

**The Representation of National Identity of Kazakhstani Citizens in Ministry-
Endorsed Textbooks for Secondary Schools**

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Abstract

The Representation of National Identity of Kazakhstani Citizens in Ministry-Endorsed Textbooks for Secondary Schools

This study analyzes the representation of national identity in Grade 9 Ministry-approved textbooks in Kazakhstan, published in Kazakh, Russian, and English. The purpose of the research is to examine the representation of national identity in textbooks, within the context of Kazakhstan's multifaceted nation-building process. This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine textual and graphic elements in textbooks of various subjects, focusing on the framing and presentation of identity markers, including language use, cultural symbols, historical references, and values. The findings show inconsistencies among subjects and languages of instruction, revealing a conflict between the promotion of Kazakh ethnonational elements and the development of a cohesive civic identity. Some parts of Kazakh- and Russian-language textbooks are more likely to highlight ethnic Kazakh heritage, history, and symbols, whereas English-language textbooks are more inclined to promote an inclusive, civic-oriented Kazakhstani identity, which reflects multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. This study contributes to understanding of the interplay of language policy, educational resources, and nation-building approaches in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Keywords: ministry-approved textbooks, textbooks, national identity, civic nationalism, ethnic nationalism, critical discourse analysis

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу Қазақстан Республикасы Білім министрлігі бекіткен, қазақ, орыс және ағылшын тілдерінде шығарылған 9-сынып оқулықтарындағы ұлттық бірегейліктің көрініс табуын талдайды. Зерттеудің мақсаты - Қазақстандағы күрделі мемлекеттік құрылыстың қалыптасуы аясында ұлттық бірегейліктің оқу материалдарында қандай тәсілдермен ұсынылатынын зерделеу. Зерттеу жұмысына әртүрлі пәндер бойынша оқулықтардың мәтіндік және визуалды элементтерін талдау үшін сыни дискурс талдау әдісі қолданылды. Талдау барысында тілдік қолданыс, мәдени символдар, тарихи сілтемелер мен құндылықтар сияқты бірегейлік маркерлерінің берілуі мен рәсімделуі тәсілдеріне ерекше назар аударылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері пәндер мен оқыту тілдері арасында мазмұн беру тұрғысынан бірізділіктің жоқтығын көрсетеді, бұл қазақ этномәдени элементтерін насихаттау мен тұтас азаматтық бірегейлікті қалыптастыру арасындағы қайшылықты айқындайды. Қазақ және орыс тілдеріндегі оқулықтардың кейбір бөлімдері көбінесе қазақ халқының этникалық мұрасы, тарихы және мәдени символикасына басымдық берсе, ағылшын тіліндегі оқулықтар, негізінен, көпмәдениеттілік пен тілдік алуандылықты көрсететін инклюзивті, азаматтық тұрғыдағы қазақстандық бірегейлікті қалыптастыруға бағытталған. Бұл зерттеу посткеңестік Қазақстандағы тіл саясаты, білім беру ресурстары мен бірегейлік қалыптастыру тәсілдерінің өзара байланысын түсінуге үлес қосады.

Түйінді сөздер: мақұлданған мектеп оқулықтары, оқулықтар, ұлттық бірегейлік, азаматтық ұлтшылдық, этникалық ұлтшылдық, сыни дискурс талдау

Аннотация

Данное исследование анализирует представленность национальной идентичности в учебниках для 9 класса, утверждённых Министерством образования Казахстана, изданных на казахском, русском и английском языках. Цель исследования заключается в изучении способов представления национальной идентичности в учебных материалах в контексте сложного процесса формирования Казахстанской государственности. В работе применяется метод критического дискурс-анализа для изучения текстовых и визуальных элементов в учебниках по различным предметам, с акцентом на способы представления и оформления маркеров идентичности, включая использование языка, культурные символы, исторические отсылки и ценности. Результаты исследования выявляют несогласованность в подаче материалов между предметами и языками обучения, что отражает противоречие между продвижением этнонациональных элементов казахской культуры и формированием целостной гражданской идентичности. Некоторые разделы учебников на казахском и русском языках чаще акцентируют внимание на этническом наследии казахов, их истории и символике, тогда как учебники на английском языке, как правило, направлены на формирование инклюзивной, гражданской казахстанской идентичности, отражающей идеи мультикультурности и языкового многообразия. Исследование вносит вклад в понимание взаимодействия языковой политики, образовательных ресурсов и подходов к формированию идентичности в постсоветском Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: учебники, утверждённые министерством, учебники, национальная идентичность, гражданский национализм, этнический национализм, критический дискурс-анализ

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Introduction

“In Kazakhstan, people of different nationalities live together in friendship and harmony, like children of one family in a common home” (Tokayev, 2025, para 66). Vast and layered like its steppe, Kazakhstan's national identity is formed by a diverse tapestry of cultures, languages, and memories. The nation has struggled in the years following independence to define what it means to be Kazakhstani, a process loaded with complexity and pride. The civic view of nationhood, which supports equality of citizenship, togetherness, and shared values among all citizens of the country, is on the one hand. Conversely, there is an ethnic and cultural vision: a celebration of the traditions, language, and ancestral legacy of the Kazakh people. The nation-building process in Kazakhstan has involved delicately harmonizing various civic and ethnic pieces into a unified national fabric. The objective, as stated by President Tokayev above, is unity in diversity, or the idea of numerous ethnic groups coexisting as a single family. In order to realize this goal, it has been necessary to bring these distinct identities together under one “brand” (Tokayev, 2025, para 70), a task Kazakhstan welcomes with a thoughtful pride derived from its distinct past.

Kazakhstan's multiethnic and linguistic nature is what contributes to this complexity. Spanning Europe and Asia, Kazakhstan has historically been a crossroads of cultures from the heritage of the Kazakh Khanate and the historical Silk Road to the effects of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Every age shaped the identity of the country. For example, the script of the Kazakh language has changed several times (from Arabic to Latin to Cyrillic to now trying to go back to Latin), each of which represents a change in cultural direction (Mynbayeva & Pogosian, 2014). During the time of the Soviet Union, Russian became a common language, while Kazakh became the official language of Kazakhstan after the country got its freedom (Mynbayeva & Pogosian, 2014). Many

Kazakhstani people even now speak two or three languages, switching between Kazakh and Russian in everyday life and more and more including English into the mix. The outcome is a culture that is naturally multilingual, where language is both a valued cultural legacy and a pragmatic tool of interethnic interaction. The national narrative of Kazakhstan actively supports this mosaic identity, which aims to strengthen the total by incorporating differences rather than erasing them. “Birlik bereke bastauy” (Unity is the source of abundance) is a one of the common sayings used to reflect the idea that the country's strength derives from its great variety.

Language and ethnic background

On the ground, empirical findings highlight Kazakhstan's remarkable diversity. The 2021 national census (Bureau of National Statistics, 2011) reveals 124 different ethnic groups living in the nation. Ranging from big groups to little diaspora populations, these all help to shape the culture of the country. Nine of these ethnic groups each number over 100,000 people, forming the core of Kazakhstan's multiethnic society (Bureau of National Statistics, 2024). Kazakhstan is mostly populated by Kazakhs (70%), although there are also large minorities of Russians (15%), Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uyghurs, Germans, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, and Koreans (Bureau of National Statistics, 2024). This pluralism is ingrained in the country's institutions and regulations, not only a demographic reality. Maybe the most representative is the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a presidential advisory body founded in 1995 to foster interethnic cooperation (Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, n.d.). Described as an institution of national solidarity and a symbol of national togetherness, the Assembly unites people from various ethnic backgrounds. It reflects the state's dedication to fostering a feeling of shared connection among different individuals. The Assembly of People of Kazakhstan strives to make sure every ethnic group feels recognized in the national narrative by means of cultural centers, festivals, and

consultative sessions (Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, n.d.). Though turning symbolic unity into actual equality presents difficulties, the very presence of such an institution attests to Kazakhstan's determination to turn diversity into a strength.

Furthermore, after the period of USSR governance, significant demographic changes took place in Kazakhstan, influencing linguistic trends. The rise in the ethnic Kazakh population has led to an increased need for Kazakh-language classrooms and education. In 1999, the proportion of Kazakhs rose to 53.4% due to considerable emigration of ethnic Russians and other minorities, while the percentage of Russians fell to 30% (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999). The trend continued, leading to the Kazakh population making up 63.7% in 2009 while 70.35% in 2021 (Bureau of National Statistics, 2011, 2023). According to the 2021 census, ethnic Kazakhs made up almost 80% of the youngest kindergarten age group (1-4 years), showing a significant rise from the 2009 census, in which they accounted for 72.7% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2011, 2023). The percentage of ethnic Kazakhs among younger age groups is higher than their overall share in the total population, due to higher birth rates among the Kazakh community (Makhanov, 2024).

This trend was also noted by Suleimenova and Akanova (2023), however their research pulled data from 1991 to 2019. Primary and secondary school enrollment rose from 32.35% to 66.0% with a large increase in Kazakh-medium instruction, while the percentage of students getting instruction in Russian declined sharply from 66.05% to 29.5%. Ethnic minority languages (such as Tajik, Uighur, Uzbek, and others) and foreign languages (such as English and Turkish) rose marginally, from 2.6% to 4.5%. Both changing demographic patterns and linguistic policies that promote Kazakh as a tool for accomplishing nation-building goals are responsible for this shift (Suleimenova & Akanova, 2023).

Language policy in education has been an additional pillar in fostering unity-in-diversity. Then president Nursultan Nazarbayev first proposed the “Trinity of Languages” concept in 2007 (Nazarbayev, 2007), and it later became a top national priority in multiple reforms, road maps and policies, latest being the “Kazakhstan-2050” Strategy (Nazarbayev, 2012). Practically speaking, the policy supports English as a language of global integration, preserves Russian as a language of interethnic communication, and elevates Kazakh as the state language and vehicle of national identity. Over the past ten years, trilingual education has become more and more popular in schools around the country. In addition, Kazakhstan's belief in inclusion ensures that other mother tongues are not overlooked in the classroom. In places where minority communities are concentrated, there are a few public schools that teach Uyghur, Uzbek, or Tajik, the native languages of some of Kazakhstan's historic minority groups. This strategy is supported by national law: the Law on Education (2007) ensures that, in some areas where there is sufficient demand and resources, students have the right to receive an education in their mother tongue. In other words, although though Kazakh and Russian are the primary languages of teaching in the country, the policy framework permits any language to be used as a medium of instruction if practical conditions allow. The idea that being Kazakhstani is not associated with a particular language or ethnicity is supported by such multilingual education policies, which highlight Kazakhstan's efforts to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity through its educational system. In order to strengthen the national identity, students are thus taught not just academic content but also the virtues of harmony, tolerance, and respect for diverse cultures.

Historical background

Nonetheless, the influence of USSR policies and reforms did leave some scars in regard to this linguistic diversity. Many countries in Central Asia have suffered severe

damages in the popularity of their titular nation's native tongue. For example, many Kazakhs, particularly in urban areas, became increasingly proficient in Russian, while the quality and quantity of Kazakh instruction in Russian-medium schools remained constrained (Fierman, 2006). A significant number of students, particularly urban ethnic Kazakhs, completed their education with minimal or no proficiency in Kazakh. Consequently, it is notable that by the conclusion of the Soviet era, not all ethnic Kazakhs were literate in their native language, and a limited number of non-Kazakhs in Kazakhstan possessed the ability to speak or read Kazakh (Olcott, 2011). Russian served as the language of prestige, higher education, science, and social advancement, whereas Kazakh became predominantly associated with rural environments and informal situations. Soviet Russification policies cultivated public perceptions that regarded Kazakh as a primitive or peasant language, predominantly linked to rural existence. Concurrently, educational curricula perpetuated cultural Russification by emphasizing literature, history, and arts with a pronounced pro-Russian (or Soviet) orientation, often marginalizing Kazakh themes (Lilley & Nesterov, 2014).

The aforementioned factors significantly undermined Kazakh linguistic and cultural identity, leading to a prevalent perception by the 1980s that the Kazakh language faced an existential threat within its native territory. The prevalence of Russian in educational and public spheres resulted in the partial suppression of Kazakh cultural identity, with many Kazakhs being raised in a Russian-speaking context, thereby facilitating linguistic assimilation. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Kazakh writers and intellectuals expressed growing concern over the decline of Kazakh-language schools and usage, apprehensive about the potential extinction of their language if these trends persisted. This issue initiated an emerging language revival movement, resulting in the establishment of the *Ana Tili* (Mother Tongue) society in the late 1980s, which advocated

for the enhancement of Kazakh's status (Lilley & Nesterov, 2014). Certain scholars have advocated for the reinstatement of the Arabic script for Kazakh, suggesting it would serve as a symbolic reconnection to their linguistic heritage, in place of the Cyrillic script imposed by Moscow (Olcott, 1985). These efforts constituted a significant aspect of the broader resurgence of Kazakh national consciousness during the *perestroika* (rebuilding) era, as individuals responded to prolonged linguistic marginalization. Soviet language policy produced a dual legacy: it achieved high levels of Russian literacy and fostered a cosmopolitan Soviet identity, while simultaneously engendering a profound sense of loss and injustice among Kazakhs concerning the reduced status of their native language (Lilley & Nesterov, 2014).

