Ethnic Narratives in Education: The Role of Kazakh Epics in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Identity

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Abstract: The study examined the effects of teaching activities, including Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images, on the participants' national value achievements and attitudes towards the course in literature courses in Kazakhstan. This study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, and a control group. The dependent variables were the national value achievement scale and literature course attitudes. The independent variable was the teaching activities based on Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images in the second-year courses of the literature department of a university in Almaty. The national value achievement and attitude scales were used to collect data, which were analyzed with covariance analysis. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' national value achievement scores in the experimental group exposed to Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images. The study's findings pave the way for recommendations for integrating culturally meaningful narratives into education. First, culturally rich content such as Kazakh Epics should be included in Kazakhstan's literature departments' curriculum, and policymakers and curriculum developers should prioritize the creation of teaching materials that emphasize these epics' historical, ethical, and literary aspects. Second, the accessibility of these materials should be increased, and their compatibility with contemporary educational goals should be ensured. Third, teacher training programs should be reorganized to emphasize culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches. Though this study was localized, the research results can be applied to education systems in different geographies to develop cultural identity and values.
Keywords: Kazakh Epics, mythopoetic images, acquisition of national values, attitude

The heroic epic genre finds its first sources in ancient myths, heroic stories, and old epic narratives, and it develops in parallel with the changes in historical reality and social consciousness. In this context, the epics offer a rich narrative integrity that includes mystical elements and reflects the historical-cultural heritage. Such works, which are included in the oral tradition of the ancient Turkic peoples, come with heroism, supernatural symbols, and social values, especially in the Kazakh epic tradition. The heroic images in Kazakh folk epics reflect the combination of historical realities and mythological layers. They can be evaluated as deep metaphors symbolizing Kazakh old beliefs and social structure (Ăzîbayeva, 2014; Bozhedonova & Ivanov, 2019; Karimova et al., 2024; Reichl, 2000). The Kazakh epic tradition,

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especially in works such as Edige Batır and Alpamysh Batır, is shaped by mythological elements from the hero's birth to their death. These epics offer complex and multi-layered narratives in which historical events and mythological elements are intertwined (Sharakpaeva & Erzhanova, 2019; Sultangareeva, 2018; Sultan et al., 2024).

The use of Kazakh epics and mythopoetic images in literature teaching in Kazakhstan is based on the historical and cultural significance of heroic epics. These narratives, rooted in ancient myths and heroic stories, not only reflect the spiritual and moral values of the Turkic people but also serve as a powerful tool in transmitting historical consciousness between generations (Auezov, 1991; Toyshybaeva, 1962). Including epics in literature programs aims to enable students to understand their national identity and cultural values more deeply. In addition, mythological motifs and heroic images in epics increase students' historical awareness and significantly contribute to the internalization of national values (Désirée Lange et al., 2023; Reichl, 2000; Tansug, 2009). Mythopoetic images facilitate their connection with their cultural identity and discovery of the past (Toyshybaeva, 1962; Reichl, 2013).

Despite the rich history and extensive literary analysis of Kazakh heroic epics and their mythopoetic images, current literature tends to focus predominantly on their historical, literary, or folkloric dimensions without thoroughly investigating their direct pedagogical impact. Many studies have highlighted the aesthetic and narrative qualities of these epics (e.g., Auyesbayeva et al., 2024; Ăzîbayeva, 2014; Reichl, 2018; Sayfulina et al., 2020), yet few have empirically examined how incorporating such culturally significant materials can influence students' acquisition of national values and attitudes in literature courses (Bekpenbetova et al., 2024; Ibraev, 2012; Reichl, 2005). This lack of integration between literary heritage and modern educational outcomes constitutes a significant gap in the literature. While some researchers have discussed these narratives' thematic universality and ethical dimensions, they have not systematically analyzed how these elements affect students' cultural identity and engagement with the subject matter (Urmantche, 2015). Moreover, the existing research does not clearly delineate the mechanisms by which mythopoetic content may be operationalized in teaching practices.

There is a pressing need to explore the intersection between cultural preservation and pedagogy, particularly in contexts where national identity is closely tied to historical narratives. The current study addresses this shortfall by adopting a quasi-experimental design that links teaching activities based on Kazakh epics to measurable educational outcomes. By doing so, it aims to provide quantitative evidence for the role of culturally responsive content in shaping both cognitive and affective dimensions of student learning. This research, therefore, goes beyond traditional literary criticism to bridge theory and classroom practice. Ultimately, the study sets out to define the pathways through which ancient epic narratives can inform modern teaching methodologies, thereby extending the scope of epic studies into the realm of educational research.

In addition to addressing the pedagogical potential of Kazakh epics, the present study also highlights the underexplored relationship between mythopoetic imagery and national value formation in higher education. Previous research has often treated these epics as static cultural artifacts, focusing on their narrative structure and historical contexts rather than their dynamic role in contemporary classrooms (Auyesbayeva et al., 2024; Ăzîbayeva , 2014; Reichl, 2018). This narrow focus has left unanswered questions regarding the extent to which engagement with these texts can transform students' perceptions of literature and cultural identity. Moreover, studies examining the impact of culturally relevant materials in education have rarely used rigorous experimental designs, limiting their findings' generalizability (Sharakpaeva & Erzhanova, 2019; Sultangareeva, 2018).

The current work employs a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures to quantify changes in national value achievement and attitudes toward literature courses. Such an approach is novel in the context of Kazakh literary studies. It offers a fresh

perspective on how historical and mythological content can be a tool for cultural transmission and value internalization. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the role of the teacher as a mediator between ancient texts and modern interpretations, thus offering practical insights for curriculum development. By investigating both these epics' cognitive and emotional impacts, the research fills a critical gap in the literature, linking cultural heritage with educational practice. This comprehensive approach enriches our understanding of the epics and provides a model for future studies seeking to integrate cultural narratives into pedagogy. In this way, the study makes an important contribution to literature, folklore, and educational research by demonstrating the multifaceted benefits of culturally responsive teaching.

