

Exploring Civic and Patriotic Orientations through Regional Literature: Evidence from Pre-Service Teacher Education in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The preparation of culturally responsive and socially responsible teachers requires educational approaches that connect professional learning with local cultural contexts. Regional literature represents a potentially valuable but underexplored resource for fostering cultural awareness, civic reflection, and pedagogical understanding in teacher education. This study examined how participation in a regional-literature-based instructional module was associated with changes in pre-service primary school teachers' civic and patriotic orientations and explored participants' perceptions of the educational value of regional literary materials. A quasi-experimental mixed-methods design was employed. The quantitative component involved a pre-test-post-test nonequivalent control-group design with 100 pre-service primary school teachers at K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University in Kazakhstan, including 51 students in the experimental group and 49 in the control group. The qualitative component consisted of thematic analysis of 87 written reflections produced by students in the experimental group during the intervention. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests, while qualitative data were analysed following Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis procedures. The findings revealed statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups at post-test, with participants in the experimental group demonstrating substantially higher levels of civic and patriotic orientation. Qualitative findings indicated that regional literature functioned as a source of cultural and historical understanding, a catalyst for emotional and civic engagement, and a pedagogical resource for future teaching. Together, the findings suggest that engagement with regional literary materials may support cultural understanding, civic reflection, and pedagogical awareness among future teachers. The study contributes to research on teacher education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and place-based learning by highlighting the potential of regional literature to connect cultural heritage with teacher preparation in multilingual and culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: *Teacher education, regional literature, civic education, patriotic education, culturally responsive pedagogy, place-based education, pre-service teachers, Kazakhstan.*

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Introduction

The preparation of future teachers extends beyond the development of subject knowledge and pedagogical competence. Contemporary teacher education increasingly emphasizes the cultivation of civic responsibility, cultural awareness, and professional dispositions that enable teachers to respond effectively to the social and cultural realities of the communities they serve (Biesta, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers are expected not only to support academic learning but also to foster students' cultural understanding, civic engagement, and sense of social responsibility. Consequently, identifying educational approaches that connect professional preparation with local cultural contexts has become an important priority in teacher education.

Within this broader discussion, culturally grounded pedagogies have received growing scholarly attention. Place-based education emphasizes the importance of connecting learning to local histories, environments, and communities, arguing that meaningful learning emerges when educational experiences are situated within learners' lived realities (Gruenewald, 2003). Similarly, culturally responsive pedagogy highlights the role of cultural knowledge, experiences, and identities as valuable resources for teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Together, these perspectives suggest that educational content rooted in local cultural contexts may contribute not only to knowledge acquisition but also to the development of civic awareness, cultural identity, and reflective professional practice (Kilinc & Tarman, 2022; Revilla Bueloth et al., 2025).

International organizations have likewise emphasized the educational significance of cultural heritage. UNESCO (2015) argues that engagement with cultural heritage can strengthen learners' sense of identity, belonging, and social responsibility while promoting connections between local and global perspectives. For future teachers, such engagement is particularly important because educators are expected to mediate cultural knowledge and civic values in increasingly diverse educational environments.

One educational resource that remains underexplored within teacher education is regional literature. Literary works rooted in local histories, traditions, and cultural experiences provide opportunities for learners to engage with narratives of place, collective memory, identity, and social responsibility. Unlike standardized curricular materials, regional literary texts are closely connected to the communities and cultural environments in which learners live and study. Through their representation of local experiences, values, and historical events, such texts may foster cultural understanding, emotional engagement, and reflection on broader civic and social issues.

Existing research suggests that regional literary materials can contribute positively to students' cultural awareness and patriotic development. Studies conducted in Kazakhstan indicate that integrating regional literature into educational activities can strengthen students' engagement with cultural heritage and promote patriotic values (Kairova et al., 2025). However, this body of research has focused primarily on school-aged learners. Considerably less attention has been paid to the role of regional literature in teacher education, particularly regarding how future teachers interpret its educational value and how engagement with regional literary materials may be associated with civic and patriotic development.

This gap is particularly relevant in Kazakhstan, where educational policy places considerable emphasis on cultural heritage, civic responsibility, and national identity within a multilingual and multicultural social context. Teachers are expected to support students' development as culturally aware and socially responsible citizens, yet previous research suggests that educators often encounter difficulties translating these goals into classroom practice (Urkunova et al., 2025). Consequently, there is a need to identify educational resources and pedagogical approaches that can support both the personal development of future teachers and their preparation for culturally responsive teaching.

The present study addresses this need by examining how participation in a regional-literature-based instructional module is associated with changes in pre-service primary school teachers' civic and patriotic orientations and by exploring participants' perceptions of the educational value of regional literary materials. Using a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, the study compares changes in orientation between an experimental and a control group while also drawing on participants' written reflections to illuminate their learning experiences.

