

D.R. Nachayeva

L. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan
e-mail: dnachayeva@bk.ru

ORCID 0009-0001-9680-3347

THE ROLE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

National identity forms a foundational bedrock of modern society, serving as a collective consciousness that reflects a shared history, culture, values, and traditions. In an era of globalization, where cultural boundaries grow increasingly fluid, the cultivation and preservation of national identity become critically important for states seeking to protect their unique heritage. A strong national identity fosters unity, solidarity, and social harmony, thereby ensuring political stability and overall societal well-being. This article examines the mechanisms through which national identity is formed and the crucial role it plays in consolidating society. Particular attention is given to the power of secondary education institutions, especially history textbooks, to disseminate core values and cultural memories. By selecting key historical events and national heroes, educational curricula can elicit a sense of pride and belonging among the younger generation. This approach not only enhances unity in multiethnic societies but also nurtures critical thinking and a nuanced engagement with the past. The study concludes that a well-designed educational policy can deliberately shape positive perceptions of both the past and present, steering youth toward the acceptance of national values and the reinforcement of a unique cultural code. However, challenges arise when integrating multiple ethnocultural groups into a single national entity, as a balance must be maintained between emphasizing common traits and preserving cultural diversity. Overemphasis or idealization may distort historical facts and marginalize certain groups. Thus, while strengthening national identity is vital, it is equally important to promote inclusivity and critical reflection on historical narratives for a truly cohesive society.

Keywords: national identity, educational institutions, history textbooks, social harmony.

Introduction

National identity is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing both formal-legal and deeply emotional-political aspects of belonging to a particular nation-state. It transcends merely holding citizenship papers, involving symbolic attachments to a shared culture, history, language, and collective narratives [1, 15]. In contemporary society, national identity plays a crucial role in fostering societal cohesion, as it provides a common thread through which citizens recognize themselves as part of one community.

Globalization has introduced unprecedented levels of interconnectedness, cultural exchange, and economic interdependence. On the one hand, these processes can erode traditional norms and national values by introducing external influences. On the other hand, globalization can galvanize states to underscore their unique cultural and historical attributes. As Benedict Anderson famously argued, nations may be viewed as “imagined communities” constructed through shared symbols, rituals, and narratives disseminated via education, media, and other institutional mechanisms [2, 27], [3, 12].

The present article investigates the significance of national identity in modern societies and highlights how secondary education institutions, especially history textbooks—serve as powerful vehicles for transmitting national narratives. Educational curricula have the capacity to weave together a story of national heroes, events, and cultural achievements that shape the worldview of younger generations. By understanding these processes, policymakers and educators alike can better

appreciate how to balance the imperatives of national unity with a critical engagement of the past [4, 130].

Materials and research methods

Over the past several decades, scholars across different disciplines have contested and enriched our understanding of what constitutes a nation and how national identity is formed. A unifying theme in much of this work is that nations are not objective, fixed entities but rather social constructs that emerge from historical, cultural, and political contexts [1, 45], [5, 22].

1. Benedict Anderson's Approach. Anderson conceptualizes the nation as an "imagined political community," where members, most of whom will never meet one another in person, are linked by shared symbols, language, media, and collective representations [1, 15].

2. Ernest Gellner's Theory. In *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner correlates the rise of nationalism with modernization processes, arguing that industrialization and the expansion of standardized education systems cultivated a homogeneous linguistic and cultural milieu necessary for modern state institutions [2, 29].

3. Anthony D. Smith's Contributions. Smith underscores the role of historical myths, symbols, and collective memories in shaping group consciousness, laying out how cultural heritage underpins a nation's sense of self [6, 45].

4. Eric Hobsbawm on the "Invention of Tradition." Hobsbawm illustrates how certain practices and customs, widely believed to be ancient, are relatively recent constructs designed to foster solidarity and legitimize political authority [3, 15].

5. Andreas Wimmer's Perspective. Wimmer explores the concept of nation building, focusing on why some states achieve national integration while others fragment along ethnic or regional lines. According to Wimmer, public education is one of the key instruments that unify diverse communities under a common set of cultural values [7, 47].

6. Maurice Halbwachs on Collective Memory. Halbwachs argues that memory, especially regarding historical events, is sustained and shaped within social institutions—schools and universities in particular—thus underlining the importance of formal education in perpetuating national narratives [8, 47].

National identity emerges from a combination of cognitive and emotional components, including self-identification, emotional attachments to national symbols, and acceptance of national norms [9, 185]. While citizenship is documented legally, national identity evolves through cultural immersion, collective memory, and shared historical experience.