Origins of the Epic Tradition and Epics

Heroic epics, taking their roots from ancient myths, heroic stories, and ancient epics, develop parallel with changes in historical reality and social consciousness. The Turkic epic tradition reflects these ancient motifs and carries a historical and spiritual burden. In particular, the epics of Tuva, Khakass, Yakut, and Altay prominently feature mythological elements such as the extraordinary birth of the hero, his struggle against hostile forces, and his leadership of the society (Auyesbayeva & Akimova, 2024; Ibraev, 2012). These supernatural beings are called Shor or Shulbu and are included in the epic universe from ancient beliefs (Kudaibergenova, 2013; Kulavkova, 2020). The structure of the epic often reflects the basis of shamanic myths (Merrill, 1998; Novruzova, 2018; Reichl, 2008; Seres, 2010). However, in the Kazakh epic tradition, elements such as the hero's birth in extraordinary circumstances and his sanctification with the symbols of dreams and visions bear traces of ancient mythical knowledge (Zhanpeissova & Kuzembayeva, 2019). Another prominent dimension is the mythological context of the epic hero's conflict with power and social order (Seres, 2010). In the Turkic epic tradition, female heroes stand out as a remarkable research topic. In the Kazakh epic tradition, female heroes appear more as figures who continue the lineage or provide moral support to the hero (Toyshybaeva, 1962).

In heroic epics, the interweaving of mythological elements with historical events is frequently observed. For example, in the epic "Edige Batir," mythological elements are blended with a historical hero figure (Auyesbayeva & Akimova, 2024). In some versions, elements indicating supernatural help explain the association of the hero's birth with extraordinary circumstances. In addition, ancient beliefs such as the "snake pregnancy" motif are repeated in the epics of other Turkic people, revealing the existence of a common mythological pool (Putilov, 1998; Qasqabasov, 1984; Somfai Kara, 2010). Similarly, in the Kazakh epic "Alpamys Batır," the hero's family cannot have a child for a long time. They make a mystical visit and pray. Then, they have a child endowed with extraordinary powers. This indicates that mythological thought has come to life again in epic form (Preston, 1947). The inclusion of historical periods, especially tribal conflicts, in the narrative reinforces the realism dimension of the epic, while mythical elements carry the identity of the hero to a legendary dimension. Therefore, the balance between historical reality and mythological imagination is one of the most striking features of heroic epics. In addition, the imagination and artistic approach of the narrators during the oral transmission of the epic reshapes the interaction of historical and mythological layers (Reichl, 2018). This situation shows that the Turkic epic tradition is a literary genre that contributes to the writing of history and the creation of oral memory. Thus, mythical material is included in the narrative of historical events and becomes a functional element in transmitting national and cultural identity (Urmantche, 2015).

Historical events in Turkic epics are often enriched with mythological narrative strategies. Thus, the heroes' actions go beyond an ordinary historical narrative to a sacred time-space dimension. For example, in Kazakh epics, events from the Genghis Khan period or the Golden Horde period are reconstructed by equipping epic heroes with extraordinary powers and

interacting with supernatural beings (Tleubergenov et al., 2016; Zhirmunskii, 1974). Historical heroes gain superhuman qualities in the mythical universe of the epic and become symbols of the people's national consciousness. This shows that the historical elements in epic narratives serve the process of establishing a strong identity rather than merely conveying information. Therefore, the pedagogical dimension of the epic tradition presents historical memory to the younger generations together with a mythical narrative and gives students the opportunity to interpret historical events, evaluate them critically, and discover cultural values through mythological symbols (Qasqabasov, 2014; Otajanova, 2022; Sakhitzhanova et al., 2023).

The process of mythologizing the historical context also deepens the discourse of national heroism in epic texts. Most epic heroes emerge as legendary reconstructions of a leader or folk hero who existed in historical reality (Bogenbayev, 2014; Daukeyeva, 2007; Dautova, 2016). For example, khans, batyrs, or tribal leaders who played an important role in Kazakh history receive magical help in epics, face extraordinary difficulties, and make decisions that will determine the destiny of a society. This narrative pattern establishes a strong identity that will take its place in social memory by placing historical events within an extraordinary narrative framework (Duysen et al., 2024). The mythological framework in question presents the hero's victories as part of a sacred mission and idealizes these figures as exemplary and respectable in the eyes of readers/listeners. Addressing such narratives in education helps students grasp the relationships between historical reality and mythical discourse, analyze different narrative levels, and deeply understand their own national identity (Assanov et al., 2016; Auyesbayeva, 2017; Bahsiyeva, 2023; Bennigsen, 1975).

In mythologizing historical events, oral culture and the tradition of folk poets play a significant role. Storytellers place the historical difficulties, political upheavals, or cultural transformations of the period they live in within the mythical framework of the epic and convey them to future generations (Martazanov et al., 2021; Nehru Gardens & Nadu, 2024). This narrative process often causes historical reality to be "re-imagined" and presented to the public, gaining a legendary dimension over time. Especially in the Kazakh steppes, the bards' performance of heroic stories accompanied by saz, their association of heroes' struggles with supernatural beings, and their exaggeration of details they consider important for social memory highlight the elements of epic texts that resemble the fantastic genre (Gumarov et al., 2023). Thus, historical reality is revived in the enthusiastic emotional atmosphere of the epic, and the mythical and heroic aspects of the events are emphasized. Regarding pedagogy, these epics, products of oral tradition, can be integrated into literature and history courses in contemporary education and reinforce students' imagination and historical thinking skills (Hafizova, 2021; Imanova, 2024).

Many legendary figures in the Turkic epic tradition are reworked in modern fantasy literature and conveyed to contemporary readers with new interpretations. For instance, the qualities of epic heroes such as "Bozzhigit" or "Edige" include strong leadership, extraordinary courage, and responsibility to protect the people, which are adapted to roles like "chosen hero" or "savior" in modern fantasy texts (Abiyr et al., 2019; Abdujamilovna & Yorkinjanovna, 2024). In this process, the historical or semi-historical identities of the heroes in question are redefined in a fictional universe; thus, the mythical atmosphere of epic texts meets the expectations and experiences of today's readers. Legendary figures take on new symbolic functions in the contemporary narrative world, sometimes blended with technological elements and interpreted as "digital heroes," and sometimes participate in epic-fantasy computer games. This transformation shows that the heroes in Turkic epics are not only limited to historical and oral culture but also inspire popular culture products (Causarano et al., 2011; Hamroyev, 2024).

Modern fantasy writers sometimes do not take the legendary Turkic heroes precisely as they are told in epic texts but reinterpret them and make them live in different universes. In this reconstruction process, the hero's character structure, fears, weaknesses, or moral dilemmas are emphasized more, thus drawing a more profound and psychological portrait. While the mythical

elements are preserved, innovative additions are also made that are intended to respond to the interests of today's readers (Adilova & Smailova, 2014). For example, the supernatural obstacles faced by the hero can be blended with modern horror elements or science-fiction motifs. Reading such adaptations in education develops an intertextual consciousness in students and inspires them to create new genres and narrative forms based on traditional texts. At the same time, these innovative fantasy texts provide the opportunity to evaluate Turkic epics in history or folklore courses, literature, and creative writing courses (Illarionov, 1982; Kabdeshova, 2019).