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends research on regional literature beyond school contexts by focusing on teacher education. Second, it integrates perspectives from place-based education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and civic education to examine the educational significance of regional literary materials. Third, it provides empirical evidence from Kazakhstan, a context that remains underrepresented in international scholarship on teacher education and heritage-based learning.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do civic and patriotic orientation levels differ between pre-service teachers who participated in the regional-literature-based instructional module and those who followed the regular curriculum?

RQ2: How do pre-service primary school teachers perceive the contribution of regional literature to their understanding of cultural heritage, civic responsibility, and future teaching practice?

Literature Review

Patriotism, citizenship, and teacher education

The concept of patriotism has long occupied a central position in educational theory and practice. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes that patriotism is not a monolithic construct but exists along a continuum ranging from uncritical, affective attachment to more reflective and critical forms of civic engagement. In recent studies, this distinction has been conceptualized as the difference between blind and constructive patriotism, where the latter involves not only loyalty to one's country but also the capacity for critical reflection, ethical responsibility, and active participation in civic life (Kaya, 2022; Kilinc et al., 2023; Yussupova, & Tarman, 2025).

Within the field of teacher education, this distinction is particularly significant. Teachers are not only expected to transmit knowledge but also to mediate values, interpret social realities, and support the development of students' civic identities. As Biesta (2020) argues, education involves not only qualification and socialization but also subjectification, that is, the formation of individuals as responsible and autonomous actors. From this perspective, the role of teacher education extends beyond technical preparation to include developing reflective practitioners capable of navigating complex cultural and civic expectations. In this regard, the professional preparation of primary school teachers requires not only methodological competence but also the ability to address learners' developmental needs, as the early educational stages are critical for shaping cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Alimanova et al., 2025; Grigg, 2015; Kgosiemang & Khoza, 2022; Nhlumayo, 2024).

At the same time, research suggests that there is often a gap between the intended goals of citizenship education and its practical implementation. Teachers may express strong support for fostering civic and global competencies but lack the pedagogical tools and contextual resources necessary to enact these goals in classroom practice. This discrepancy has been observed in various

educational contexts, including Kazakhstan, where studies indicate a mismatch between teachers' perceived readiness and their actual capacity to develop students' global and civic skills (Urkunova et al., 2025). These findings highlight the need to identify concrete pedagogical approaches that can support the development of civic and patriotic dispositions in teacher education. At the policy level, this challenge is also reflected in national educational frameworks, which emphasize the importance of fostering civic responsibility, national identity, and value-based education as key priorities of the educational system (Conceptual Foundations of Education, 2015).

Conceptualizing Civic and Patriotic Orientation

Although patriotism has been widely examined in educational research, scholars have conceptualized patriotic orientation as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, value-based, and behavioral components (Kaya, 2022; Schatz et al., 1999). In educational contexts, patriotic orientation can be understood as an individual's knowledge, values, attitudes, and dispositions regarding cultural heritage, national identity, civic responsibility, and participation in the social life of the community and the nation. Rather than reflecting a single emotional attachment to one's country, patriotic orientation incorporates multiple elements that influence how individuals understand, experience, and enact their relationship with their cultural and national communities.

This understanding is particularly relevant in teacher education because future teachers are expected not only to possess knowledge of national and cultural heritage but also to demonstrate civic responsibility and transmit socially valued orientations through their professional practice. Consequently, examining civic and patriotic orientation requires attention to the interconnected cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and value-based aspects of individuals' engagement with culture, society, and citizenship.

Previous scholarship has identified several interrelated components of patriotic orientation. Cognitive aspects involve knowledge and understanding of cultural traditions, historical experiences, national heritage, and the social significance of cultural identity (UNESCO, 2015). Behavioral aspects concern civic participation, social responsibility, community engagement, and actions that contribute to the preservation and development of cultural and social life. These perspectives are consistent with contemporary understandings of constructive patriotism, which emphasize active citizenship, responsibility, and participation rather than passive loyalty (Kaya,

2022). Scholars have also highlighted the importance of affective and value-based elements, including emotional attachment to the homeland, appreciation of cultural heritage, pride, a sense of belonging, and commitments associated with civic and patriotic engagement (Biesta, 2020; UNESCO, 2015; Chigisheva et al., 2022; Gerfanova et al., 2025).

Rather than examining these elements as separate dimensions, the present study conceptualizes civic and patriotic orientation as a broad construct reflecting cultural awareness, civic responsibility, sense of belonging, and engagement with cultural heritage. This perspective is consistent with contemporary approaches that view patriotism as a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes, and dispositions that support constructive participation in social and civic life (Kaya, 2022; Schatz et al., 1999).

For future teachers, such orientations are particularly important because educators are expected not only to support academic learning but also to foster students' cultural understanding, civic awareness, and social responsibility. Consequently, exploring how educational experiences contribute to the development of civic and patriotic orientation represents an important area of inquiry within teacher education.