Upon gaining independence in 1991, ethnic Kazakhs constituted only a modest plurality, approximately 40% of the population, rendering Kazakhstan distinct among post-Soviet republics for its absence of a nominal majority (Daminov, 2021). The country's regions exhibited markedly distinct demographics; for instance, the northern regions had substantial Slavic populations as they are closer to Russian borders, while the southern and western areas were primarily Kazakhs. In this environment, then President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his administration advocated for a Kazakhstani civic identity intended to encompass all ethnic groups, while simultaneously progressing *Kazakhization* (the elevation of the Kazakh language and culture) (Daminov, 2021). In addition, the government feared that unchecked Kazakh ethnonationalism might destabilize the nation or alienate non-Kazakh people, and even endanger relations with Russia, which closely observed the treatment of fellow Russian countrymen (Daminov, 2021). Thus, the government chose a dual approach to identity: on one side advocating for the dominance of Kazakh culture and language as the basis of the country's identity, while on the other hand supporting a civic nation concept of a multiethnic Kazakhstani people (Loftus, 2023).

Policies and presidential directives meant to promote patriotism among all people without sparking ethnic strife expressed this balancing act.

Although official praise for Kazakhstan's model, local scholars and critics have identified a number of issues and contradictions with the nation's rehabilitation efforts. Aziz Burkhanov and Dina Sharipova (2015) state that Kazakhstan's civic-national identity project has included “ambiguous policies” (p. 21) and “points of resistance” (p. 21). This is due to the policy's ambiguity, which fosters one ethnic group in practice while promoting a civic identity in principle. Some instances of this type of actions include criticism of organizations such as the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and calls for unity in diversity, which are often more symbolic than real attempts at inclusiveness.

The Assembly is only an advisory body with no real power; its primary duties have been to host performances of traditional dance and offer remarks in favor of interethnic harmony. Strategic documents such as the “Doctrine of National Unity” (Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, 2010) and the “Concept of Strengthening and Development of Kazakhstani Identity and Unity” (Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, 2015) have been abundant; however, their implementation has been insufficient (Daminov, 2021). The Doctrine, which asserted a civic basis for national unity, was ultimately shelved due to nationalist backlash and did not progress beyond draft stages. The Concept was adopted, reaffirming civic identity and underscoring the role of an expanding middle class as a unifying force. Observers indicate that these concepts primarily exist in theory, as they have not resulted in a functional document or tangible alterations in ethnic relations (Bohr et al., 2023). Policies promoted as enhancing national cohesion, such as trilingual education and patriotic youth programs, are frequently perceived as top-down initiatives with minimal grassroots influence. The official narrative of harmonious diversity contrasts

with the on-the-ground reality of limited progress, prompting some to characterize the efforts as “mere window-dressing” (Daminov, 2021, para 10).

As a result, the conflict between Kazakh and Kazakhstani identities, or ethnic vs civic nationalism, points to a divide between the Kazakh majority and other minority ethnic groups. This struggle is a hallmark of Kazakhstan's approach to nation-building (Aitymbetov et al., 2015).

Education and national identity

Having established the context of Kazakhstan, this section more thoroughly explores the relationship between education and national identity. To comprehend the intricacies of nation-building in Kazakhstan, we must first explore Anthony D. Smith's (1989) definition of a nation. Smith defines a nation as a group of people who have the same history, rights, duties, and citizenship. There is also a derivation of this concept named nationalism, which is a political philosophy, strives to build and sustain the idea that each state has its own country, and vice versa. Smith (1989) differentiates between two major types of nationalism: civic and ethnic. In Kazakhstan, the interaction between civic and ethnic nationalism has important ramifications for the country's future. Civic nationalism may create a sense of solidarity and common purpose among all people, regardless of ethnicity. However, ethnic nationalism can cause splits and conflicts, especially if it is regarded as endangering the interests of minority communities. Therefore, it is necessary for a country to have a clear portrait of the national identity of their citizens as it will heavily impact their relationship inside and outside of their state.

Classic works on national identity often emphasize the role of school education as a key factor in fostering a sense of belonging to a nation. This is achieved by socializing young citizens and passing on core national values and practices (Anderson, 2006; Smith, 1989). Therefore, it is crucial to minimize tensions throughout school instruction since

students might grow up believing that injustice is the societal norm, and they may conduct exclusion and discrimination as adults (Bekzhanova, 2024). Thus, given the importance of the school curriculum in developing students' worldviews, it is critical to identify any disparities between national policy and curriculum content (Bekzhanova, 2024).

Education continually has links to cultural politics and power worldwide. Critical scholars believe curriculum reflect cultural, political, and economic interests rather than objective knowledge. For instance, Apple (1979) says *official* or *legitimate* knowledge in classrooms is never neutral. Curriculum reflects culturally and politically dominant groups' values, which are dubbed common knowledge. According to Apple, schools give cultural credibility to the knowledge of powerful groups in society. Later, Apple (1993) uses Gramscian cultural hegemony to explain how a *common* curriculum can impose a selective tradition that benefits the power structure. Cultural hegemony here is a notion where the ruling class dominates a culturally diverse society by shaping its ideas, explanations, perceptions, and values so that their worldview becomes common sense in order to stay in power (Martin, 2023). This viewpoint prompts a thoughtful analysis of the historical events, individuals, and tales of culture that textbooks (a derivative of the common curriculum that directly interacts with the youth) decide to emphasize or exclude, uncovering those whose needs are being favored. The focus on particular national heroes or the sidelining of minority viewpoints may suggest a deeper agenda intended to advance a certain perspective. This process is seen in textbooks through the meticulous selection and presentation of content, which covertly promotes prevailing views while portraying them as natural and unquestioned. Thus, examining textbooks from this perspective necessitates a thorough assessment of their content, language, and structure to reveal the underlying messages that uphold current power dynamics within society.

Another prominent scholar who has critically examined the curriculum as a political and cultural instrument is Giroux (1985). As one of the pioneers of critical pedagogy, Giroux builds upon earlier theories by introducing the concept of the hidden curriculum: the implicit lessons, values, and norms that schools transmit beyond the formal syllabus. According to Giroux (1985), schools function as arenas where cultural politics are enacted and where dominant ideologies are subtly reinforced. He further argues that there exists a structured silence surrounding the relationship between class and culture, which underpins the logic of both the hidden curriculum and the broader schooling process.

From a sociological perspective, Bourdieu's (1990) work similarly illuminates how educational systems, while often claiming neutrality, serve to reproduce social inequalities. Bourdieu contends that the cultural practices of the dominant class are valorized as forms of elite knowledge, and students who possess the corresponding cultural capital are systematically rewarded. Education, in this view, operates through a largely arbitrary cultural system rooted in the maintenance of power relations, even if these dynamics are masked by the appearance of meritocracy. Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence further explains how subordinate groups unconsciously internalize and legitimize the dominant culture as natural and universal, thus perpetuating social stratification (Bourdieu, 1990). In essence, the transmission of culture through formal education becomes a critical mechanism by which class divisions are maintained across generations.

In essence, the approaches that have been stated above indicate that authorities tend to overlook the many different social perspectives and cultures that exist inside a nation, and instead define culture in terms that are confined, nostalgic, and typically conservative. As a result and based on the cultural and historical background of the country, it is more or less expected that Kazakhstan's curriculum and textbooks will correspond with ethnic

equality goals rather than achieving the ones that are in agreement with multinationalism and civic national identity.

Problem Statement

Kazakhstan, a post-Soviet Central Asian nation characterized by significant ethnic and linguistic diversity, continues to face the challenge of building a unified national identity. The education system, acting as a vital foundation for language policy and the development of national identity (Tollefson & Tsui, 2010), is instrumental in influencing collective memory and fostering social belonging. Although the Kazakhstani government officially advocates for a civic identity that encompasses all ethnic groups, policy shifts towards *Kazakhization* indicate a disparity between its rhetoric and actual practices.

Textbooks that receive ministry approval, which are centrally sanctioned and distributed, serve as a crucial means of conveying official narratives to the younger generation. Textbooks play a crucial role in legitimizing specific identities while sidelining others, offering an insightful perspective on how the state conceptualizes national belonging. However, there has been limited research that systematically examines the construction of national identity within these materials, especially through both textual and visual components. The research aims to explore language choices, cultural references, and visual imagery to determine if these textbooks promote a unified civic identity or favor an ethnonational narrative focused on Kazakh culture.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

This study examines ministry-approved textbooks written in Kazakh, Russian, and English and their attempts at developing a sense of national identity in light of Kazakhstan's multilingual society. It acknowledges the inherent connection between language, education, and identity by specifically examining whether the same subject textbooks written in various languages of instruction promote cohesive or divergent

identity construction (Olaoye, 2013). Since grade 9 is a crucial time for adolescents' development of national consciousness, the study focuses on textbooks from this grade.

Two main questions serve as the basis for the research:

- 1) How is national identity represented in grade 9 ministry-endorsed textbooks?
- 2) Does the representation of national identity in textbooks change depending on the language?

Significance

It is necessary to comprehend how national identity is formed through educational materials in order to evaluate Kazakhstan's broader nation-building efforts. Schools play a vital role in helping young people develop a feeling of national belonging, and the language used in textbooks can have a big impact on how students place themselves within the larger national narrative. By analyzing the language and content of textbooks published in Kazakh, Russian, and English, this study sheds light on how education aids in the development of national identity in a bilingual and increasingly trilingual society.

Furthermore, the clash between Kazakh ethnic nationalism and Kazakhstani civic nationalism is a significant issue in contemporary Kazakhstan. Examining how these competing identity models are portrayed in different language streams helps us better understand the ongoing negotiation of national identity in the post-Soviet era. Finally, because language is a powerful tool for establishing and enhancing group membership, this study contributes to our understanding of the intricate links between curriculum design, language policy, and identity development. By focusing on textbook content, the study contributes to broader discussions about education, multiculturalism, and national cohesiveness in Kazakhstan's evolving social scene.

This section offers a clear outline of the chapters that will follow in the thesis. The following section provides an in-depth examination of the literature, placing the study

within wider academic discussions on nation-building, national identity, language policy, and textbook analysis. The inquiry is framed by discussing key theoretical frameworks, including Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, Smith's (1989) ideas on ethnic and civic nationalism, and Apple's (1993) notion of official knowledge in curricula. The following section presents the methodology, detailing the application of critical discourse analysis to investigate Grade 9 ministry-endorsed textbooks in Kazakh, Russian, and English, emphasizing both textual and visual depictions of national identity. The findings section outlines the results structured around the two research questions, examining the portrayal of national identity in various textbooks and investigating whether these portrayals differ based on the language of instruction. The discussion section thoughtfully examines the findings, connecting them to the theoretical literature and emphasizing the study's contributions, contradictions, and implications for educational policy and curriculum development in Kazakhstan. The thesis concludes by summarizing key insights, reflecting on both theoretical and practical implications, and proposing directions for future research.

Literature Review

This chapter conducts a thorough analysis of available literature to contextualize and look at areas related to Kazakhstan's nation-building and education systems. It investigates the complex interactions of ethnic and civic identities, language policy, and their consequences for educational practices. By delving into these subjects, the chapter intends to lay the groundwork for a better understanding of the larger sociopolitical and cultural factors driving policy execution and national identity in Kazakhstan. The chapter finishes with a review of Kazakhstan's textbook evaluation and approval procedure, focusing on recent revisions and their influence on instructional material quality.

Education and national identity in Kazakhstan

In the post-Soviet states of Central Asia, education serves as a crucial instrument for nation-building and the construction of cultural identity. After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, newly independent nations intentionally restructured their educational systems to advance a national narrative and language. A significant change occurred in language-of-instruction policies: Soviet-era schools predominantly used Russian, whereas contemporary governments now emphasize their titular national languages in education to reinforce sovereignty and identity. Since the late 1980s, Central Asian republics have sought to advance their state language across all public domains, particularly in education. Policies were implemented to establish the state language (Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, etc.) as the primary or single medium of instruction, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of Russian-medium and other minority-language schools (Ferrando, 2020).

The government of Kazakhstan has actively promoted Kazakh-language education since the 1990s, explicitly associating it with the restoration of national culture following extensive Russification. The percentage of students enrolled in Kazakh-medium schools has increased more than twofold since the attainment of independence. This initiative is perceived as a nation-building operation, intentionally promoting Kazakh as both the official language and a fundamental aspect of national identity (Makhanov, 2024). This fosters a perception that being *Kazakhstani* entails an appreciation for the Kazakh language and heritage. Language policies exemplify the alignment of curricula with political objectives related to unity and identity formation.