The intersection of mythological themes and historical events in Turkic epics increases the originality and universal appeal of the epic narrative. In epic texts, historical processes such as wars and migrations are given meaning through the guidance of celestial beings or sacred prophecies and go beyond an ordinary historical narrative. For example, in Kazakh epics, the migration movements of Turkic tribes are partly explained by divine signs or the suggestion of mythical spirits, and thus, historical data is placed within an extraordinary narrative framework (İbrayev, 1998; Somfai Kara, 2010). Especially when used in education, this approach shows students that historical events are not just a mechanical and chronological series but also have an important symbolic value in constructing social memory and cultural identity. When the analogy with the fantasy genre is established, the combination of mythical themes with historical reality suggests a layered reading in which the "past" can be understood as both legend and reality (Karlygash et al., 2015).

The intersection of mythological themes and historical events in epics also enriches the pedagogical use of Turkic epic narratives. In these narratives, for example, a hero participating in a historical war and receiving help from a legendary being simultaneously nourishes young readers' imagination and historical consciousness. In addition, when historical places and real people are integrated with the mythical texture of the epic, it is observed that students' curiosity about history and literature increases (Alimbayev et al., 2020). By discussing these epic stories in the classroom, educators can encourage students to develop different perspectives and evaluate historical-mythological data with an intertextual approach. Thus, the connection between Turkic epics and the fantasy genre provides a productive synergy in scientific and literary aspects and pedagogical practices (Kenbayeva et al., 2022).

Historical Typology of Turkic Epics and Fantasy Genre

Studies focusing on the historical typology of Turkic epics provide the opportunity to examine the cultural and literary dimensions of epic narratives deeply. Although epics spread over the vast geography of the Turkic world vary in different periods and regions in line with historical conditions and oral narrative traditions, they bear striking similarities regarding mythological foundations and common motifs (Meletinsky, 2004). Especially in texts such as "Alpamys Batır" or "Edige Batır" from the Kazakh epic tradition, the extraordinary abilities that the epic hero possesses from birth show that historical reality is placed within a mythical narrative framework (Auezov, 1991; Jumaliyev, 1958). The kinship established with the fantasy genre becomes more apparent with the appearance of elements such as magical beings, mythical monsters, and extraordinary objects in epic fiction. This situation ensures that the historical context is conveyed in an epic language and that the mythical codes in the collective memory are kept alive (Karlygash et al., 2015). Utilizing these common motifs and typological features in education contributes to students' understanding and internalization of cultural heritage and universal literary traditions.

Turkic epics are shaped in line with historical reality and oral cultural characteristics of the geography from which they originate. For this reason, the epic texts of different Turkic communities, such as Kazakh, Tuvan, Khakass, Yakut, and Altay, exhibit a multi-layered structure that reflects a common heritage and includes local elements (Kudaeva, 2020). For

example, Kazakh epics such as "Alpamys Batır," "Kobylandy Batır," and "Edige Batır" emphasized that the hero has extraordinary power from birth, enemy forces are often associated with supernatural beings, and moral values such as bravery, courage, and honor come to the fore. At the same time, heroes who appear with names such as "Hunan Kara" or "Aldai Buuchu" in Tuvan epics fight mythical monsters and progress in a narrative universe fed by shamanic rituals (Oros-ool, 1997; Sayfulina, 2020). Thus, although the geographies differ, common typological patterns such as "the extraordinary birth of the hero, overcoming supernatural obstacles, preserving social order and contributing to collective identity" stand out in epic narratives (Tihanov, 1999, p. 162).

Another common point that forms the typology of these heroic epics in different Turkic cultures is that family and kinship relations occupy a prominent place in the epic narrative. The scenes in Kazakh epics where the hero's mother foresees the hero's birth in her dreams or prayers largely overlap with similar themes of motherhood in Tuvan or Altai epics (Uskembaeva et al., 2016). In these epics, the mother figure assumes a divine role in a child's birth, sometimes ending a barren marriage with long prayers, rituals, or sacred visits. Thus, the birth of the hero is narrated within a miraculous framework. The motherhood motif is a strong element that determines the fate of the hero and the direction of the epic narrative and reinforces the image of the "holy mother" in social memory (Zhanpeissova & Kuzembayeva, 2019). These commonalities enable a broad comparative study of Turkic epics regarding typology and reveal that similar familial-mythological structures are processed in different geographies.

In addition to the birth motif of the hero, the hero's growth and youth exhibit typological features similar to those in Turkic epics. In Kazakh, Tuvan, or Khakas epics, the hero often grows rapidly, becomes stronger, and goes through difficult tests in preparation for his journey in the epic (Tumėnas, 2014). These tests sometimes manifest themselves in encounters with supernatural enemies and sometimes in social reputation and leadership battles. The young hero prepares for the struggle with the help of spiritual guides or mythical characters (e.g., ancestral spirit, shamanic power, magic horse, etc.) and rises as a real "batır" (brave). At the end of this process, the hero emerges at a moment of existential crisis for society and is placed at the center of the epic narrative (Meletinsky, 2004). Typologically, this structure points to a close kinship with fairy tales and fantasy literature.

Another title that reveals the typological similarities of epics is that the enemies or obstacles encountered by the hero have supernatural and extraordinary qualities. For example, while mythical enemy types such as "Kalmak" (Somfai Kara, 2010) or genie, giant, or dragon can sometimes be encountered in Kazakh epics, monster types called "Shulbu" are included in Tuvan heroic narratives (Oros-ool, 1997). These enemies are presented as beings with powers beyond human comprehension and represent significant obstacles that the hero must overcome in his epic journey. Within the typology, this situation corresponds to the motif of "the hero confronting a demonic or monstrous character" frequently encountered in the fantasy genre. This common aspect forms the basis of the interaction of Turkic epics with the fantasy genre since both genres place an extraordinary world and superhuman struggles at the center (Freidenberg, 2006).

In many Turkic epics, mythical creatures and magical objects carry the narrative to a fantastic dimension. For example, motifs such as the hero being equipped with a magic sword or the guardian horse giving him wisdom in Kazakh epics also find a counterpart in Tuvan and Altai epics (Albekov et al., 2019). At this point, magical horses accompany the hero's mystical journey, provide a transition between worlds, and sometimes play a key role in the hero's spiritual transformation. This kinship with the fantasy genre shows that the symbols and motifs nourished by oral culture can be reinterpreted in modern literature. Examining these common motifs in education allows students to evaluate epic symbols in their own culture and universal fantasy elements (Baisklan, 1987).

