challenges of teaching history competence, was identified as an essential element in training to achieve an effective level of application and didactic knowledge of a complex discipline.

The results of this study have important implications for the future of history teacher education in Indonesia. The persistent gap between theory and practice and varying perceptions of innovation confirms the need for a more cohesive and practice-orientated approach to teacher training. Along with implementing the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum in Indonesia, historical thinking skills must be theoretically emphasised and effectively integrated into classroom practice. To address this challenge, curriculum revisions may include more practical training opportunities for prospective teachers to apply historical thinking skills in real-world scenarios. In addition, there needs to be a focus on developing comprehensive assessment tools that can help teachers evaluate the development of these skills in their students. Thus, teacher education programmes can better prepare future educators not only to understand history as a discipline but also to teach it in ways that are innovative and relevant to contemporary social issues.

In conclusion, although historical thinking skills are recognised as an important component of history education, their practical application remains challenging. This research contributes to our understanding of these issues by highlighting the need for a more integrated and practice-orientated approach to teacher education. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve training in historical thinking for prospective secondary school teachers, including revising Indonesia's history learning innovation curriculum and adequate time allocation for teaching and applying historical competencies, emphasising the expansion of the theory-practice integration approach. This is important, given examples from countries such as Europe and the United States that have implemented more comprehensive training programmes in this aspect (13, 16–20). In addition, it is necessary to promote an innovative vision of education that goes beyond

the cognitive-procedural approach and encourages critical thinking about history and its purpose in shaping informed citizenship. It is also recommended to facilitate deeper learning about educational practices, including reflection on the challenges of teaching historical competence and developing and implementing competency-based teaching materials.

Although this study revealed important findings, it should be borne in mind that it has limitations due to its focus on history teaching innovation training at one university (PGRI University Yogyakarta), which may differ elsewhere. Nevertheless, this study makes a valuable contribution to understanding the issues by highlighting the need for a more integrated and practice-oriented approach in teacher education, where future research should focus on developing strategies to address these challenges and ensuring that historical thinking skills are taught and applied effectively in the classroom.

## Conclusion

This research shows that history learning innovation courses do not always effectively prepare history teachers to apply historical thinking competencies in the classroom. Although the training programme combines theory and practice, not all participants achieve the expected understanding or application of the competencies. The success of the course depends on the effective integration of theory and practice and the history education background of the participants. Many prospective teachers have theoretical knowledge but lack practical historical didactic skills. Factors such as academic background and mastery of the theory-practice approach influence the ability to teach history effectively. The research recommends curriculum revision and improved training in historical thinking, emphasising educational approaches that focus more on developing competencies, encouraging critical thinking, and applying knowledge in real situations, which will prepare prospective teachers to teach and assess historical competencies more effectively. Furthermore, further research is also urgently needed to understand better the factors that influence the effectiveness of history teacher training, with research across different universities and contexts in Indonesia providing additional insights for improvement strategies. Collaboration between

universities and schools should be enhanced to ensure training materials are relevant to the real needs of classroom teaching. Finally, a personalised approach to training could be more effective given the variety of backgrounds and abilities of student participants, allowing for the tailoring of materials to meet the specific needs of individuals or groups of participants. By implementing these implications, it is expected that there will be an improvement in the quality of history teaching, contributing to a deeper and more critical understanding of history among students.

## Abbreviation

Nil.

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## Author Contributions

The author contributions to the research article are as follows: study framework, Data collection, conception, methodology, draft manuscript preparation, Data Analysis, and Results.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## Ethics Approval

No ethical clearance certificate applies to the present study.

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