The curriculum in Central Asia has been revised to align with new national ideologies. The government of Kazakhstan revised history curricula and textbooks to promote a patriotic narrative focused on the Kazakh people and state. Burkhanov and Sharipova (2023) conducted a study on Kazakhstan's ministry-approved history textbooks,

focusing on the identities they endorse. Post-independence texts emphasize narratives centered on pride and independence, celebrating the Kazakh khanate, resistance to imperial rule, and the accomplishments of an independent Kazakhstan, while minimizing or recontextualizing the Soviet-era legacy. The official history curriculum constructs a narrative of national identity aligned with contemporary political priorities. These scholars noted that the narrative may differ by language: textbooks in Kazakh often place greater emphasis on heroic national myths compared to their Russian counterparts, indicating distinct imagined communities for Kazakh and Russian-speaking students (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2023). The overall trend indicates that education serves to instill a unified national identity. This case, specific to the region, underscores the general assertion that curricula are constructed through social and political processes. They are not neutral; rather, they are designed to convey specific values, collective memories, and language priorities that reflect the interests of those in power, thereby influencing citizens' identities and reinforcing the established social order.

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan's language policy has navigated a delicate balance between three objectives: reestablishing Kazakh as the core of national identity, maintaining Russian to support interethnic communication, and fostering English proficiency to enhance global integration (Kuzhabekova, 2003). The language reforms implemented after independence significantly influenced Kazakh identity, as the reinstatement of Kazakh in educational institutions, governmental bodies, and media was deemed crucial for reinforcing national identity (Smagulova, 2008). The Kazakh language emerged as a symbol of sovereignty, representing Kazakhstan's independence following extensive Russification. Then President Nursultan Nazarbayev consistently asserted that proficiency in the state language constitutes a patriotic obligation and is essential to Kazakhstan's civic identity. The resurgence of the Kazakh language in educational settings

has enabled a new generation of ethnic Kazakhs to attain fluency in their ancestral language, a circumstance not assured for individuals born in the 1970s or 1980s. The government simultaneously fostered interethnic harmony by accommodating Russian while prioritizing Kazakh, achieving a balance that has been largely accepted by the public. Ethnic Kazakhs predominantly endorsed initiatives aimed at increasing the use of their language, whereas Russian-speaking minorities found reassurance in the continued official protections for Russian (Smagulova, 2008).

Nonetheless, tensions emerged periodically, as certain Kazakh nationalists contended that reforms were progressing too slowly. They referenced data from the 2009 census (Bureau of National Statistics, 2010), which indicated that only 74% of Kazakhstan's population reported proficiency in Kazakh, despite 18 years of independence. In contrast, certain Russian speakers expressed concerns regarding potential loss of status or opportunities due to inadequate proficiency in Kazakh. Kazakhstan managed this linguistic realignment with relative peace, employing gradualism and language education reforms to address divisions from the Soviet era. By the 2000s, the framework was established for a more ambitious policy: not merely bilingualism, but trilingualism - incorporating English alongside Kazakh and Russian.

Formally launched by President Nazarbayev in 2007 as the "Trinity of Languages," (Nazarbayev, 2007) Kazakhstan's trilingual education program sought to generate persons bilingual in English, Russian, and Kazakh. Threefold was the justification: English would be pushed as indispensable for integration into the global economy, science, and business; Russian would continue to be the main language for interethnic communication and regional connectivity; Kazakh would remain the core of national identity and unity. Reacting to globalization, this ambitious approach acknowledged that English competency was becoming more and more important for luring foreign capital and fostering

international alliances. Depending on the type of school, the implementation included changing the curriculum to include English from elementary school using Kazakh and Russian as main teaching languages. While public colleges started providing English-medium programs for STEM disciplines, specialized institutes including Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and some universities embraced Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach (Karabassova, 2020). Teacher shortages, especially for English-medium instruction, unequal implementation across urban and rural locations, and worries that English education may eclipse attempts to improve Kazakh remain obstacles notwithstanding advances (Karabassova, 2020). However, the State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2010) and later governmental initiatives have solidified Kazakhstan's leadership as a regional innovator in official trilingual education. Although urban learners usually flourish in trilingual surroundings, rural places suffer from resource differences, thereby perhaps exacerbating the gap between urban and rural schoolchildren (Imanova et al., 2025). From a Soviet bilingual legacy to a model including a global language, English, Kazakhstan's trilingual education policy indicates an attempt to balance national identity with globalization.

The study done by Nam (2018) found a fascinating link between the language of education and students' national identity in Kazakhstan. Students who received their education entirely in Kazakh displayed a significantly stronger sense of national identity, with a prominent emphasis on their ethnicity. This aligns with the idea that language is a powerful tool for shaping cultural identity. Conversely, students educated primarily in Russian or English demonstrated a weaker overall sense of national identity. Interestingly, their national identity leaned more towards a civic-based perspective, focusing on shared values and national unity rather than ethnicity.

This finding (Nam, 2018) becomes even more intriguing when considering Kazakhstan's unique ethnic makeup. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhs were a minority within their own nation. However, due to significant migration patterns and higher birth rates compared to other ethnicities, particularly Russians, Kazakhs have steadily regained demographic dominance (Bureau of National Statistics, 2015). This demographic shift coincides with a national effort to revitalize the Kazakh language, elevating it to the status of the national language alongside the still-widespread Russian. Kazakhstan's ambitious “Kazakhstan - 2050 Strategy” (Nazarbayev, 2012) takes this a step further, aiming to create a trilingual society by adding English to the educational mix. The interplay between language of education, ethnicity, and national identity in Kazakhstan presents a complex and evolving picture, with ongoing efforts to shape a national identity that reflects both the country's rich ethnic diversity and its aspirations for a unified future.

A study conducted by the Centre for Social and Political Research ‘Strategy’ (2022) revealed the complex interplay between ethnic and civic identities in Kazakhstan. While civic identity ranked lower than familial/tribal and ethnic identities among respondents, the attempt to promote a Kazakhstani national identity has faced opposition from various groups, including local elites who prefer a primordialist perspective (Sultanov et al., 2010, as cited in Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015). Primordialist approach is one of the theories of ethnic identity that describes ethnicity as an unchanging property of people and societies. Primordialists argue that ethnicity is based on inherited biological qualities, a long-standing cultural practice, or a mix of the two. They see ethnic identity as naturally dedicated, long-lasting, and integral to an individual's self-perception and the uniqueness of their group (Reuter, 2023). However, this view of permanent identities ignores the diversity in how ethnic groupings originate, which ranges from transitory associations to deeply embedded, cohesive communities created by common biological

and historical circumstances. This dynamic was visible in Kazakhstan and other countries throughout the years they spent in the Soviet Union (Reuter, 2023).

The notion that the formation of the Kazakhstani nation would inevitably eliminate ethno-cultural diversity is based on Stalin's formula, which equated ethnicity with nationality. This perspective, however, fails to recognize the enduring significance of ethnic identities in shaping individual and collective identities (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015). The challenges faced by Kazakhstan in nation-building are compounded by the country's diverse cultural and historical heritage. While the Soviet legacy has left its mark on Kazakh society, the country's unique cultural traditions and historical experiences have also played a significant role in shaping its identity (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015). Thus, Kazakhstan's post-Soviet experience demonstrates the complexities of nation-building in a multi-ethnic society. While the government has sought to promote a unified national identity, the enduring significance of ethnic identities and the challenges of fostering civic identity have created obstacles. By understanding these complexities, Kazakhstan can develop more effective strategies for building a cohesive and inclusive nation (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015).

Language policy has been a particularly contentious issue in Kazakhstan, characterized by government ambiguity and inadequate implementation of laws and regulations. The country's capacity to carry out public projects, including language policy, remains relatively low. This is evident in the limited use of Kazakh by the general population, with only 36% speaking it fluently and 50% understanding it to some extent (Eldesov, 2014). High-ranking officials are frequently criticized for failing to use Kazakh in official settings, and the implementation of Kazakh in government organizations faces challenges due to a shortage of qualified personnel (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015). The language used by a nation or ethnic group is frequently a sign of identity and allegiance,

reflecting its beliefs, culture, and customs. The language of teaching is the most efficient approach to conserve and renew a language and culture as it is passed down through generations (Fishman & Fishman, 2000). However, it may also be used to carry out linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013), which is the purposeful destruction of a language. The language used for education determines which social and linguistic groups have access to opportunities and which are marginalized. This makes it a significant tool for power distribution and social reconstruction. In Kazakhstan's history, language policy has been influenced by political and social factors. The future of Russian in Kazakhstan is also uncertain, as it may be marginalized if ethnic identification takes precedence over civic identity and the language is eliminated as a medium of instruction. While the Russian Federation will continue to exist, minority ethnic groups who utilized and continue to use Russian may suffer significant identity harm (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015).

Language policy is an important aspect of education, and disputes over it frequently include concerns about educational efficacy. Policymakers frequently utilize an educational justification to explain language-related actions. However, this pedagogical argument is frequently driven by political, social, and economic objectives that favor certain groups. The clash between these objectives is difficult to overcome, and frequently results in political, social, or economic goals gaining precedence over educational considerations (Nam, 2018).

Development of national identity in children

Before proceeding to discuss how national identity is conveyed through textbooks, it is necessary to mention how children even develop their national identity before facing textbooks as schoolchildren. I took a seminal lecture by Dr. Martyn Barret, *The Development of National Identity in Childhood and Adolescence* (2000), as a basis for this section as it: a) offers thorough and evidence-based psychological framework for

comprehending the emergence and transformation of national identity of children from the early stages of life to their adolescence; b) is written in simpler language that is easier to analyze and comprehend.

Firstly, Barrett (2000), utilizing insights from developmental, social, and cross-cultural psychology, differentiates between the cognitive and affective aspects of national identity, highlighting their simultaneous and interrelated progression in children and adolescents.

The cognitive dimension encompasses a child's evolving comprehension of their nation, including its symbols, geography, language, historical figures, and cultural norms. Children start to identify fundamental symbols, including national flags, languages, and prevalent cultural practices, from an early age. This initial understanding frequently adopts an essentialist perspective, as younger children tend to view nationality as an inherent trait or biologically determined status. During the developmental period from ages six to eleven, children's understanding of national identity becomes increasingly complex. Individuals start to recognize that nationality is a construct shaped by social and political factors, linked to legal citizenship, common historical narratives, and collective cultural practices. During adolescence, the majority of individuals can assimilate intricate concepts related to national identity, encompassing differences among ethnic, civic, and political interpretations of nationhood. Formal education significantly influences this knowledge, especially through history, civics, and literature curricula, which offer students organized exposure to national narratives, founding myths, and concepts of citizenship (Crawford, 2006; Barrett, 2007). Therefore, school textbooks and classroom discussions are crucial routes for the transmission and cognitive internalization of national identity content.

The affective aspect of national identity refers to the emotional and evaluative responses that children and adolescents form regarding their national group. These

encompass pride, loyalty, and emotional attachment to national symbols and traditions, along with a sense of similarity and solidarity with fellow citizens. Studies indicate that by age five, numerous children exhibit distinct affective preferences for their national group, frequently assessing it more favorably than foreign groups. Ingroup favoritism often becomes more pronounced during the middle years and may continue into adolescence, though it may manifest in more complex ways (Barret, 2000). With the advancement of cognitive maturity, adolescents develop the ability to maintain ambivalent or critical perspectives regarding their nation, all the while preserving emotional attachment. School-based customs and symbolic practices, including flag-raising ceremonies, national holidays, patriotic songs, and the commemoration of historical figures, reinforce these affective orientations. These practices are particularly effective as they engage both a student's intellectual curiosity and their emotional connection to the learning environment. Barrett (2000) asserts that affective national identity transcends emotional response; it constitutes a systematic collection of attitudes that mirrors extensive cultural and social education processes.

The cognitive and affective aspects of national identity are closely interconnected, frequently enhancing each other during a child's developmental process. An emotional attachment can enhance interest in national learning, whereas a thorough understanding of national history and culture can intensify affective identification (Barret, 2000). An imbalance between the two may result in adverse outcomes. Fostering emotional loyalty without critical understanding may lead to uncritical nationalism or exclusionary attitudes toward minorities and outgroups. In contrast, instructing on national facts without cultivating emotional engagement may lead to a superficial or disinterested understanding of citizenship. Educational systems play a crucial role in balancing these dimensions. They should not only convey factual information but also foster emotional engagement and

facilitate critical reflection. Barrett's cross-national studies, encompassing research in England, Scotland, Catalonia, and Andalusia, highlight the impact of regional and political contexts on children's knowledge of their nation and their sense of belonging. Children in politically autonomous regions like Catalonia exhibit dual identification with both Catalonia and Spain, illustrating how emotional attachments are influenced by exposure to various, occasionally conflicting, national narratives (Barret, 2000).