Another motif frequently seen in Turkic epics is the "extraordinary birth" and "the magical protection of the hero." The birth of Alpamys as a kind of "midnight miracle," the existence of Edige Batır based on prophecies, and the hero's coming to the world with shamanic prayers in Tuvan and Khakas epics are shaped around a kind of mythical fiction (Berdibayev, 1997). This situation shows significant similarities with the "chosen hero" archetype encountered in the fantasy genre. The fact that the hero has extraordinary powers from the moment he comes into the world and sets out to realize a collective goal has a central place in both Turkic epics and contemporary fantasy works (Illarionov, 1982). Treating this theme in education can provide students with a critical perspective on cultural identity, values, and the perception of heroism.

From a typological perspective, a structure in which elements of nature, magic, and heroism complement each other is at the forefront of Turkic epic narratives. The common elements of fantasy literature, such as magical creatures, sorcerers, legendary kingdoms, and extraordinary adventures, are profoundly similar to the shamanic and mythical beliefs in the oral culture of Turkic epics (Melioransky, 1973). At the same time, themes such as "the intervention of divine powers," "dreams that determine the fate of the hero," and "the blessing of the founding ancestors" encountered in epic texts correspond to structural elements frequently used in modern fantasy fiction. This overlap allows students to evaluate fantasy literature and Turkic epics within the same analytical framework. In this way, similarities and differences between texts from two different fields are revealed, and young readers' intertextual thinking and interpretation skills are developed (Lvova, 2000).

The magical beings and geographies we frequently encounter in Turkic epics overlap with the typical elements of the fantasy genre. For example, the "endless steppe" descriptions in Kazakh epics and the "legendary mountains" and "fairytale forests" in Tuvan and Khakas epics present the hero's journey in an extraordinary spatial framework (Merrill, 1998). These geographies create physical and symbolic obstacles for the hero, adding a gripping dynamism to the narrative. This understanding of space parallels fantasy literature's "imaginary universe" design, reflecting the shamanic worldview at the root of epic texts (Reichl, 2013). Examining such spatial designs in the educational process helps students understand the cultural and mythological background of the text they read and learn the literary function of the concept of space.

Comparative typology studies of heroic elements also provide valuable contributions to educational practices because students can learn common motifs and symbols by analyzing epic and fantastic narratives in different cultures (Bogenbayev, 2014). Rituals, mythical beliefs, and epic narrative patterns in oral culture provide a rich example for making sense of universal narrative structures encountered in contemporary fantasy. For example, comparing Kazakh epics with Western fantasy allows students to explore universal literary phenomena by examining the interaction between the "local" and the "global." At the same time, this comparison introduces many pedagogical elements, such as developing language skills, using cultural motifs in creative writing activities, and discussing the traces of mythical thought in modern life. Based on heroic epics, the universality of topics such as "saving society," "standing by the side of the oppressed," and "moral dilemma" can be demonstrated to students, thus enriching value-based education methods (Sultan et al., 2024, p. 130).

Analyzing the magic element facilitates understanding the mechanisms of fiction and symbolic forms of expression in the fantasy genre. It offers students the opportunity to compare the logic of different fictional universes. In continuation of this, comparing an epic such as "Edige Batır" with, for example, a fantasy novel also paves the way for the application of intertextual approaches in the educational environment (Sharakpaeva & Erzhanova, 2019, p. 18). Such a comparison reinforces critical thinking by revealing not only similarities but also cultural and periodic differences. At this point, folklore and literature education disciplines work in collaboration, making it possible to present both the theoretical and practical aspects

of heroic epics and fantasy fiction to students. Thus, the comparative typology of heroism and magic elements provides rich textual examples from different cultures in the course curriculum and reveals the stimulating potential of literature.

The comparison between heroic epics and the magical elements of fantasy literature contains much richness in terms of textual, mythological, and pedagogical aspects. While the heroes in the Turkic epic tradition are equipped with mythological motifs close to magic, they also keep historical memory and social values alive. This situation brings them together with the fantasy genre in a broad similarity line (Sayfulina et al., 2020). Epics like "Edige Batır" reveal how historical reality and myth intersect and have qualities comparable to fantastic works in the West or East. The role of female heroes in epic narratives, the inclusion of magical elements in the narrative, the typology of the enemy, and supernatural conflicts all offer common elements that shape the inner and outer journey of the hero.

Due to these common elements, the recognition of the Turkic epic tradition in the global literary environment increases, and the universal heroic and magical archetypes are enriched by different perspectives (Reichl, 2005). Pedagogically, heroic and magical motifs support students' ability to make cross-cultural comparisons, develop critical thinking, and grasp different narrative traditions. Moreover, the dialogue between epic traditions and fantasy literature makes it possible to add interdisciplinary activities such as creative writing, drama, and mythological analysis to the curriculum (Bram, 2006). Thus, literature education gains a holistic structure that fosters language, rhetorical skills, cultural awareness, and aesthetic understanding.

Educational and Cultural Implications

Integrating heroic epics and the Turkic epic heritage into literature curricula strengthens students' ties with national cultural values and positively develops their attitudes toward literature. This situation, especially when the historical depth, mythical elements, and moral values contained in Kazakh epics are considered, paves the way for students to establish a meaningful connection between the past and the present. Research has shown that when Kazakh heroic epics are processed following the course curriculum, they strengthen students' sense of national identity and arouse curiosity towards literary texts (Bogenbayev, 2014; Sharakpaeva & Erzhanova, 2019). In addition, the presentation of epic narratives by blending them with the contemporary fantasy genre is considered an effective didactic approach in terms of attracting the attention of young generations (Sultan et al., 2024). Combining these two narrative structures to preserve cultural heritage and adapt to the global understanding of literature offers students a more innovative and inclusive educational experience. Relating epic examples to other fields of history, geography, social sciences, and literary texts makes it possible to gain an interdisciplinary perspective (Aitbayeva et al., 2023).

Including the Kazakh epic heritage in educational programs is essential in reinforcing students' national identity and historical awareness; epics provide cultural continuity by making young generations feel their ties to the past with the historical, geographical, and mythical elements they contain. Zarcone and Hobart (2017) emphasized that teaching Kazakh heroic epics in literature classes strengthens students' perceptions of oral literature and national values. In addition, telling epic texts in a historical context turns epics from memorization into an experience; this contributes significantly to forming a sense of national heroism and cultural belonging in students (Albekov et al., 2019).