Schools serve as principal socializing agents where young people acquire not only academic skills but also value orientations, social norms, and attitudes [4, 130]. The educational process introduces a vision of what constitutes "appropriate" civic behavior, laying the foundations of patriotism and social responsibility. Through curricula, the state communicates official ideological stances, endorses historical interpretations, and affirms moral standards [2, 31].

While subjects like literature, languages, and social studies all contribute to forming a sense of identity, history courses often take center stage in cultivating national consciousness. By teaching a shared narrative of historical origins, cultural achievements, and national heroes, educational systems establish a sense of continuity and belonging among pupils.

History textbooks hold influence because they are accorded the status of authoritative resources on the nation's past [10, 3]. Governments and educational authorities frequently set the tone for what is included or excluded, how specific events are depicted, and which figures are celebrated. These decisions, in turn, reflect broader ideological goals:

The American Example. In *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James W. Loewen argues that many U.S. textbooks paint a sanitized and Eurocentric account of the nation's past, glossing over uncomfortable topics such as the oppression of Indigenous peoples, slavery, and socio-economic conflicts [10, 45]. Such omissions can foster a one-sided national narrative, reinforcing a triumphalist perspective.

The German Example. Falk Pingel observes that post-World War II history textbooks in Germany often minimized discussions of the Nazi era, indicating an initial reluctance to confront collective guilt [11, 600]. By the 1960s, however, comprehensive educational reforms led to a more transparent portrayal, aiming to cultivate democratic values and ensure that the nation confronted its past atrocities.

The Kazakhstani Example. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstani textbooks underwent a transformation, shifting from a Soviet-centric lens to an independent national perspective. Where Soviet textbooks had typically emphasized the “progressive nature” of Kazakhstan's incorporation into the Russian Empire, modern textbooks highlight struggles for sovereignty and spotlight national heroes who opposed colonial rule [12, 17], [13, 42]. This shift underlines the role of textbooks in strengthening a postcolonial identity aligned with the newly formed nation-state.

One of the chief challenges in designing history curricula is balancing the goal of fostering patriotic sentiment against the need to develop students' critical faculties [8, 48]. Overemphasis on national grandeur can result in a monolithic, uncritical understanding of history, suppressing or omitting episodes that complicate the narrative. Such an approach can hamper students' ability to engage constructively with alternative viewpoints, potentially undermining tolerance for cultural and historical diversity [4, 140].

Modern educational standards increasingly underscore the importance of critical inquiry. Methods like classroom debates, source analysis, and collaborative projects encourage learners to evaluate different historical narratives, thereby refining their analytical skills. By encountering contested viewpoints, students learn to grapple with the complexities of national history [5, 40].

Many countries—Kazakhstan included—are ethnically and culturally diverse. Consequently, national identity cannot solely be about a single dominant culture; it must also integrate various traditions and peoples within a cohesive framework. A purely assimilationist approach could marginalize minority groups, risking social tensions.

Inclusive Narratives. One effective strategy is to incorporate the histories and cultural contributions of multiple ethnic communities. In contemporary Kazakhstani history textbooks, for instance, textbooks highlight how non-Kazakh peoples also shaped the region's economic, political, and cultural life. This fosters a sense of ownership and belonging across ethnic lines [13, 65].

Shared Values vs. Local Identities. Students should recognize that certain national-level elements—such as an official language, a unifying set of laws, and state symbols—serve as cornerstones of the national project. At the same time, it is crucial to protect and celebrate local languages, customs, and religious practices. As Wimmer explains, nation building does not have to eradicate subnational identities but can carefully integrate them to achieve unity in diversity [7, 86].

Cultivating national identity through secondary education brings both strengths and potential drawbacks. On the positive side, it fosters social cohesion by promoting shared narratives and symbols, thereby encouraging solidarity, mutual understanding, and a willingness to collaborate for the common good [6, 53]. In addition, it helps preserve cultural heritage: by emphasizing national traditions, languages, and historical heroes, the educational system can transmit unique legacies in a globalized era [3, 12]. Furthermore, highlighting national values often inspires students to take on civic responsibilities and actively contribute to the development of society [2, 31].