Understanding the dual nature of national identity development is crucial for designing educational interventions that promote informed, inclusive, and critically engaged citizens. Schools function not only as venues for the dissemination of knowledge but also as spaces for the formation of identity. Their provision of tools, encompassing language, curriculum, and symbolic practice, facilitates the development of both understanding and emotional grounding in young individuals, enabling them to perceive themselves as constituents of a national community. The interaction between cognitive learning and emotional attachment is fundamental to the cultivation of national identity during the crucial developmental phases of childhood and adolescence (Barret, 2000).

National identity in textbooks

Textbooks are a potent tool used by nations to create and communicate a sense of national identity to their youth. Textbooks are commonplace in both primary and secondary schools, particularly in disciplines like language, literature, and history. They frequently provide an official account of the country's history, heroes, ideals, and position in the world. As societies reinterpret who *we* are, this narrative is always being modified through political discussion and curriculum reform (Hutchins, 2016). In fact, national education systems are known to be quite good at engaging people and that governments use them to create a shared collective memory and support national philosophy and identity (Benini, 2023). Prominent scholars of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner and

Anthony D. Smith have observed that mass schooling is fundamental in fostering national identity, bringing youth together into a shared “imagined community” (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2023).

Although there are several common markers that define a nation and set it apart from others, the focus on these markers varies depending on the region and political context. For example, one nation's textbooks may celebrate secular republican values while minimizing the role of religion, whereas another may emphasize religious identity. Some nations embrace ethnic diversity in their narrative, while others create a more uniform national story. This survey examines the construction of national identity in textbooks from various regions, emphasizing the differences in content and methodology.

Starting from United States of America, it is notable that for a long time, American history and civics textbooks have helped build a national identity based on patriotism, democracy, and a story of growth that brings everyone together. U.S. history books usually talk about the country's founding values (like freedom and equality), national heroes like the Founding Fathers and presidents, and important events from the American Revolution to the world wars of the 20th century. The narrative here encourages a kind of religion based on the Constitution and other patriotic symbols. Scholars point out that U.S. history education frequently promotes a celebratory narrative, but it has also been the location of contestation between more traditional patriotic myths and critical, inclusive revisions (Hutchins, 2016). Over the years, American textbooks have undergone revisions to incorporate perspectives that were once marginalized - for instance, placing greater emphasis on the experiences and contributions of women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other minority groups. The changes signify advancements in society, exemplified by movements like civil rights, as well as a transition in academia towards embracing multiculturalism. Research indicates that continuity frequently takes precedence

over change in U.S. textbooks: emerging themes such as multiculturalism or gender equality are added onto the narrative, yet the fundamental story and list of prominent figures generally stay remarkably stable (Hutchins, 2016). Efforts to significantly alter the national narrative may encounter political pushbacks from conservative factions and local educational authorities. For instance, more critical perspectives on American history – those that honestly address injustices such as slavery or the displacement of Native peoples – have occasionally been softened in response to backlash, as certain communities worry these discussions could undermine patriotism. Consequently, the content of U.S. textbooks emerges from a dynamic interplay between progressive revisions and a conservative commitment to preserving a proud national narrative (Hutchins, 2016).

Regardless of the discussions surrounding it, American textbooks clearly seek to foster a common identity. They highlight the importance of national unity and civic loyalty, frequently infused with a nuanced sense of patriotism. An analysis conducted by Merry (2009) notes that U.S. history texts foster a form of patriotism that can be subtle and not immediately apparent. To foster a sense of connection with the homeland, the patriotic inclination can be as nuanced as employing pronouns like *we* or *us*. The structure of curricula, featuring daily recitals of the Pledge of Allegiance, chapters on national holidays such as Independence Day, and narratives about American inventors and explorers, fosters a shared identity. In conclusion, American textbooks shape national identity by recounting a shared history of challenges and victories, honoring national figures, and endorsing the concept of American exceptionalism, which suggests that the U.S. possesses a distinct mission and set of values (Merry, 2009).

Moving on, an impressive instance of creative method made by Europe in order to convey a multifaceted narrative is the Franco-German joint history textbook project, which addresses concepts of national identity. In 2006, France and Germany introduced

Histoire/Geschichte, the first bi-national secondary history textbook, created through the collaboration of French and German historians and published in both languages (Siegel & Harjes, 2012). This project was designed to foster a collective understanding of history and to symbolically cement the reconciliation between France and Germany following centuries of competition and discord. The textbook offers a cohesive account of modern history, showcasing narratives from both perspectives and illustrating how education serves as a means for fostering international cooperation and peace. This joint textbook highlights a transition in certain areas of Europe from solely national narratives to more transnational and diverse perspectives – an effort to reconcile national memory with a wider European identity.

Even with these efforts, it is crucial to recognize that throughout much of European history, textbooks served to bolster nationalist feelings that corresponded with the political requirements of each nation. Scholars highlight those textbooks from the 19th to 20th century in Europe frequently aligned with state agendas. For instance, early 20th-century French textbooks fostered a sense of patriotism linked to republican ideals, whereas German textbooks prior to 1945 advanced imperial or ethnonationalist narratives under the Kaiser and subsequently the Nazis. Even today, discussions persist in Europe regarding the approach to sensitive historical topics (e.g. colonial history or regional independence movements) within school curricula. In the UK, there is a continuous dialogue regarding the teaching of empire and Commonwealth history, as this has implications for British national identity (McDermid & Foster, 2024). After the fall of communism, Eastern European countries needed to revise their textbooks to forge new national identities. They transitioned from Marxist-Leninist interpretations of history to narratives that emphasized national independence and frequently underscored the suffering experienced under Soviet rule. The varied experiences across Europe illustrate that, although European textbooks are

progressively emphasizing critical inquiry and occasionally a collective European memory, each country continues to meticulously shape its own identity narrative within its educational materials (Głowacka-Grajper, 2018).

In contrast to two previous regions, textbooks in East Asian countries tend to be more openly used as an instrument for shaping national identity, and their content more often than not reflect 20th century conflicts and contemporary ideological goals. China, for example, serves notably as a government that intentionally employs textbooks to promote patriotic nationalism. Following the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Chinese authorities initiated an extensive Patriotic Education Campaign aimed at reinforcing the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China by fostering nationalist sentiment (Maosen et al., 2004). This campaign resulted in significant changes to history education, whereby the textbooks started moving away from previous class-based Marxist narratives to a national narrative focused on 100 of years of humiliation of the country, portraying the time of domination by foreign powers from the 19th to mid-20th century, and the ensuing revival (Liu & Ma, 2018). History textbooks were revised to highlight events such as the aggression of Imperial Japan, the Opium Wars, and various injustices committed by Western powers – depicting China historically as a victim transformed into a victor under Communist Party of China leadership (Wang, 2008). By the mid-2000s, Chinese textbooks had adopted a distinctly nation-centric approach. For instance, new editions around 2007 provided significantly more detailed accounts of Japanese wartime atrocities, minimizing previous references to Japan's positive contributions, and overall portrayed Japan in a consistently negative manner as the national antagonist. This revision aimed to strengthen the narrative of national unity in the face of external threats (Vickers & Biao, 2013). The campaign effectively integrated these themes into educational content, earning recognition for cultivating a strong sense of Chinese nationalism among the youth and promoting a vision

of China as a cohesive national entity. In primary schools, Chinese language and moral education textbooks also promote patriotism, frequently emphasizing love for the motherland and respect for national symbols. Recent studies by Lee & Wang (2023) indicate that Chinese textbooks persist in promoting patriotic values, pride in China's accomplishments, and loyalty to the state, adhering closely to the ideological framework of the Communist Party of China.

Having discussed a nation that used textbooks to strengthen the unity in the state, this section addresses how the textbooks were used as a support system to create a unified national identity from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in a region that gained independence after long years of colonial struggle. A comparative study of Senegal and Zambia (Benini, 2023) highlights that both nations strategically utilize education to advance state-centric narratives of national identity, yet they achieve this through different representational frameworks influenced by their individual colonial histories, religious and ethnic makeups, and political ideologies. In Senegal, history textbooks highlight the significance of historical depth and continuity by linking the contemporary nation to esteemed precolonial polities like the Wolof and Serer kingdoms, while also weaving Islamic heritage into a cohesive cultural narrative. This method fosters a somewhat unified perception of national identity that blends cultural pride with political stability (Benini, 2023). In Zambia, the precolonial landscape was characterized by greater ethnic breakdown, leading textbooks to focus on the colonial and post-independence eras, especially highlighting the anti-colonial struggle and the pivotal leadership of Kenneth Kaunda. In Zambia, national unity is expressed more through postcolonial ideals, such as the motto “One Zambia, One Nation,” rather than through shared ancient histories. Textbook narratives aim to diminish ethnic divisions by representing all groups as equal contributors to independence and development (Benini, 2023).

Coming closer to Kazakhstan, it is important to discuss the relationship between textbooks and national identity in post-Soviet countries first. Firstly, Baktygul Ismailova's (2004) article provides a valuable insight into how newly independent post-Soviet states, especially Kyrgyzstan, have reformed their educational systems to foster national identity formation. Ismailova (2004) examines the evolution of the Kyrgyzstani history curriculum following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, highlighting the role of educational reform as a key element in the larger context of nation-building. Throughout the Soviet era, Kyrgyz students were immersed in a pan-Soviet identity shaped by a uniform Marxist–Leninist historical narrative that overlooked local histories, cultures, and ethnic uniqueness. Following this legacy, the reforms in Kyrgyzstan after 1991 aimed to indigenize the curriculum by reinstating pre-Soviet historical narratives and highlighting Kyrgyz traditions and values, cultural heroes, and Kyrgyz language (Ismailova, 2004).

Another example is Nancy Popson's (2001) study that offers important insights into the construction and communication of national identity through educational materials in post-Soviet Ukraine. In examining a state-approved fifth-grade history textbook authored by Viktor Mysan, Popson (2001) illustrates that the textbook functions not merely as a means of conveying historical information but also as a significant ideological instrument for the process of nation-building. The text constructs a coherent vision of the Ukrainian nation by highlighting selective historical narratives, focusing on foundational periods such as Kyivan Rus', the Cossack Hetmanate, and the independence movements of the 20th century. Popson (2001) contends that although the textbook seeks to foster civic unity, it significantly depends on ethnic identifiers like language, heritage, and national heroes, illustrating what she describes as “a civic nation built on an ethnic cultural pillar” (p. 343). This duality indicates a conflicted stance on inclusivity, as the portrayal of non-Ukrainian ethnic groups continues to be restricted or peripheral.

Textbooks and EML approval process

Kazakhstan's centralized education system mandates that the majority of mainstream schools adhere to a ministry-sanctioned national curriculum, thereby ensuring consistency in instructional materials nationwide. Public school textbooks are predominantly produced by major publishing companies, including Mektep, Atamura, and Almatykitap. The textbooks are published in four official languages: Kazakh (the state language), Russian (the language of interethnic communication), Uighur, and Uzbek, which reflects the linguistic diversity of the country. Upon approval by the Ministry of Enlightenment of Kazakhstan, specifically the Republican Centre for Examination of Educational Content (n.d.), these textbooks are disseminated nationwide and implemented across all grade levels. Textbooks are generally reissued every five years with limited modifications, ensuring a significant level of consistency over time (Republican Centre for Examination of Educational Content [RCEEC], n.d.).

The process of selecting authors for textbooks and educational and methodological literature (EML) in Kazakhstan is a multi-faceted endeavor involving various stakeholders and criteria. At the core of this process is the composition of the author team, which typically includes a scientist with expertise in subject matter and at least two educators. This ensures a balanced perspective that incorporates both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience (RCEEC, n.d.).

The responsibility for selecting authors lies with competing private publishers. These publishers employ a competitive personnel selection process that emphasizes the reputation and professional achievements of potential authors. This rigorous process aims to identify individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of producing high-quality educational materials. To guide the selection process, authors must adhere to specific guidelines outlined in the Ministry of Education and Science Order No. 132

(hereby Order) (2020). This order provides detailed requirements for the structure and content of textbooks and EML. Additionally, the Republican Centre for Examination of Educational Content (RCEEC) offers comprehensive criteria that authors are obligated to be trained on (RCEEC, n.d.).

By following these guidelines and criteria, the selection process ensures that textbooks and EML are developed by qualified individuals who can contribute to the quality and effectiveness of education in Kazakhstan. This rigorous approach helps to maintain high standards and ensures that students receive educational materials that are both informative and engaging. In Kazakhstan, the evaluation of textbooks and EML is entrusted to a team of experts. These experts consist of a scientist with subject matter expertise and two teachers who possess a deep understanding of the educational landscape. Working in a confidential mode, these experts play a crucial role in ensuring the quality and relevance of educational materials (RCEEC, n.d.).

Moving into the process of selecting evaluation experts for textbooks and EML. The RCEEC (n.d.) is responsible for selecting the experts who will evaluate textbooks and EML. A rigorous selection process is in place to identify individuals who meet the necessary qualifications and possess the expertise required for this critical task. To be selected as an expert, individuals must demonstrate compliance with specific qualification requirements. They undergo comprehensive training and are introduced to the external database of experts. The selection is based on a thorough evaluation of their previous experience and the results of various tests (RCEEC, n.d.).