Educational scientists state that this approach increases course motivation and develops students' research skills. It also emphasizes that it encourages a critical analysis of the interaction between historical reality and legendary elements (Karlygash et al., 2015). Epic characters can enable students to gain a deeper awareness of social and ethical values such as leadership, courage, justice, and solidarity (Zhanpeissova & Kuzembayeva, 2019). In addition,

the storytelling techniques used during the presentation of these epics nourish creative thinking and significantly contribute to developing language skills (Dautova, 2021). Students' examination of the methods of description in epic texts and their attempts to use them in their own written or oral forms of expression expand their literary taste and language usage capacity. Group work and discussion-oriented activities, in particular, help students develop different perspectives and reinforce their critical thinking practices. Ultimately, incorporating the Kazakh epic heritage into the curriculum enables young generations to gain a holistic view of national values and universal literary accumulation. When blended with modern pedagogical approaches, this holistic view creates a learning atmosphere that nourishes students' sense of identity and culture and supports their academic success (Emelianov, 1983).

This study presents a framework centered around theories of narrative theory, cultural transmission, and identity formation. Narrative theory allows us to understand how individuals and communities structure their experiences. Bruner (1991) showed how narratives play a central role in this process by emphasizing how individuals perceive and make sense of the world. Research on how narratives shape individuals' identities reveals how individuals construct their experiences within a social and cultural context. Cultural transmission theory explains how cultural elements are passed from generation to generation and how individuals construct their identities in the process. Cultural transmission examines the impact of individuals on their social identities and emphasizes the role of social norms and values in this process. This theory reveals the importance of cultural context in shaping individuals' identities (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Identity formation theories emphasize how individuals develop their social identities and the role of narratives in this process. Erikson (1968) stated that identity is a dynamic process, and individuals construct this identity through different experiences throughout life. In this context, creating individuals' narratives is critically important in constructing their identities.

Research on how narratives shape individuals' experiences and identities shows how cultural and social contexts affect individuals' perceptions and experiences. Ricoeur (1984) explained how narratives function in making sense of individuals' past experiences by analyzing the relationship between time and narrative. This explanation establishes an important link to the objectives of our research. The effects of narratives and cultural transmission play an important role in shaping individuals' perceptions of identity. Therefore, this framework is directly linked to the main themes of our research. Cultural transmission processes show that not only cultural elements but also social dynamics are effective in the formation of individuals' identities. In this context, individuals' social environments and cultural backgrounds are critical factors affecting how they construct their identities. This situation reveals that our research is an area that needs an in-depth analysis.

The use of epics in education contributes to individual learning processes and the reconstruction of social memory. Mythological elements in the epic tradition of the Turkic people help young people learn the social, cultural, and spiritual values of the past. In this context, Kazakh epics offer an opportunity to build a bridge between the narratives of the past and modern education (Melioransky, 1973; Reichl, 2018). The importance of the research also lies in its potential to contribute to international studies aimed at understanding the connections of Kazakh epics with world mythology and literature (Toyshybaeva, 1962; Reichl, 2005). These epics represent a common cultural and historical heritage for Kazakhstan and the entire Turkic world. Therefore, studying these epics can provide a model for worldwide comparative mythology and epic studies of different cultures (Sayfulina et al., 2020).

The study of Kazakh epics and mythopoetic images in the context of literary education has a limited place in the literature. While studies conducted at the higher education level in Kazakhstan generally focus on general literary history and epic studies, comprehensive research on using these works as educational materials is limited (Auezov, 1991; Reichl, 2000). The pedagogical functions of these epics, especially in the context of the impact of mythological

origins on national value acquisition and students' attitudes toward literature, have not been sufficiently examined (Berdibayev, 1997; Jumaliyev, 1958). Comparative studies on the epics of the Turkic peoples generally address the common motifs and structural features of these epics while providing less information on the effects of these narratives in the context of education (Ibrayev, 2012; Reichl, 2018). For example, although the role of the epic "Edige Batır" in the development of national identity has been examined, the impact of this work on students and how it can be used in teaching modern literature has not been sufficiently addressed (Auyesbayeva et al., 2024).

In the relevant literature, the mythological origins of Kazakh epics and the impact of these origins on national value acquisitions have not been sufficiently searched. While existing studies generally focus on the literary aspects of epics, they provide limited information on how these works can be used as a pedagogical tool in modern education (Azibayeva, 2014; Reichl, 2005; Sayfulina et al., 2020). More research is needed on the factors that affect students' attitudes toward literature, especially at the higher education level (Azibayeva, 2014; Bekpenbetova et al., 2024). The research literature also lacks a connection between the mythological motifs of Kazakh epics and modern educational materials.

This study examines the effects of teaching activities, including Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images, on the participants' national value achievement and attitudes towards literature courses in Kazakhstan. For this purpose, this study sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. Do teaching activities, including Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images in literature classes for students in Kazakhstan, increase the participants' achievement of national values?
2. Do teaching activities that include Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images in literature classes for Kazakhstan students positively affect the participants' attitudes towards the course?

Method

This study used an experimental design to evaluate students' teaching activities, including Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images, on the national value achievements and attitudes towards the course. In this context, this study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group. A random assignment was not made when selecting the experimental and control groups, but the equality of the groups was checked regarding their pre-test scores. In this design, an experimental procedure is applied to the experimental group; then, a measurement is conducted, and the results are compared with those of a control group (Goba et al., 2011). Experimental designs aim to determine the effect of a special application on the result (Creswell et al., 2011).

The researcher conducted the courses in both the experimental and control groups. Using the experimental model, which includes methods that will reveal students' national value achievements and their attitudes towards the course, gives meaning to the numerical representation and measurability of the research results. This also provides a more sensitive description opportunity because "The use of a control group in the experimental model undoubtedly increases the quality of that research as controlled research" (Duckett, 2021, p. 457).

Table 1 shows the experimental group (GE), the control group (GC) O1 and O3, the pre-test and post-test measurements of the experimental group (O1 and O3, respectively, the pre-test and post-test measurements of the control group (O2 and O4, respectively), and X shows the independent variable (experimental variable) applied to the subjects in the experimental group.