Despite these benefits, there are risks that require careful consideration. One is the danger of ideologizing education through a selective portrayal of historical events, which may result in either glorification or suppression of certain periods and ultimately impede comprehensive understanding

[10, 50]. Another concern is the possible marginalization of minority groups: if textbooks overlook or misrepresent the contributions of diverse ethnic or cultural communities, these groups may feel alienated [5, 58]. Finally, relying rigidly on a single national narrative can undermine the cultivation of independent inquiry, thereby limiting the development of critical thinking skills [4, 140].

In the twenty-first century, the rapid advance of digital technologies and online learning platforms has significantly reshaped how young people acquire historical knowledge. Students can now readily access diverse online resources, which may or may not align with official curricula. On the one hand, this can deepen critical thinking by exposing learners to alternative viewpoints. On the other hand, it raises questions about quality control, misinformation, and the broader societal role of state-approved educational content [7, 102].

Simultaneously, innovations in pedagogical practices—ranging from project-based learning to interactive simulations—enable students to co-create historical narratives. They might produce short documentaries about local history, interview elders for oral histories, or engage in virtual exchanges with peers in other regions. Such hands-on and collaborative initiatives encourage students to become active investigators rather than passive receivers of a monolithic historical account.

To highlight how different national contexts approach the intersection of identity, education, and diversity, we may examine two further examples:

France. The French education system historically championed a singular national identity tied to the French language and secular Republican values. Ernest Renan’s question “What is a Nation?” [14] strongly influenced how France viewed the nation as a moral and ideological community. Nonetheless, with changing demographics and debates over *laïcité* (secularism), educators grapple with how to accommodate the cultural and religious identities of immigrant communities without undermining core Republican principles.

The United Kingdom. The UK’s history curriculum has occasionally been described as “island-centric,” emphasizing British exceptionalism, the monarchy, and Empire. Critics argue that such a narrow focus diminishes the experiences of the Commonwealth and indigenous peoples under colonial rule [15, 25]. In response, recent educational reforms have begun incorporating broader global contexts and more critical discussions of empire, slavery, and decolonization.

Results and discussions

These comparative insights reinforce the premise that secondary education is deeply entwined with national narratives and that each society calibrates its curriculum differently, reflecting domestic ideological imperatives, historical memory, and ethnic composition [6, 60].

One of the central tensions in any national education policy is harmonizing unity with pluralism. While a shared sense of identity can promote stability and communal purpose, ignoring internal diversity risks alienation and social stratification. If historical narratives overly glorify one group’s achievements at the expense of others, students from marginalized backgrounds may feel disenchanting [9, 200]. By contrast, when national curricula selectively incorporate the perspectives and contributions of multiple groups, a more inclusive form of national identity can emerge [8, 49].

Practical Recommendations might include:

1. Inclusive Textbooks: Offer balanced representations of the achievements and challenges faced by various ethnic communities.
2. Critical Pedagogy: Encourage teachers to facilitate open discussions, source analyses, and debates on contested historical episodes.
3. Teacher Training: Invest in professional development so educators can manage sensitive or conflictual topics effectively, fostering empathy and nuanced understanding.

4. Community Engagement: Invite local cultural leaders, historians, and community members to contribute their expertise to classroom discussions, bridging the gap between textbook narratives and lived experiences.

Conclusion

National identity cannot be reduced merely to citizenship or legal status—it is a multidimensional construct rooted in a collective sense of belonging to a particular historical-cultural community [1, 45]. In an age characterized by fluid cultural frontiers and global interdependence, many states emphasize reinforcing their distinct identities. Secondary education has emerged as a principal mechanism through which new generations internalize the nation’s past, develop patriotism, and cultivate a sense of civic duty [7, 102].

History textbooks and curricula play a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions. By highlighting noteworthy individuals, events, and myths, educators craft a vision of the nation’s trajectory. When effectively managed, this process strengthens social solidarity, fosters critical consciousness, and respects multicultural realities. Conversely, overly propagandistic or exclusionary approaches risk distorting historical truth, alienating minorities, and undermining societal cohesion [10, 50].