In addition, there are guidelines set up to objectively evaluate the textbooks and EML. The experts are guided by a set of guidelines that ensure the evaluation process is objective and comprehensive. These guidelines include the requirements for the structure and content of textbooks and EML as outlined in the Order (Ministry of Education and

Science [MES], 2020). Additionally, the experts adhere to detailed criteria approved by the RCEEC (n.d.) Academic Council. The involvement of experts in the evaluation process is essential for maintaining the quality and relevance of educational materials in Kazakhstan. Their expertise and objectivity contribute to the development of textbooks and EML that meet the needs of students and educators alike (RCEEC, n.d.). Kazakhstan's textbook regulations have recently been updated, bringing numerous substantial modifications aimed at improving students' educational experiences. One of the most significant changes is the limitation on textbook translations in Kazakh language institutions. This guideline requires that all textbooks used in these schools be written completely in Kazakh (RCEEC, n.d.).

The revised rules also place a strong emphasis on prioritizing Kazakhstani content. Textbooks must now instill love and respect for the Motherland, promote national ideals, and explore the history and culture of the Kazakh people. This involves showcasing historical and contemporary heroes, folkloric imagery, and other important issues. In addition, the revised standards meet modern-day issues. Textbooks are intended to avoid anything that is potentially harmful or elicits negative emotions, such as suicide, terrorism, cruelty, violence, or an overwhelming dread of making mistakes. Instead, they should encourage environmental stewardship, expose kids to a variety of occupations, and develop a good attitude toward work (RCEEC, n.d.).

The age appropriateness of textbooks is also an important concern. The text, images, exercises, and narrative language should be customized to the age range of the children. This entails establishing a balance between developing cognitive capabilities, providing both standard and novel circumstances, and employing suitable evaluation techniques (RCEEC, n.d.).

Finally, the new criteria include particular guidelines for e-learning publications. Textbooks and educational and methodological literature must now be created as software products on a web platform and delivered via external media. This assures their accessibility and interoperability with new educational technology. The primary functional and technological features of these e-learning publications are likewise well defined. These revisions attempt to make Kazakhstani students' educational experiences more relevant and engaging, by matching textbooks with the country's cultural, social, and technical achievements (RCEEC, n.d.).

Finally, the whole timeline of evaluation starts with the clearance process for textbooks and EML in Kazakhstan used as a multi-step process that ensures the quality and relevancy of educational materials. This approach includes thorough evaluations by professionals at various phases. The first level consists of scientific and educational knowledge provided by an external panel of specialists. The panel consists of a scientist, two practical teachers, and an RCEEC specialist. The review procedure takes about 50 days. If the textbook or EML passes this step, it is submitted to the publisher for editing. The publisher conducts the editing step, which normally lasts 40 days. During this stage, essential adjustments and enhancements are implemented based on the comments from the initial expert review (RCEEC, n.d.).

Following the editing step, the textbook or EML goes through a second phase of scientific and pedagogical review. This examination involves the same panel of experts, which includes a scientist, two practicing teachers, and an RCEEC specialist. If the textbook or EML satisfies the necessary requirements, it advances to the trial stage. The trial stage is an important phase in the approval process. It entails testing the textbook or EML in pilot classrooms. At these schools, teacher-approbators analyze and offer comments on the contents. In addition, the Teacher's Association, which is made up of

instructors who are members of the organization, helps with the review. Based on the comments, the publisher makes any required changes (RCEEC, n.d.).

After the trial period, the textbook or EML is returned to the publisher for final editing, which usually takes 10-15 days. The final stage is the evaluation by the topic expert committee. This committee is comprised of a new set of external specialists, including academics, working teachers, and methodologists. They thoroughly examine the textbook or EML, both online and offline. If the materials match the necessary criteria, they are included in the approved list of textbooks and EML. This multi-step review procedure assures that Kazakhstan's educational system only uses high-quality textbooks and electronic learning materials. By consulting specialists at various phases, the process ensures that instructional materials remain relevant, effective, and pedagogically sound (RCEEC, n.d.).

Conceptual Framework

This study utilizes a conceptual framework that synthesizes three significant theories to examine the portrayal of national identity in educational resources. Initially, Apple's (1979) notion of official knowledge elucidates that textbooks are not impartial carriers of information; rather, they serve as tools that embody and validate the beliefs and ideologies of predominant groups. Secondly, Smith's (1991) differentiation between civic and ethnic nationalism offers a framework for assessing the many national identity theories presented in the textbooks, focusing on either collective citizenship or ethnocultural legacy. Third, Anderson's (1983) concept of imagined communities emphasizes that nations are socially constructed entities, maintained through common narratives and symbols reinforced by institutions like schools. This study critically analyzes the utilization of language, culture, and historical narratives to cultivate a feeling of national

identity among students in a multilingual and multiethnic society through the integration of several theoretical frameworks.

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), developed by Norman Fairclough (1992), investigates how language within institutions such as schooling reflects larger societal power relations. Fairclough contends that daily communication patterns frequently include underlying ideologies, or “unconscious assumptions” (1992, p. 207). These beliefs may be employed to sustain social order through consent, and language serves as the major means of transmission. Fairclough underlines the need to closely examine how language usage perpetuates existing power systems (Fairclough, 2001).

This research study uses CDA as a methodology to examine how Kazakh, Russian, and English languages are employed in ministry-approved textbooks for public schools in grade 9. Students in this age range provide an invaluable opportunity since their national identity is still developing (Daniel & Benish-Weisman, 2019). The study intends to shed light on the ideological forces that shape this evolution by investigating how these textbooks reflect national identity through linguistic choices.

According to Fairclough's approach, discourse can be thought of in three interconnected dimensions: social practice (the larger social and cultural framework in which the discourse exists), discursive practice (the creation, dissemination, and consumption of the text), and text (the linguistic elements of the discourse). This research emphasizes the dimensions of textual and discursive practices.

Analysis of text investigates the written content and visual components of textbooks, focusing on the construction of national identity through symbols, language, historical references, and values.

Discursive practice analysis examines the ways in which content is illustrated, framed, and presented across various subjects and languages, focusing on aspects such as layout, emphasis, and the selection of illustrative examples. This approach recognizes that the visual and textual presentation of information influences its ideological message.

The textbooks were acquired in digital format and analyzed in their original languages. The textbooks were systematically organized in an Excel file based on their language of instruction, with each entry corresponding to relevant excerpts or visual elements. Each entry was recorded with contextual information, thematic codes, and initial observations.

The study concentrated on identifying markers of national identity and analyzing their presentation and framing across various subjects and languages. This entailed an analysis of both textual content and discursive practices, specifically how information was visually and textually represented across different subjects and languages. Visual elements, including illustrations, photographs, symbols, and layout, were deemed essential for comprehending the construction and communication of identity. The analysis of national identity markers focuses on cultural symbols (e.g., traditional games, artifacts, national monuments), historical references (e.g., Kazakh heroes, historical events), language use (e.g., Kazakh, Russian, and English; emphasis on state language versus multilingualism), values and ideologies (e.g., patriotism, unity, multiculturalism, modernization), and ethnic representation (e.g., depictions of diversity and inclusiveness).

The study employed discursive practice analysis to examine the framing and presentation of content, focusing on layout and design (the arrangement and emphasis of text and images), visual cues (the reinforcement or contradiction of textual messages by illustrations, diagrams, and photos), language framing (the differences in emphasis or ideological tone among Kazakh, Russian, and English texts), and educational objectives

(the integration of national identity with learning goals, including the promotion of patriotism or multiculturalism through specific examples).

The analytical process involved multiple steps, starting with a textual and visual examination of textbooks in Kazakh, Russian, and English. Relevant excerpts and visual elements were meticulously documented and categorized according to their significance in the construction of national identity. The subsequent phase involved coding and thematization, wherein text and images were categorized based on themes related to identity markers. Particular emphasis was placed on the varying framing, illustration, and emphasis of these markers across different languages and subjects. A comparative analysis was conducted to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the construction of national identity within Kazakh, Russian, and English textbooks. This included an examination of whether specific languages or subjects presented national identity more prominently or divergently. Interpretation was conducted to connect findings to wider sociopolitical contexts, specifically Kazakhstan's policy objectives of cultivating a unified national identity alongside the promotion of multilingualism. The methodology utilized captured both the content of the textbooks and the manner of their visual and textual presentation, providing insights into whether these materials fostered a cohesive or divergent sense of national identity among students.

To incorporate all relevant grade 9 textbooks in all three language mediums, a purposeful sampling technique was employed. The official textbook list for grade 9 (included in the Ministry's publications catalog) was first assembled into an inventory. Textbooks covering every major subject area and every instruction language were chosen from this list. In actuality, this meant adding language and literature courses in both Kazakh and Russian (e.g., Kazakh language (L1), Russian literature (L1), Kazakh as a second language (L2), Russian as a second language (L2)), the natural sciences (biology,

physics, chemistry), the social sciences (history of Kazakhstan, world history, geography of Kazakhstan, basics of law), and mathematics (algebra, geometry) (see Table 1). The English textbook for Grade 9 (an English as a foreign language subject) and other bilingual versions, where appropriate, were also used to incorporate English-language topics.

Every textbook was acquired in digital format (e-book or PDF) from online repositories of authorized materials. After that, the writings were methodically arranged according to subject and language. Excerpts and pictures from every source were compiled into an Excel file. Each entry in this spreadsheet represents a significant passage or graphic component, together with metadata (textbook title, page number, and context). This method made systematic review easier. All of the core Grade 9 textbooks currently in use are included in the sample, offering thorough curriculum coverage. Comparability between subjects and languages is guaranteed by this stratified purposive sampling.

Findings

The grade 9 curriculum in Kazakhstan integrates aspects of national identity across multiple subjects, providing students with both ethnic and cultural references and inclusive civic themes. Table 1 shows the list of textbooks that were analyzed.

Table 1. *List of textbooks analyzed*

Textbook name	Author(s)	Year of release
Kazakh language (as L1)	Dauletbekova Zh., Rauandina A., Dusimbaeva M.	2019
Kazakh literature (as L1)	Aktanova A., Zhundybaeva A., Zhumekenova L.	2019

Kazakh language and literature (as L2)	Kurmanalieva A., Iskakova Zh., Amanbaeva A.	2019
Russian language (as L1)	Sabitova Z., Beisembaev A.	2019
Russian literature (as L1)	Anishchenko O., Shmeltser V., Poluianova A.	2019
Russian language and literature (as L2)	Salkhanova Zh., Khairusheva E., Pralieva Zh.	2019
Algebra	Shynybekov A., Shynybekov D., Zhumabaev R.	2019
Geometry	Shynybekov A., Shynybekov D., Zhumabaev R.	2019
Informatics	Mukhametzhanova S., Ten A., Golikova N.	2019
Geography of Kazakhstan	Usikov V., Egorina A., Usikova A., Zabenova G.	2024
Biology	Asanov N.,	2019

	Solovieva A., Ibraimova B.	
Physics	Zakirova N., Ashirov R.	2019
Chemistry	Usmanova M., Sakariianova K., Sakharieva B.	2019
History of Kazakhstan	Uskembraev K., Saktaganova Z., Mukhtaruly G.	2019
World History	Aldabek N., Makasheva K., Baizakova K.	2019
Basics of law	Ibraeva A., Goncharov S.	2019
Arts and Crafts (for girls)	Alimsaeva R., Velker E.	2019
Arts and Crafts (for boys)	Chukalin V., Tuleuov N., Tanbaev K.	2019
English Language (Excel for Kazakhstan (grade 9) Student`s book)	Jenny Dooley, Bob Obee. Translations by: Natalya Mukhamedjianova	2019
Informatics (bilingual)	Yerzhanov E.,	2019

	Gesen I., Aidarbayev N., Akhmetov N., Shaniyev Y.	
Physics (bilingual)	Tashev N., Shokobalinov N., Duseyev Y., Karabatyrov A., Baieshov A., Artykbayev A., Auyelbayeva K.	2018
Chemistry (bilingual)	Baikenov K., Khassen T., Zhumagulov N., Kaliyev D., Yussupov O., Samatov A., Sel A., Tor A.	2018
Biology (bilingual)	Karimova N., Sagintayev A., Ermetov B., Kenci B., Akhmetova A., Nuraliyeva L.,	2018

	Jilkaidarova A,	
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These representations of national identity can be categorized into two interrelated types: Kazakh ethnic national identity, which includes the references to folklore, traditions, and symbols relevant for Kazakh people; and civic Kazakhstani identity, which shows unity, diversity and shared citizenship within the modern Kazakhstan. Here, I am going to describe the presence, framing, and function of national identity in these textbooks using particular examples of grade 9 textbooks in written in English, Russian, and Kazakh.