Table 1

Research Design

Group	Pre-Test	Experimental Procedure	Post-Test
GE	O1	X	O3
	Attitude Scale Towards Literature Course	Teaching activities based on Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images (5 weeks)	Attitude Scale Towards Literature Course
	National Value Achievement Scale		National Value Scale Gain Scale
GC	O2	-	O4
	Attitude Scale Towards Literature Course	No application	Attitude Scale Towards Literature Course
	National Value Achievement Scale		National Value Scale Achievement Scale

A pretest-posttest control group random design has two main advantages. First, measurements obtained under different experimental procedure conditions will be highly correlated in many experiments because measurements are made on the same subjects, reducing errors and increasing statistical power. The second advantage is that the design requires fewer subjects, which saves time and energy. Depending on these advantages, the opportunity to work in homogeneous groups contributes to determining the actual effect of the experimental procedure. In this design, external validity decreases somewhat due to the possible stimulating effect of the pre-test on the subjects. For example, when an attitude scale is given as a pre-test, the subject may become sensitive to an expression or topic in the scale. This situation may cause the subjects in the experimental group who receive the experimental variable whose effect is being tested to be affected differently by the procedure. As a result, some variance observed in the post-test scores may arise from the interaction between the pre-test and the experimental procedure, which will naturally reduce the accuracy of the analysis results.

In the experimental design applied in the research, the dependent variables were the national value achievement scale and attitudes towards the literature course. The independent variable was the teaching activities. The study had two groups: the experimental and control groups, which studied Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images in a second-year literature course at the university. The experiment group was taught using the text-linguistic method, and the control group was taught using the standard method.

For this purpose, Kazakh heroic epics, Edige Batyr, Tuvan, Khakas epics with the fantasy genre topics and epic texts suitable for them were determined. The students were guided following the determined titles, and text analyses were conducted to achieve the desired results. Examples that the students could examine outside the class were also prepared so that they could understand text analysis better. Five tales were analyzed and processed using the text linguistics method in this context. At the end of each session in the experimental group, students were asked questions about the effects of the Kazakh heroic epics on the formation of national values, and classroom discussion activities were carried out.

Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was employed in the second-year literature department of a major university in Almaty, Kazakhstan, during the 2024–2025 academic year. Participants were chosen based on their enrollment in an alternative subject titled "Kazakh Epics and Mythopoetic Images." This enrollment ensured that all students had a direct academic interest in the course content. Inclusion criteria required that participants were enrolled in the literature program and willing to participate in pre-test and post-test assessments. Informed consent was obtained from all students. Sixty students divided into two groups participated.

- Experimental Group (n = 30): Comprising 18 girls and 12 boys, this group received the teaching intervention based on Kazakh epics and mythopoetic images.
- Control Group (n = 30): Comprising 19 girls and 11 boys, this group continued with the traditional literature curriculum.

Although random assignment was impossible due to the fixed structure of course enrollment, efforts were made to achieve numerical and demographic equivalence. Before the intervention, the groups were compared on baseline measures (e.g., national value achievement scores) to ensure comparability. Matching the groups on these characteristics helped to mitigate selection bias and supported the internal validity of the quasi-experimental design. The sample was drawn from a single university, which reflects the typical demographics within the literature department in Almaty.

Experimental Procedures

A six-week Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images text processing activity was planned during the data collection. Students in the experimental group were informed about the text linguistics method and its elements before the tale unit. A sample text analysis was conducted. The tale unit processing period, planned as five weeks in the annual plan, was completed within the specified time by adhering to the plan due to the evaluation of students with a standard exam. In the text linguistics method, the review headings in the tale unit were determined, the determined headings guided students, and text analyses were conducted to enable the desired achievements. Examples that students could examine outside the lesson were also prepared to understand the text analysis better. In this context, four tales were analyzed and processed. During this process, students in the control group were taught in the traditional method; the textbook texts were read, and the questions were answered.

Data Collection Tools

Attitude Scale Towards Kazakh Literature Course

The researchers developed this scale to determine the attitude towards the Kazakh Literature course. The scale comprised 10 attitude statements scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Exploratory factor analyses revealed that the attitude scale had a single-factor structure. The scale had two negative sentences. The factor loading of each scale item was over 0.45. Each scale item had a high correlation with the total scale scores. The Cronbach's alpha for this single factor was 0.87. High average scores obtained from the attitude scale towards the Kazakh Literature course indicate positive attitudes towards the course. Appendix A presents the scale and its items.

National Value Achievement Scale

A Likert-type scale was developed to measure students' national value acquisitions in literature class. The literature course program and literature were considered when preparing the scale items. In particular, the research and scale development studies conducted by Coombs Richardson and Tolson (2005), Çetin (2015), and Maslak and Pozdnyakov (2015) were considered. For this purpose, 18 items were prepared for a trial. The developed trial scale items were applied to five students who assessed each item's comprehensibility, after which necessary corrections were made. Then, factor analysis was performed on these 18 items with Principal Components Analysis. The KMO value for the factor analysis of 18 items was .91. The Barlett test result ($p<0.05$) was significant. As a result of the principal components factor

analysis performed using the Varimax rotation method, a single factor was obtained. This single factor contributed to 58.90% of the total variance.

In terms of usability of the items in the scale, attention was paid to the fact that the factor loading of the items in the scale was .40 and the difference between the factor loading values of an item was at least .10. At this stage, three items with a factor loading below 0.30 were removed from the scale. As a result of the factor analysis performed using the Varimax rotation technique, the national value acquisition scale in the literature course consisted of 15 items. The Cronbach's alpha analysis performed on the items of the national value acquisition scale in literature had a reliability coefficient of 0.89. Appendix B presents the national value acquisition scale items.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS 26.0. First, the normal distribution assumptions regarding the scores obtained from the attitude towards the course and the national value acquisition scale were tested. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the pre-test scores of the study scales were within the range of ± 1, and the S-W normality test result was also insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The Shapiro-Wilks normality test and skewness and kurtosis values showed that the student scores from the scales met the normal distribution assumptions. Based on these results, parametric statistical techniques were used to compare the group's means. Because the pre-test attitude scores of the experimental and control groups had significant differences, covariance analysis was used to compare the post-test scores related to the same variable.

A fundamental principle of experimental research is controlling group cognitive and affective readiness differences (Podlesnik et al., 2024). In this respect, the most appropriate way to reveal the effectiveness of the experimental process in pre-test-post-test control group quasi-experimental patterned studies was covariance analysis (ANCOVA) when data sets show appropriate characteristics. The preliminary analysis results showed that the normality, homogeneity of variances, and linear relationship assumptions required for ANCOVA were met. In this context, a single-factor covariance analysis was performed to find an answer to the first question of the study.