Striking a balance between patriotism and critical inquiry is imperative. Schools can be places where students not only learn to revere their cultural heritage but also develop analytical tools to examine that heritage objectively [8, 48]. In multiethnic states, this balance must incorporate the cultural expressions of various groups, ensuring that the national “we” extends beyond any single ethnicity [13, 65]. Ultimately, a robust national identity shaped by inclusive educational practices can buttress social harmony, cultural preservation, and respect for diversity in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

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Д.Р. Начаева

ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЕГЕЙЛІКТІ ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУДАҒЫ ОРТА БІЛІМ БЕРУ ИНСТИТУТТАРЫНЫҢ РӨЛІ

Ұлттық бірегейлік – заманауи қоғамның негізгі ұстыны, ол ортақ тарихты, мәдениетті, құндылықтар мен дәстүрлерді біріктіретін ұжымдық сана ретінде танылады. Жаһандану жағдайында мәдени шекаралар барған сайын өзгеріп, ұлттық бірегейлікті қалыптастыру және сақтау мемлекеттер үшін, әсіресе, өздерінің бірегей мұрасын қорғауды көздейтін елдер үшін өте маңызды. Ұлттық бірегейлікті нығайту азаматтар арасындағы татулықты, бірлік пен ынтымақтастықты арттырып, әлеуметтік келісімді және саяси тұрақтылықты қамтамасыз етеді. Бұл мақалада ұлттық бірегейліктің қоғамды біріктіру тұрғысындағы маңызы және оның қалыптасуына әсер ететін факторлар жан-жақты талданады. Орта білім беру мекемелерінің, соның ішінде тарих пәні оқулықтарының, жас ұрпақтың тарихи санасын және ортақ құндылықтарға деген құрметін қалыптастырудағы ролі ерекше атап көрсетіледі. Оқулықтарда іріктелген тарихи оқиғалар мен тұлғалар жайлы баяндау ұлттық мақтаныш сезімін оятып, жастардың өз отанына деген сүйіспеншілігін арттыруға бағытталған. Бұл тәсіл көпэтносты ортада бірлік пен ынтымақтастықтың нығаюына ықпал етеді. Мақалада бірегейлікті нығайтудағы білім беру саясатының маңызы да сөз етіледі. Жас буынға тарихи сананы сыни ойлау арқылы игеруге мүмкіндік беру маңызды. Сондай-ақ ұлттық құндылықтарды сақтау мен біртұтас азаматтық сананы қалыптастырудың арасында тепе-теңдікті сақтау қажеттігі атап өтіледі. Бір жағынан, жоғары деңгейде идеализациялау шынайы тарихты бұрмалауға әкелсе, екінші жағынан, этникалық топтардың ерекшеліктерін тану және құрметтеу қоғам бірлігін арттыра түседі.

Түйін сөздер: ұлттық бірегейлік, білім беру мекемелері, тарих, тарих оқулықтары, әлеуметтік келісім.

Д.Р. Начаева

РОЛЬ ИНСТИТУТОВ СРЕДНЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ

Национальная идентичность представляет собой одно из базовых оснований для существования современного общества, являясь коллективным сознанием, которое воплощает общую историю, культуру, ценности и традиции. В условиях глобализации и все более размывающихся культурных границ формирование и сохранение национальной идентичности становятся для государств критически важными, особенно если они стремятся уберечь собственное уникальное наследие. Сильная национальная идентичность способствует укреплению социальной гармонии, единству и солидарности среди граждан, обеспечивая тем самым политическую стабильность и социальное благополучие. В данной статье проанализировано, как именно национальная идентичность влияет на консолидацию общества и какие механизмы способствуют ее формированию. Особое внимание уделяется роли институтов среднего образования и, в частности, школьных учебников по истории как мощным инструментам трансляции базовых ценностей и культурной памяти. Авторы подчеркивают, что нарратив в учебных программах, включающий отбор ключевых исторических событий и личностей, прямо влияет на формирование у молодежи чувства причастности и гордости за свою страну. Такой подход способствует не только укреплению единства в многонациональном государстве, но и формирует критическое мышление у учащихся, помогая им осознанно воспринимать историческое наследие. Статья делает вывод, что грамотная образовательная политика способна целенаправленно формировать позитивный образ прошлого и настоящего, ориентируя

молодежь на принятие национальных ценностей и поддержку уникального культурного кода. В то же время авторы указывают на вызовы, возникающие при попытке интеграции множественных этнокультурных групп в единую национальную общность: необходим баланс между подчеркиванием общих черт и сохранением культурного разнообразия. Таким образом, укрепляя национальную идентичность, важно избежать избыточной идеализации, которая может привести к искажению исторических фактов и маргинализации отдельных групп.

Ключевые слова: национальная идентичность, образовательные учреждения, история, учебники по истории, социальная гармония.

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Автор туралы мәлімет:

Начаева Д.Р. - Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан, e-mail: dnachaeva@bk.ru

Сведения об авторе:

Начаева Д. Р. - Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан, e-mail: dnachaeva@bk.ru

Information about author:

Nachayeva D.R. - L.Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, e-mail: dnachaeva@bk.ru