The representation of national identity

The representation of Kazakh elements

A significant manner that national identity is shown is through the use of ethnic cultural symbols and traditional practices in lessons. There are examples of Kazakh national games and objects in STEM textbooks, which are usually thought to be more neutral and focused on the subject content more:

Figure 1. *Algebra exercise with integration of a traditional game Togyzkumalak*

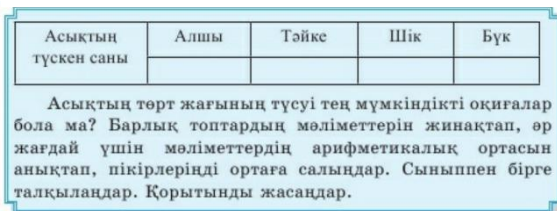
2.42. Тоғызқұмалақ ойыны турниріне қатысушылардың әрқайсысы қалғандарымен бір-бір партия ойнап шығуы қажет еді. Турнирге қатысушылардың екеуі әрқайсысы үш-үш партия ойнағаннан кейін денсаулығына байланысты турнирден шығып қалды. Егер бұл жарыста барлығы 16 партия ойналған болса, онда басында турнирге неше ойыншы қатысқан?

In the grade 9 algebra textbook (Shynybekov et al., 2019a), a word problem, shown in Figure 1, presents the Kazakh traditional game *Togyzkumalak*, a strategic board game frequently compared to mancala, within the context

of mathematics. By referencing *Togyzkumalak*, the math book links abstract mathematical thinking to a well-known local tradition, presenting mathematics as intertwined with students' cultural heritage.

Another example from algebra (Shynybekov et al., 2019a), represented in Figure 2,

Figure 2. Exercise on probability using *assyk*

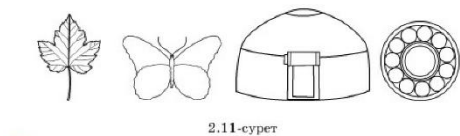


is the mention of *assyk*, the small sheep ankle bone utilized in a Kazakh children’s tossing game akin to jacks or bowling. The textbook teaches the concept of probability, usually done using a coin or some dice, effectively

integrating a familiar ethnic game piece into the learning process. These examples illustrate how ethnic symbolism, such as traditional games and toys, serves as educational tools that strengthen national identity by incorporating indigenous games into academic content.

The geometry textbook (Shynybekov et al., 2019b) also incorporates cultural motifs naturally. Figure 3 illustrates a *kese*, a type of Central Asian cup or bowl, and a

Figure 4. Objects used to show real-life examples of symmetric objects

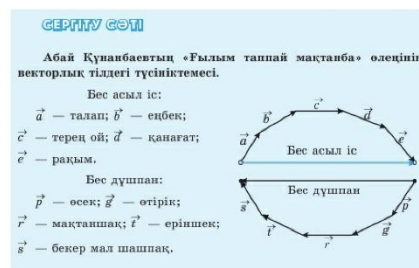


yurt, a type of traditional round tent used by nomadic groups in Central Asia, serving as the examples of symmetric objects. Incorporating items familiar to students from Kazakh dining

culture and lifestyle into a geometry lesson focused on symmetry helps connecting national material culture with mathematical concepts. In the other sections of the geometry book (Shynybekov et al., 2019b), a notable cultural figure from Kazakhstan, the poet-

philosopher Abay, is referenced: a popular poem created by Abay is exemplified through a vectors exercise (Figure 4). This example integrates a renowned Kazakh literary figure into a mathematical context displaying interdisciplinary connection, and the inclusion of Abay’s words

Figure 3. Exercise on vectors that uses Abay's poem



enriches the lesson with moral or philosophical significance rooted in national heritage. It is important to point out that Abay’s surname is presented in its Russian form (Kunanbayev) within the Kazakh text, a slight inconsistency that I will address when comparing with other textbooks later.

The crafts subjects, which in Kazakhstan are grouped by gender, prominently feature cultural symbols. The Arts and Crafts (*Khudozhestvennyi trud / Korkem enbek*) textbook (Alimsaeva & Velker, 2019) for girls is beautifully designed with Kazakh

Figure 6. *A project work in Arts and Crafts (girls)*



ornamental patterns throughout its pages and includes lessons focused on traditional arts. The book explores Kazakh carpet weaving as “one of the artistic expressions of the Kazakh people,” (p.10) detailing the traditional customs associated with carpets. Students are tasked with a project to create a carpet featuring Kazakh national ornaments, allowing them to actively engage in the

reproduction of cultural designs (shown in Figure 5). In a similar vein, the Arts and Crafts for boys textbook (Chukalin et al., 2019) features Kazakh elements in its design, demonstrating that even technical or vocational projects for boys integrate national ornamental styles (for instance, woodworking or metalworking tasks may incorporate Kazakh patterns, see Figure 6). These textbooks serve to preserve and transmit ethnic heritage to the younger generation by placing Kazakh cultural artifacts and crafts at the heart of learning

Figure 5. *A project work in Arts and Crafts (boys)*



«Сәлем! ІМНО, мен біздің шежіремізді зерттеуде тамаша нәтижелерге қол жеткіздім. АФАІК біздің үлкен атамыз патшалық дәрігері болған.
 ВТW, сен атамыздың анасы жағынан кім болғанын білесің бе? АSAP мұны мен зерттеуімді жалғастыру үшін шұғыл түрде білгім келеді.
 АКА, біздің ортақ досымыз Темірлан атамыз жағынан бізге алыс туысқан болып шықты. LOL және осы жағымды жаңалықтарға қуанамын. Менің ойымша, Темірлан да менің хатымды алғанда қуанып қалады.
 WBR. сенін аған.

Figure 7. *A text in Kazakh with English abbreviations*

activities. The framing is confident and instructive: these traditions are showcased as valuable knowledge, placing students as heirs to a profound cultural heritage.

In general, the construction of national identity tends to be optimistic and open-minded. Ethnic Kazakh cultural elements are portrayed as valuable treasures to take pride in, with an appreciative and encouraging tone surrounding Kazakh games, arts, and customs as they have been shown in previous paragraphs.

The representation of Kazakhstani elements

Linguistic inclusion forms one of the aspects of how the civic identity is illustrated in the textbooks. The trilingual education policy of Kazakhstan is evident in the textbook that occasionally incorporate multiple languages in their content. The informatics textbook (Mukhametzhanova et al., 2019) demonstrates a significant integration of English and Kazakh languages through a text that explains English abbreviations, featuring English colloquial terms within a primarily Kazakh (or Russian depending on the medium of instruction) context. The effect sets students as citizens of Kazakhstan and as participants in a globalized environment. The image illustrated in Figure 7 conveys an implicit yet significant message that adopting English, the global language of science and technology, can be achieved while retaining one's Kazakhstani identity. Multilingual proficiency is considered a valuable national resource. The framing

is optimistic and progressive, suggesting that Kazakhstanis can take pride in their heritage while actively participating in contemporary society.

Textbooks also foster civic pride by highlighting national achievements and advancements within the subject content. Numerous examples and tasks, especially in the field of science, are contextualized within the unique landscapes and achievements of Kazakhstan. The physics textbook (Zakirova & Ashirov, 2019) includes the Baikonur Cosmodrome (see Figure 8), the first-ever space launch facility situated in Kazakhstan, within the context of a lesson on space exploration. The text highlights Baikonur's



Рис. 44. К вопросу 1.
Велосипед казахстанского
производства, г. Алматы

Figure 9. *A bicycle made in Kazakhstan*

significance, which emphasizes Kazakhstan's role in significant advances in humanity and establishing the country as an essential contributor to scientific progress. Similarly, regular word problems attempted to be adapted to a local context. For instance, a physics task has utilized a bicycle manufactured in Almaty, shown in Figure 9, to illustrate the principles of machinery. A

further example in physics involves a skiing path in *Shchuchinsk*, a resort located near the town, to illustrate friction and slope calculations. The overarching effect of local brands, places, and infrastructure contributes to the perception of Kazakhstan as an industrially and technologically advancing nation. Students observe that their nation generates valuable products, hosts international events, and possesses modern cities and infrastructure that merit inclusion in academic literature. This integrates patriotism into everyday education, positioning pride in national development as an essential aspect of understanding mathematical or scientific concepts.

Figure 8. *Information about Baikonur*

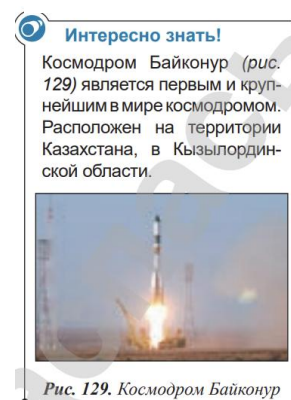


Рис. 129. Космодром Байконур

The anthem and the term Kazakhstani highlight the importance of national unity and statehood. The modern examples are approached with a forward-looking and inclusive tone. For instance, the integration of English and Kazakh in an ICT lesson indicates that one can be both Kazakhstani and globally savvy (see Figure 7).

In addition, the content does not exhibit any explicit negativity or exclusion of minorities; rather, it subtly acknowledges diversity through the inclusion of names and ethnicities in the examples provided. This is illustrated by several examples. The Informatics (Mukhametzhanova et al., 2019) textbook presents an activity or data table

that features a column dedicated to individuals' ethnicity, specifically highlighting Kazakh, Russian, and Korean as example ethnic groups (referenced in Figure 10). This serves as a clear recognition of Kazakhstan's diverse ethnic composition

Figure 10. Example dataset from Informatics textbook

	A	B	C	D
1	Аты	Ұлты	Көз түсі	Бойы (см)
2	Айнұр	қазақ	қоңыр	155
3	Айдар	қазақ	қоңыр	157
4	Света	орыс	көгілдір	160
5	Сергей	орыс	көгілдір	156
6	Имаш	қазақ	қоңыр	160
7	Сара	қазақ	қоңыр	152
8	Алина	корей	жасыл	158
9	Максим	корей	сұр	161
10	Анна	орыс	жасыл	162

4-сурет. Бастапқы кесте

within a lesson. It is important to note here that in Kazakhstan Korean people tend to have Russian names. So, a hypothetical individual of Korean ethnicity might be named Vladimir Kim, highlighting the demographic reality that many Korean Kazakhstani citizens possess Slavic first names as a result of historical integration. This detail, although it may seem like an unintentional quirk of the example, effectively illustrates a realistic portrayal of Kazakhstani identity; a blend of ethnic backgrounds and traditions, where an individual may be ethnically Korean, have a Russian first name, and hold citizenship in Kazakhstan. Incorporating such examples into a computing lesson, where it is portrayed just as regular data to be used in a task, allows the textbook to normalize the concept of ethnic diversity and integration as an integral aspect of daily life. It instructs students on

diversity in a straightforward manner and emphasizes the civic importance of unity in diversity – that all these ethnic groups belong to *us*.

At the same time, the analysis of the world history textbook (Aldabek et al., 2019) within the set of textbooks indicates that it has not been significantly localized in its content, predominantly offering a Eurocentric perspective. The perspective appears to be predominantly that of Western nations, with Eastern or African countries depicted primarily as colonized entities. This indicates that, as of the 2019 edition, the world history curriculum continued to adhere to a conventional Western-centered timeline and did not reinterpret global history from a Kazakhstani or entirely post-colonial perspective. The national identity markers in this world history text are either subtle or missing; rather,

Еуропалық мәдениеттің «ісіп жетілгендігін», оның ежелгі архангалық мәдениетке, Шығыстың мәдени мұраларына жақындауына ұмтылысынан көруге болатын еді.

В поисках нового вдохновения европейское искусство начинает тяготеть к древним архаическим культурам, наследию искусства Востока — Китай, Индия, Япония, Африка, первобытное искусство, а также к истокам собственных культур (иконы, готика, лубок). Все эти течения, обратившиеся к корням народного творчества и примитивизму, отразились в *неопримитивизме*.

Figure 11. *Differences in information based on the language of instruction*

Kazakhstan, along with the non-Western world, is portrayed without agency in the narrative, depicted as more of a colonized region. This framing shown in Figure 11 might unintentionally clash with the nation-building tone present in other topics. It indicates that not every subject was updated to include a proud national perspective – world history might depend on international academic content that is less tailored. The influence of a Western viewpoint in world history may subtly strengthen the notion of Kazakhstan as a participant in a global narrative, yet it does not effectively foster national identity, aside from possibly emphasizing the nation’s history of colonization. In the Russian-language world history text (Aldabek et al., 2019), there is a discussion of the art movement *Neoprimitivism*, which is a Muscovite style from the early 20th century. This topic holds

niche relevance and is more aligned with Russian cultural history than with Kazakh history. The Kazakh version of the same textbook left out this detail (as indicated in Figure 11), highlighting that certain content in the humanities can vary depending on the language.