Results

Tables 2 and 3 show the average of the participant's responses in the experimental and control groups regarding pre-tests applied and the independent sample t-test used for comparison. The difference in the attitude pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups towards the literature was statistically significant at p. = .039, with the control group showing more favorable attitudes than the experimental group. See Table 2.

Table 2
Analysis of Pre-test Attitude Scores of Experimental and Control Groups towards Literature Course

Pretest	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
Attitude Towards Literature Course	Experimental	30	3,57	0,57	-2,110	0,039
	Control	30	3,94	0,76		

Table 3 presents the analyses of both groups' pre-test national value achievement scale scores. The difference in the groups' pre-test national value acquisition scores was insignificant,

and their national value achievement scores were close to each other at the beginning of the research.

Table 3

Analysis of Pre-test National Value Achievement Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Pre-Test	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
National Value Achievement Scale	Experimental	30	4,00	0,75	-0,108	0,914
	Control	30	4,01	0,55		

Analysis of Post-Test Scores in the Study

Because the attitude pre-test scores showed significant differences, the covariance analysis technique was used to examine whether the post-test scores differed according to the groups. Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the analysis. Table 4 shows the experimental and control groups' post-test mean scores and standard deviations regarding their attitudes toward literature courses and the corrected post-test mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 4

Descriptive Analysis of Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups Regarding Their Attitudes Toward the Course

Group	Attitude Post-Test Levels		Adjusted Attitude Post-test Levels	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	4,49	0,54	4,50	0,55
Control	4,13	0,71	4,13	0,70

Table 5 provides the results of the covariance (ANCOVA) analysis performed on the post-test attitude scores of the groups. Table 5 shows that the initial literature attitude levels of the group participants exhibited significant differences between the attitude levels in the post-test ($F=4.42$, $p<05$). Based on these results, the teaching practices using Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images significantly improved the participants' attitudes toward the literature course. The eta square value shows that the difference in attitudes between the experimental and control groups is 7.2% due to the applied experimental method.

Table 5

Covariance Analysis Results of the Attitudes of the Experimental and Control Groups Towards the Course

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1,902	2	0,951	2,337	0,106	0,076
Intercept	33,362	1	33,362	82,004	0,000	0,590
PREATTITUDE	0,002	1	0,002	0,006	0,941	0,000
Group	1,798	1	1,798	4,419	0,040	0,072
Error	23,189	57	0,407			
Total	1140,974	60				
Corrected Total	25,091	59				

Note. R Squared = ,076 (Adjusted R Squared = ,043)

The results in Table 6 show a statistically significant difference between the attitude post-test score averages from the experimental and control groups (t=2.08; p<0.05). When the averages of the groups are considered, the national value gains of the students in the experimental group were higher than in the control group. Considering these findings, the teaching applications based on Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic images significantly contributed to the participants' national value gains.

Table 6
T-test Results Regarding National Value Achievements of Experimental and Control Groups

Post-Test	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
National Value Achievement Scale	Experimental	30	4,41	0,43	2,082	0,042
	Control	30	4,11	0,65		

Discussion

This study examined the effects of Kazakh epics and mythopoetic images on students' acquisition of national values and their attitudes toward literature courses. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' national value acquisition scores in the experimental group exposed to Kazakh epics and mythopoetic images. This result shows that integrating culturally relevant and historically rooted narratives into the curriculum plays a vital role in developing students' cultural identity and ethical awareness.

These narratives bridged the gap between abstract cultural ideals and students' experiences, enabling them to internalize the values presented in the epics. Students developed a nuanced understanding of their cultural heritage by exploring themes of heroism, resilience, and social responsibility and a stronger appreciation for the ethical lessons rooted in these stories. The consistent thematic presence of heroism, ethical dilemmas, and collective identity in these epics resonated deeply with students, fostering a sense of pride and belonging to their national traditions. In addition, the historical context of the epics provided a platform for them to reflect on the evolution of cultural values and their relevance in contemporary society. For example, characters who embodied virtues such as courage and self-sacrifice provided moral exemplars, encouraging students to consider their societal roles. The multidimensional impact of these narratives underscores their effectiveness as educational tools for developing values critical to identity formation, social cohesion, and ethical development.

There was a significant increase in the attitudes of the experimental group students towards the literature course after the application. Thus, the culturally rich and contextually meaningful content provided students with more participation, a better approach, and intrinsic motivation. Including Kazakh Epics created an emotional and intellectual impact, transforming the literature course into a platform for cultural exploration and personal reflection. The narratives bridged students' personal experiences and academic learning, making the course content more relatable and compelling. These findings provide convincing empirical evidence for the benefits of including Kazakh Epics and mythopoetic imagery in the educational curriculum. These practices significantly contribute to academic and personal development by enriching students' learning experiences, encouraging participation, and preserving cultural heritage.

The progress in students' acquisition of national values points to the importance of mythopoetic images in educational settings. As the existing literature underlines (Auezov, 1991; Reichl, 2000), Kazakh epics contain universal themes of heroism, moral responsibility, and cultural identity that have a deep place in the historical and mythological consciousness of the Turkic people. These epics allowed students to establish a connection between their academic knowledge and their national memory and identity. At the same time, they allowed

them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the transmission and preservation of historical and cultural values through storytelling.

The effectiveness of these narratives in education lies in their multi-layered thematic structures, such as heroism, cultural heritage, and social solidarity. This structure reinforced students' sense of belonging and pride and led them to think critically about the validity of these values in today's context. For example, characters representing virtues such as courage, sacrifice, and perseverance served as moral models, encouraging them to evaluate their social roles and responsibilities. This process developed a more profound understanding by students of cultural heritage's importance in forming individual and collective identities. In addition, integrating these epics into the curriculum supported cognitive and affective learning. Students had the opportunity to establish an emotional connection with these narratives by relating the struggles and achievements of the epic heroes to their own lives. This connection, combined with intellectual engagement, made the learning experience both more effective and unforgettable. Educators successfully created a bridge between abstract cultural ideals and students' life experiences through culturally meaningful materials, thus developing a holistic educational approach that met their academic and personal development needs. This method shows that culturally themed narratives are important for raising socially conscious, well-rounded individuals.

The positive changes in students' attitudes toward literature courses are consistent with the participatory learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of meaningful and relatable content. The inclusion of Kazakh epics in the courses transformed literature courses from being a purely academic subject into a culturally enriching experience. With their moral and cultural depth, these epics provided meaningful narratives for students that reflected their personal and social realities. This depth allowed students to view course materials as academic information and as a reflection of their heritage and identity. Furthermore, actively engaging with narratives that reflected their heritage increased intrinsic motivation and allowed them to develop a deeper appreciation for literature. For example, themes such as courage, solidarity, and ethical dilemmas resonate intellectually and emotionally with students, resonating with their individual and cultural sensibilities. Such narratives encourage critical and empathic thinking, making the learning experience richer and more effective.

Class discussions became livelier and more interactive, and students had the opportunity to analyze symbolic elements in epics and apply them to current issues. In addition, the increased interest in historical and mythological elements of Turkic cultures after the intervention showed that these narratives resonated outside the classroom environment. Epics supported cognitive, emotional, and cultural learning dimensions in a balanced way by enabling students to establish deep connections with the material. Thus, literature lessons became a process of academic knowledge transfer and a transformative experience that fostered personal growth, cultural pride, and a lifelong appreciation for storytelling. This result supports previous studies on the importance of culturally responsive teaching (Auyesbayeva & Akimova, 2024) and emphasizes the need to integrate cultural heritage-based content into modern educational practices.

These findings are also consistent with previous studies on the function of epics in education. Researchers such as Reichl (2018) and Narimbet and Baybosynova (2023) have emphasized the impact of Turkic epics in shaping students' cultural awareness and ethical perspectives through mythological and heroic motifs. These works serve as a cultural heritage repository reflecting societies' moral and ethical values. Reichl's (2018) study on mythological archetypes in Turkic epics reveals that these narratives provide a rich foundation for developing critical thinking and moral reasoning. Therefore, the role of such content in education, which combines historical traditions with modern pedagogical approaches, is becoming increasingly important.

Study Limitations

The study has limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted at the literature department of a university in Almaty, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions and different educational settings in Kazakhstan. While the study provides valuable information, the selected group's specific cultural, social, and economic context may not fully represent the broader Kazakh educational environment. The six-week experimental period may not adequately capture the long-term effects of integrating Kazakh epics into the curriculum. While the study demonstrates immediate benefits regarding value acquisition and attitudes toward literature, it remains unclear whether these effects are sustainable over time. Finally, the study relies primarily on quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-application tests, to assess national values and attitudes changes. While these measures provide an objective basis for analysis, they fail to capture students' nuanced and subjective experiences.

Implications

Pedagogical and Practical Implications

This research aligns with discussions in educational theory about culturally responsive teaching. Researchers such as Auyesbayeva and Akimova (2024) have emphasized the importance of embedding learning within students' cultural and historical frameworks to create transformative educational experiences. By contextualizing learning within these frameworks, educators increase academic achievement and support emotional and social development. The integration of epics in this study aligns with this approach and demonstrates how culturally specific content can catalyze academic and personal development.

From a practical perspective, this study highlights the importance of teacher education programs designed to equip educators with strategies for integrating culturally relevant materials into their teaching. Professional development initiatives should focus on improving teachers' skills in selecting and adapting narratives that reflect the cultural heritage of their students. Additionally, curriculum developers are encouraged to prioritize diverse and contextually relevant narratives, such as Turkic epics, to ensure that educational content aligns with students' cultural and historical realities. These practices are necessary to encourage student engagement and preserve intangible cultural heritage by ensuring that traditional narratives continue to inspire and educate future generations. The study also highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum design. Educators can create holistic learning experiences that transcend traditional subject boundaries by connecting literature to history, art, and ethics. Such interdisciplinary integration will give students a comprehensive understanding of their cultural heritage while encouraging critical thinking and creativity.

The study's findings pave the way for several practical recommendations for integrating culturally meaningful narratives into education. First, culturally rich content such as Kazakh Epics should be included in Kazakhstan's literature departments' curriculum. Integrating these narratives into teaching practices by educators can increase students' levels of cultural belonging, moral values, and intellectual engagement. In this context, policymakers and curriculum developers should prioritize the creation of teaching materials that emphasize these epics' historical, ethical, and literary aspects. In addition, the accessibility of these materials should be increased, and their compatibility with contemporary educational goals should be ensured.

Teacher training programs should be reorganized to emphasize culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches. Providing educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively bring cultural narratives into the classroom can eliminate the incompatibility between traditional

curricula and students' cultural contexts. To this end, workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning modules should be designed to encourage teachers to understand and implement the pedagogical benefits of using cultural narratives such as the Kazakh Epics. These will enable them to conduct meaningful classroom discussions both academically and personally.

However, an interdisciplinary approach should be adopted to increase the impact of integrating cultural narratives into the curriculum. Connecting literature courses to disciplines such as history, ethics, and art can give students a more comprehensive and profound understanding of their heritage.

Cultural Implications

The research results can be applied to education systems in different geographies to develop cultural identity and values. The mythological and epic narratives of many societies worldwide enable students to connect with their cultural heritage and add a deeper meaning to education in this context (Abazov, 2009). Incorporating local cultural myths and legends into the education system can help students understand their identity and social values. The stories of indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, and America can similarly serve as powerful tools to enable students to explore their social responsibilities and cultural heritage (Auyesbayeva & Akimova, 2024). Such an approach will allow students to internalize their cultural values better and integrate them into their academic learning processes. Thus, the educational environment can be transformed from a mere transfer of knowledge to a space that contributes to shaping students' individual and social identities.

The adoption of culturally responsive teaching practices increases diversity in education, while at the same time strengthening the principles of social justice and equality (Thompson et al., 2006). Therefore, the role of Kazakh epics in education is not only limited to Kazakh culture but also provides an important example of how similar structures can be constructed in other cultural contexts. Such content prepares the necessary ground for students to grow as more conscious individuals in the social context.

Future Research Directions

Finally, future research should comprehensively examine the effects of culturally responsive pedagogical practices. In particular, longitudinal studies and cross-regional analyses are important to assess the long-term outcomes of integrating cultural narratives into education. By analyzing students' responses from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to such applications, researchers can provide valuable insights to enable more effective and inclusive adaptation of methods. Such efforts will contribute to the effectiveness of culturally responsive educational approaches and students' inclusive and sustainable development in different learning contexts. Longer-term longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether the observed changes persist and how they affect students' broader academic and personal development. Incorporating qualitative methods such as student interviews, focus groups, or observational studies can provide richer insights into how students internalize and apply the values and themes presented in epics. Such methods allow researchers to explore the emotional and cognitive processes underlying observed outcomes.

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