Influence of Languages of Instruction on Differences in Content

The second research question examines whether the representation of national identity varies according to the language of instruction. Specifically, it investigates whether Kazakh-language, Russian-language, and English-language textbooks emphasize identity in distinct ways. The analysis indicates that core themes are consistent across languages, though notable variations in content and emphasis exist. The national identity messages outlined above, celebrating Kazakh culture and fostering a diverse civic nation, are designed as universal curriculum objectives in Kazakhstan. Subtle differences arise when comparing textbooks across languages, primarily due to translation and adaptation processes, as well as potential adjustments for diverse student audiences.

The Kazakh-medium and Russian-medium textbooks analyzed in various subjects exhibit comparable content concerning national identity. This is expected, given that the curricula sanctioned by the Ministry mandate identical learning standards for both streams, and numerous textbooks are initially created in one language (commonly Russian) before being translated into the other. Furthermore, national curriculum guidelines likely mandate the inclusion of specific identity elements, thereby ensuring a baseline consistency. The cultural examples found in the algebra and geometry textbooks (Shynyberkov, 2019a, 2019b), such as traditional games, folk objects, and quotes from Abay, are likely included in both the Kazakh and Russian editions of these texts. Consequently, a student in a Russian-language mathematics class is likely to encounter *togyzkumalak* and *assyk* in their algebra problems, similar to a student studying in Kazakh. The integration of ethnic and

national elements in mathematics and science appears to be standardized, indicating a deliberate consistency across languages.

Note. This is the only localized task

out of two whole practice pages

19. A plane flies to Karagandy 500 km due east from the airport. Then it flies from Karagandy to Astana 225 km northwest. Draw a vector diagram and determine the straight-line distance and direction from the airport to Astana.

Figure 12. *Localized task*

An analysis of the STEM textbooks in

English suggests that their content may have been

influenced by educational materials originally

developed for English-speaking contexts. Although

this observation remains speculative, it appears that

the integration of Kazakhstani national identity

elements within these textbooks is relatively superficial. For example, Figure 13, which is

a screenshot I took from a physics textbook (Tashev et al, 2019), is where only one task

was localized. Other tasks either did not have any names or they had Eurocentric names.

National symbols and cultural references are sporadically included but do not seem as

deliberately or consistently embedded as in textbooks produced in Kazakh or Russian. In

contrast to English language textbooks authored by European scholars - where limited

cultural localization might be understandable due to unfamiliarity with Kazakhstan's

context - the STEM textbooks in question are authored by local Kazakhstani specialists.

This raises questions regarding the depth of national identity integration. One possibility is

that the authors sought merely to fulfill the minimum cultural content requirements

mandated for approval by the Republican Centre for Examination of Educational Content

(RCEEC), rather than engaging in a more substantive incorporation of national elements.

Another explanation, informed by anecdotal insights from students currently attending

Kazakhstani secondary schools, is that bilingual STEM textbooks are often treated as

supplementary materials. In such cases, students primarily rely on standard textbooks

written in Kazakh or Russian, using the English-language versions periodically to

reinforce language skills. This supplementary status could account for the relatively

surface-level integration of national identity content observed in the English-medium STEM textbooks.

The Kazakh-medium textbooks, composed in the national language, integrate cultural references, linguistic conventions, and orthographic norms that align closely with the experiences and expectations of ethnic Kazakh students. Surnames in these textbooks typically follow Kazakh linguistic patterns, using endings consistent with Kazakh grammar and cultural naming traditions. Similarly, the textbooks make full use of the expanded Kazakh alphabet, which includes specific letters such as *ә, 2, қ, ң*. This linguistic environment presupposes a high level of familiarity with the Kazakh script and phonetics, reinforcing the primacy of the Kazakh language in national identity construction and literacy development.

Figure 13. *Names of the national heroes using Kazakh letters*

Ресейдегі Ақпан және Қазан революциялары Қазақстанға да әсері етті. Генерал-губернаторлар жойылды, олардың орнына облыстық комиссарлар тағайындалды. Уақытша үкіметтің шешімімен Ә.Бөкейханов Торғай облысына, Ж.Досмұхамедов — Орал, М. Шоқай — Түркістан облыстарының комиссары ретінде тағайындалды. Ұлттық казак облыстары мен уездік комитеттер құрылды.

In contrast, Russian-medium textbooks adjust content to enhance accessibility for students whose first language may not be Kazakh. Surnames are often presented in Russified forms, using standardized Russian transliterations or suffixes, thus aligning with linguistic practices more familiar to Russian-speaking students. Furthermore, Russian-medium textbooks naturally avoid the Kazakh-specific letters absent from the Cyrillic Russian alphabet, thereby simplifying reading tasks for non-Kazakh speakers. For

Февральская и Октябрьская революции в России нашли отражение и в Казахстане. Были упразднены генерал-губернаторы, вместо них назначались областные комиссары. Букейханов был назначен Временным правительством комиссаром Тургайской области, Тынышпаев — Семипалатинской, Досмухамедов — Уральской, Чокаев — Туркестанской. Были образованы национальные казахские области и уездные комитеты.

Figure 14. *Names of the national heroes, which were Russified*

example, it is quite noticeable in history textbooks (Aldabek, 2019), where the names with Kazakh letters in them are switched to Russified versions (Figures 13 and 14). In addition, it is interesting to note that this is done only one-way, textbooks written in Kazakh do not add Kazakh letters to make it palatable for Kazakh speakers. This difference in script usage not only eases the cognitive load for Russian-dominant students but also subtly influences how national identity is experienced linguistically: Kazakh culture is presented, but through the intermediary lens of the Russian language.

Additionally, some divergences in tasks and readings can be attributed to translation dynamics. Certain literary works or historical texts may have been translated only into Kazakh or only into Russian, resulting in variations between the textbooks. For instance, a Kazakh-medium textbook may include excerpts from a Kazakh epic that remains untranslated into Russian, while the Russian-medium version may substitute a different text or provide a summarized version. This is what I assume had happened in the geography of Kazakhstan textbook (Usikov et al., 2024), where the task in the textbook written in Kazakh is to read extract of a literary work, whereas the textbook in Russian was given a task similar in nature but not the same one (Figures 15 and 16). These differences, although partly logistical, have broader implications for the construction of national

Figure 16. *The task in the textbook written in Russian*



Figure 15. *The task in the textbook written in Kazakh*

identity: students are exposed to distinct narratives and literary canons depending on their language of instruction. As a result, the experience of national belonging may be subtly shaped by the linguistic medium, reinforcing either an ethnocultural Kazakh perspective or a more civic, multilingual Kazakhstani orientation.

Moreover, the process of textbook creation and translation introduces additional shifts. Translation choices, such as which terms are explained, which names are adapted, and how cultural references are rendered, can create discrepancies in meaning, tone, and emphasis. While Kazakh-medium textbooks often assume shared cultural knowledge, Russian-medium textbooks sometimes adopt an explanatory or even slightly distanced tone, positioning Kazakh culture as an object of learning rather than a shared heritage. Such differences underline the challenges of crafting a unified national identity through multilingual education and highlight the complex role that language policy, translation practices, and literacy skills play in shaping students' engagement with the national narrative.

Discussion

This study sought to address two crucial questions: how is national identity represented in textbooks and how does the representation of national identity differ between textbooks in Kazakh and those in Russian?

Language of instruction and identity formation (RQ2)

The analysis reveals that, in the grade 9 textbooks available in both Kazakh and Russian, the overarching theme reflects the state's nation-building initiative: students are encouraged to take pride in Kazakhstan's history and culture, while recognizing their identity as members of a unified nation. Every textbook, irrespective of the language, attempted at integrating the key national symbols, historical references, and cultural

touchstones, which are predominantly about Kazakh culture, in order to be certain that majority students acquire a shared foundation of national identity content.

At the same time, there are some differences identified during the textual analysis in the same subject textbooks designed for Kazakh and Russian classrooms. However, these differences are delicately balanced by a central story of oneness. Curriculum developers appear to have preserved a foundation tale of national pride and shared identity across both mediums of instruction, which aligns with Kazakhstan's post-independence goal of nation-building through diversity. Any variances in tone or detail do not detract from the overall narrative; rather, they provide complexity that speaks to each audience while maintaining the same underlying concept of what it means to be Kazakhstani.

In general, the goal of the textbooks is national cohesion, and their content serves as a unifying pattern for identity, treating the nation as a family in which all children, regardless of language of teaching, learn the same story of national togetherness and pride. This conclusion demonstrates that Kazakhstan's policymakers do try to employ education as a tool for social integration, a trend seen in many nation-building programs around the world (Tollefson & Tsui, 2010). By carefully monitoring textbook material, the state constructs an imagined community of Kazakhstani citizens (Anderson, 1983), uniting a variety of ethnic and linguistic groupings behind a shared national narrative. This is consistent with critical curriculum theory, which holds that curricula are never neutral; rather, they serve political aims and reflect the views of those in power (Apple, 1993).

The understanding of how the language of instruction mediates the representation of national identity is one of this paper's major contributions. Given that the majority of Kazakhstan's mainstream schools have separate classroom for different languages of instruction, there was a minor possibility of this resulting in divided identities or conflicting national narratives. The analysis of the textbooks indicates that the government

has intentionally implemented measures to avoid any significant divergence. Despite the subtle distinctions highlighted earlier, the core narrative of the nation remains consistent across both the Kazakh-medium and Russian-medium textbooks. This suggests a deliberate approach to curriculum development aimed at maintaining a unified national narrative despite linguistic differences. This approach is consistent with the argument presented by Tollefson and Tsui (2010) that medium-of-instruction policies are inherently biased and frequently advance particular political agendas in multilingual contexts. In this instance, the objective seems to be nation-building via bilingual uniformity by employing both Kazakh and Russian channels to disseminate the same state-sanctioned narrative of history and identity (Tollefson & Tsui, 2010). The Ministry's strategy aims for a cohesive outcome by ensuring that Kazakh-language schools and Russian-language schools do not promote divergent identities. Instead, all students, regardless of the language of instruction, should graduate with a comparable understanding of their country and their role within it. This strategy addresses the imperative of nation-building in post-colonial Kazakhstan: to mend divisions and foster a unified national community following the Soviet era, while ensuring that Russian-speaking minorities, who constitute a significant portion of the population, are not marginalized.

The subtle shifts in tone and detail I noted for each audience reflect careful consideration of how the message is conveyed. The Kazakh-medium textbooks, composed in the national language, seamlessly incorporate cultural references that resonate with ethnic Kazakh students, thereby strengthening their connection to the national narrative. The Russian-medium textbooks enhance accessibility for students who may not have an ethnic Kazakh background by offering additional background explanations on Kazakh terms or by incorporating the Russian versions of certain names into the narrative. This may be seen as a practical approach to incorporate non-Kazakhs into the envisioned

community, allowing them to engage with pride in these national symbols instead of feeling alienated from the narrative. The narrative's packaging varies somewhat to cater to the audience, yet the pride and loyalty it aims to evoke remain unchanged. This tailoring demonstrates a recognition that national identity encompasses not only the lessons imparted but also the connections formed with learners. This aligns with theories of multicultural education, indicating that curriculum content should connect with students' cultural backgrounds to achieve genuine inclusivity (Banks, 2008). The use of familiar linguistic forms for Russian-speaking students serves as a means to connect them to a national narrative that is predominantly centered around Kazakh culture. The state aims for a cohesive patriotism: a Kazakhstani identity that goes beyond language while still being rooted in the rich Kazakh cultural heritage. This method appears to be an attempt to engage in a more compassionate style of ethnocultural nation-building, as indicated in our analysis and reflected in Popson's comparison. It steers clear of the severe exclusion or assimilationist tone found in certain early post-Soviet national curricula (Popson, 2001), choosing integration over assimilation instead. The textbooks avoid portraying any group as the Other or suggesting any inferior status for minorities; they focus solely on one cultural narrative. Kazakhstan's education authorities navigate a delicate balance: they advocate for a civic identity narrative that appears inclusive, yet this narrative is profoundly rooted in the heritage of the majority.

Official knowledge and grade 9 textbooks

According to Michael Apple's idea of official knowledge (1979, 1993), which is one of theories used to build the conceptual framework of this thesis, school curriculum is a collection of accepted facts that reflect the beliefs of dominant groups rather than being impartial. According to Kazakhstan's 9th grade textbooks, it can be assumed that building a national identity is mostly about learning the official story of who *we* are as a country.

Most of the topics and languages in Kazakhstan's curriculum include important parts of the country's history. This shows what the government thinks students should know about their country. The results show that content related to national identity is purposefully added to many topics, such as history, literature, math, and science. Apple (1979, 1993) says that the curriculum promotes the view of the strong, which is supported by the fact that patriotic themes are used a lot.

In this regard, it is important to note that the grade 9 textbooks indicate that the Kazakh cultural perspective is frequently regarded as the standard conventional knowledge of the nation. Reflecting Apple's (1993) perspective that curricula mirror the culture of the politically dominant group, numerous identity markers in the textbooks are derived from Kazakh (ethnic) traditions and history. The grade 9 algebra textbook (Shynybekov, 2019a) includes the traditional Kazakh game togyzkumalak within a word problem. Students are invited to explore the outcomes of this game, gaining insight into a piece of nomadic heritage within their math class. In a different algebra problem (Shynybekov, 2019a), the concept of probability is illustrated through the use of assyk rather than the usual coin or dice. Embedding indigenous games in the curriculum without clearly explaining their cultural significance suggests that knowledge of these ethnic traditions may be presumed and regarded as basics for any educated student in Kazakhstan. This particular tradition emphasizes Kazakh ethnic culture as an essential element of the nation's official knowledge foundation.

The trend keeps appearing in other subject areas. Geometry lessons (Shynybekov, 2019b) feature illustrations of a yurt and a kese as examples of symmetrical objects. A task on vectors in the same textbook references a renowned poem by Abay. In both instances, mathematical concepts are conveyed through allusions to national cultural icons, thereby emphasizing the universal significance of those icons. The grade 9 Arts and Crafts

textbooks (Alimsayeva & Velker, 2019; Chukalin et al., 2019) also position Kazakh heritage as the focal point of official artistic knowledge. The craft textbook for girls showcases Kazakh ornamental patterns throughout its pages and includes a project focused on designing a traditional Kazakh carpet adorned with national motifs. The boys' craft textbook features woodworking and metalwork projects that integrate Kazakh national patterns and symbols. Through these projects, students engage in the reproduction of cultural artifacts, effectively embodying their role as keepers of Kazakh national culture. Therefore, the assumption is that traditional arts, crafts, and symbols of Kazakhstan hold significant value and needs to be preserved and shared, with schools serving as the means for this important transmission.

All things considered, these patterns could help to explain how Kazakhstan's educational resources foster a selective legacy, therefore favoring particular stories and cultural components. The existence of small discrepancies and varying depth of subject area localization, however, points to an official knowledge application that is not total or uniform. It would take more study to find out how deliberately and consistently these identity stories are being shared.

Imagined community through the textbooks

Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities (1983) offers a helpful lens for seeing how Kazakhstani textbooks could foster a common national awareness. Textbooks in Kazakh, Russian, and English could help students feel as a whole by means of national symbols, events, and shared values mentioned often. Textbooks could be motivating students across language streams to picture themselves as part of a unified national narrative by including common references such the national holidays or personalities like Abay.

There are also visible attempts to advance civic unity. The use of words like Kazakhstani and illustrations including different ethnic groupings could suggest efforts to promote a civic national identity encompassing all ethnic communities. Exercises in informatics (Mukhametzhanova et al., 2019), for example, that include multiethnic names and datasets might support the notion that Kazakhstan is a varied yet unified society. Though ethnic components remain important, these instances could help to support the theory that Kazakhstan is trying to build a civic imagined community (Anderson).

Though the textbooks seem to promote a common vision of nationhood, the subtle differences between language versions might result in somewhat different readings of what it means to be part of the Kazakhstani nation. More study would be required to find out how these variations are seen by students and how they affect their feeling of belonging.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that this imagined community exhibits some degree of heterogeneity. Kazakh-medium textbooks assume a higher level of cultural familiarity, thereby creating an imagined community that emphasizes ethnic Kazakh heritage and identity. Russian-medium textbooks facilitate this process by providing explanations and tailored references, encouraging students from non-Kazakh backgrounds to engage with the imagined community, while framing Kazakh culture as a subject to be studied rather than an intrinsic aspect of shared identity. In contrast, English-medium textbooks, due to their limited integration of national symbols, contribute less effectively to the formation of a Kazakhstani imagined community, instead promoting students' engagement in a more globalized context.

Consequently, the textbooks not only contribute to the nation-building endeavor outlined by Anderson but also expose the inherent tensions in forming a civic national identity in a multilingual, multiethnic context. The strength and character of the imagined

community are influenced by the language of instruction and the degree to which national narratives are integrated and localized within educational materials.

Ethnic and civic nationalism in the textbooks

Anthony Smith's (1991) difference between ethnic and civic nationalism provides a helpful perspective for reading the two messages in Kazakhstan's grade 9 textbooks. While civic nationalism emphasizes shared values, rights, and political institutions, ethnic nationalism stresses shared legacy, culture, and language. The textbooks seem to mix both approaches, perhaps mirroring the state's complicated nation-building plan.

Civic nationalist ideas are evident, particularly in mentions to the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, the use of inclusive language such as Kazakhstani, and the portrayal of ethnic diversity as a strength. Examples from informatics (Mukhametzhanova et al., 2019) and geography (Usikov et al., 2024) textbooks that depict ethnic diversity in a favorable, normalized way could be interpreted as attempts to foster a civic sense of national belonging. Including English words and worldwide allusions could also help to promote a civic story of modernization and international involvement.

Simultaneously, there remain significant ethnic nationalist components. Many topics prominently include Kazakh cultural symbols, customs, and historical stories. Textbooks on history and literature especially stress Kazakh heroes, folklore, and themes of national resurrection. This focus might indicate a continuous attempt to re-center Kazakh ethnic identity following decades of Soviet marginalisation.

All in all, the textbooks utilize inclusive civic terminology, such as referring to the populace as Kazakhstanis and celebrating unity in diversity, reflecting the civic model of nationhood. Conversely, the content of the curriculum is significantly influenced by the heritage of the titular ethnic group (Kazakhs). This duality reflects the observations made by Popson (2001) regarding the textbooks of post-Soviet Ukraine: a superficial layer of

civic national unity supported by an ethnic cultural foundation (Popson, 2001). In Ukraine, a state-sanctioned history textbook aimed to foster loyalty to a civic Ukrainian state by emphasizing the Ukrainian language, ethnic heroes, and folk culture. This led Popson to characterize it as “a civic nation built on an ethnic cultural pillar” (Popson, 2001, p. 343). The Grade 9 textbooks of Kazakhstan exhibit a notably similar pattern. The idea of civic identity is advocated in theory, yet it is fundamentally rooted in Kazakh ethnicity in practice. My analysis clearly demonstrates that Kazakh language and cultural symbols are prominently featured, similar to the way Ukrainian symbols were highlighted in Popson’s case. At the same time, the contributions of non-Kazakh ethnic groups are recognized only to a limited extent. For example, in the Kazakhstani textbooks I examined, there are occasional references to Russian or Korean names in passing exercises, as well as mentions of other minorities within a broader educational context. These inclusions are praiseworthy as a recognition of the country’s diversity; however, they largely serve as symbolic gestures. The narrative consistently centers on the story of the Kazakh people, with little emphasis on the contributions of Russians, Ukrainians, Uyghurs, or other minorities to Kazakhstan’s national history. This suggests that, in spite of the discourse surrounding multiethnic inclusion, the educational material emphasizes what Popson (2001) refers to as the ethnic pillar of the nation. Burkhanov and Sharipova (2015) observed a foundational ambiguity in Kazakhstan’s identity policies: while the state theoretically promotes a civic identity, it practically prioritizes the culture of one ethnic group over another. The textbooks I reviewed validate this uncertainty within the curriculum. A clear tension exists between civic unity and ethnonational content, which corresponds with Popson’s (2001) portrayal of Ukraine’s early nation-building and the critical insights regarding Kazakhstan’s nation-building difficulties (Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2015; Smagulova, 2008).

This duality could suggest that Kazakhstan is aiming for a hybrid model of nationhood: one that aspires to civic inclusiveness while anchoring itself in a particular ethnic legacy. Such a model might respect the legacy of the titular ethnic group while still allowing for wide national identification. The unequal distribution of civic and ethnic material across textbooks and languages, however, could run the risk of confusing students.

Ultimately, the results of this study point to an effort in Kazakhstan's grade 9 textbooks to negotiate the difficulties of national identity in a multilingual, multiethnic setting. Though with varying emphasis and tone depending on language and topic, they seem to support a unified national narrative. Though they emphasize the complexity and limitations of applying such frameworks in reality, these depictions could fit more general theoretical models around official knowledge, imagined communities, and hybrid nationalisms. Evaluating the real influence of these representations on national identity creation would benefit from more empirical studies including students' readings.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Points

The purpose of this study was to look at how national identity is built and represented in Kazakhstan's Grade 9 ministry-approved textbooks, as well as if these representations differ depending on the language of teaching used. The findings, based on a critical discourse analysis of both textual and visual elements, revealed that Kazakh-medium textbooks incorporate national identity elements in a way that assumes cultural familiarity, employing Kazakh script, surnames, and historical references that are particularly appealing to ethnic Kazakh students. In contrast, Russian-medium textbooks give additional background explanations and change language elements to make them more accessible to non-Kazakh speakers, implying an effort to create a more civic-oriented

Kazakhstani identity. Meanwhile, English-medium STEM textbooks showed a very superficial incorporation of national identity aspects, most likely due to translation challenges and their secondary role in education. Overall, the analysis indicates that, while all textbooks strive to promote a unified national narrative, differences among languages reveal inherent tensions between civic and ethnonational forms of identity. Thus, the study has successfully answered its original goal of examining the discursive creation of national identity in Kazakhstan's educational resources.

Limitations of the Study

Several constraints must be addressed. First, while critical discourse analysis gave valuable insights into textual and visual representation, the study did not involve classroom observations or interviews with teachers and students, which could have shed light on how textbooks are perceived and used in practice. Second, while my interpretations are based on recognized CDA technique, they are ultimately subjective and influenced by theoretical perspectives, as is typical of discourse-analytical research. Especially when it comes to the linguistic aspect of the analysis, as I am not a professional.

Implications

The findings have important consequences for theory, policy, and practice. The study adds to the growing corpus of research on the significance of schooling in national identity building, particularly in multilingual, post-Soviet situations. It supports critical academics' claims (e.g., Apple, Bourdieu, Giroux) about curriculum's non-neutrality and the subtle ways in which dominant ideologies are reproduced in educational texts. In terms of policy, the study implies that Kazakhstan's efforts to reconcile ethnic and civic nationalism through textbooks have been only partially effective, with minority children potentially alienated if Kazakh-centered narratives are not carefully filtered across all language streams. For Kazakhstani policymakers, the study emphasizes the significance of

more coherence and intentionality when constructing multilingual educational resources. While Kazakhstan's curriculum strategy demonstrates an official commitment to multilingualism and civic nation-building, differences in textbook content and tone across languages indicate that implementation still favors an ethnic-centric paradigm in some circumstances. To truly create an inclusive civic identity, future textbook creation must ensure that national narratives, cultural references, and historical instances are thoroughly and meaningfully localized across all language streams, rather than merely translated or altered superficially.

Curriculum frameworks could benefit from including more explicit multicultural and civic-oriented narratives that highlight the contributions of different ethnic groups to Kazakhstan's progress. Such an approach would serve to balance the dominating Kazakh ethnocultural framework and better reflect the country's professed principles of "unity in diversity."

In practice, textbook developers should be more sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students, ensuring that cultural allusions are not simply translated but meaningfully modified across languages. Furthermore, training for authors and translators should contribute to more consistent integration of multicultural identification markers. For textbook authors and educators, the study underscores the importance of going beyond the surface-level incorporation of national features. Rather than regarding Kazakh cultural references as aesthetic serves as or minimal approval requirements, authors should strive for real integration, ensuring that national symbols and stories are organically connected to the subject matter. Educators, too, must be aware of how textbooks shape national identity and augment classroom instruction with critical discussions of these myths, particularly in linguistically and ethnically diverse classrooms.

Teachers in bilingual and trilingual classrooms should be trained to notice subtle discrepancies in identity creation across textbooks and devise measures to promote a more inclusive and thoughtful feeling of national belonging among all pupils. Professional development programs focus on providing teachers with critical pedagogy skills so that they can enable meaningful and sensitive talks about identity, diversity, and belonging.

Recommendations

Future studies could build on this research by expanding the scope to include earlier and later grade levels, thereby providing a longitudinal view of how national identity messages evolve across a student's educational journey. Investigating the reception of textbook content through student interviews, classroom ethnographies, or teacher surveys would also offer valuable insights into how discourses of national identity are actually internalized, contested, or negotiated in everyday educational practices. Comparative research with other multilingual post-Soviet states, such as Kyrgyzstan or Ukraine, could further illuminate how textbook policies reflect broader regional trends in nation-building and language politics.

Final Reflections

Conducting this study has been a transformative intellectual experience. Engaging deeply with Kazakhstan's educational materials has not only strengthened my understanding of critical discourse analysis but also sensitized me to the complex interplay between language, power, and national identity in a postcolonial, multicultural society. Navigating the nuances of different language mediums revealed how subtle shifts in text and imagery can carry profound ideological weight. The process of critically examining textbook materials, which often get overlooked in everyday schooling due to its nature of being passed down by the authorities, has reinforced my belief in the importance of scrutinizing educational resources as active instruments of societal construction. This

research journey has sharpened both my analytical skills and my appreciation for the challenges and responsibilities inherent in shaping collective identities through education.

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Thesis Title: The Representation of National Identity of Kazakhstani Citizens in Ministry-Endorsed Textbooks for Secondary Schools

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