Cultural and Place-based Approaches in Education

In response to these challenges, a growing body of research has emphasized the importance of culturally grounded and context-sensitive pedagogies. Place-based education, for example, argues that meaningful learning emerges when educational content is rooted in local environments, histories, and communities. Gruenewald (2003) conceptualizes this approach as a "critical pedagogy of place," which seeks to connect learners to their immediate cultural and ecological contexts while also encouraging critical reflection on broader social structures.

Similarly, culturally responsive pedagogy highlights the role of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities in shaping learning processes. Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that effective teaching requires not only academic competence but also cultural relevance and the ability to connect curriculum content to learners' lived realities. Within this framework, cultural heritage is not treated as supplementary knowledge but as a central resource for meaning-making, identity formation, and engagement.

International organizations have also underscored the importance of integrating cultural heritage into education. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that education should promote both a sense of

belonging to local cultural contexts and the development of global civic competencies, highlighting the role of cultural heritage as a bridge between identity and critical engagement. Importantly, such engagement is not limited to the preservation of cultural artifacts but involves active interpretation and critical reflection, enabling learners to relate cultural knowledge to contemporary social and civic issues.

For pre-service primary school teachers, these approaches are particularly relevant. Early education plays a foundational role in shaping children's perceptions of identity, belonging, and social responsibility. Therefore, teacher education programs must equip future teachers to integrate culturally meaningful content into their teaching in ways that are pedagogically effective and socially relevant.

Regional Literature as a Pedagogical Resource

Within culturally grounded approaches, literature occupies a unique position as both a cognitive and affective medium. Literary texts provide access to historical narratives, moral dilemmas, and cultural values, while also engaging readers emotionally and imaginatively. In the context of regional literature, these functions are further intensified, as texts are directly connected to specific places, communities, and cultural traditions.

Regional literary works, including the poetry and oral traditions of specific areas, can serve as a bridge between individual experience and collective memory. They offer representations of local history, social struggles, and cultural identities that are often absent from standardized curricula. As such, they have the potential to foster not only knowledge acquisition but also emotional engagement, value formation, and a sense of belonging.

In the Kazakhstani context, regional literature is closely linked to the rich traditions of poets, storytellers, and oral performers whose works reflect themes of homeland, courage, social responsibility, and moral integrity. Recent empirical research conducted in Kazakhstan demonstrates that the purposeful integration of regional literary materials into educational practice contributes to the development of patriotic culture, strengthens students' emotional engagement with cultural heritage, and enhances their sense of civic responsibility (Kairova et al., 2025). However, much of this research remains descriptive and focused on school-level outcomes, with limited attention to the systematic integration of regional literary materials into teacher education programs.

Moreover, while existing studies emphasize the potential of cultural and literary resources for patriotic education, they rarely examine how engagement with regional literature contributes to the broader development of civic and patriotic orientation among pre-service teachers. Research focusing on teacher education remains particularly limited.

Research Gap and Conceptual Focus

Taken together, the reviewed literature suggests three key points. First, contemporary approaches to patriotism in education emphasize reflective, constructive engagement rather than uncritical loyalty. Second, culturally grounded and place-based pedagogies provide a promising framework for connecting educational content with learners' identities and lived experiences. Third, regional literature represents a potentially valuable but underutilized resource within this framework.

To date, little empirical research has examined how engagement with regional literature is associated with civic and patriotic orientation among pre-service teachers. Although previous studies have documented the educational value of regional literary materials and their contribution to patriotic culture among school-aged learners (Kairova et al., 2025), considerably less is known about their role in teacher education and professional preparation.

The present study addresses this gap by examining how participation in a regional-literature-based instructional module is associated with pre-service primary school teachers' civic and patriotic orientations and by exploring participants' perceptions of the educational value of regional literary materials. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how culturally embedded educational resources can support the development of reflective, culturally responsive, and contextually grounded teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design to examine the contribution of regional literature to the civic and patriotic orientations of pre-service primary school teachers. The quantitative component followed a pre-test-post-test nonequivalent control-group design. Students in the experimental group participated in a regional-literature-based instructional module, whereas students in the control group continued their regular coursework. The qualitative

component consisted of thematic analysis of students' written reflections and was used to contextualize and explain the quantitative findings.

Participants and Context

The study was conducted at K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Kazakhstan. The quantitative sample comprised 100 pre-service primary school teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes, including 51 students in the experimental group and 49 students in the control group. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 22 years ($M = 19.8$, $SD = 1.1$). The experimental group included 45 females (88.2%) and 6 males (11.8%), while the control group included 43 females (87.8%) and 6 males (12.2%). Second-year students represented 52% of the sample and third-year students 48%. The groups were comparable in terms of age, gender distribution, year of study, and pre-test civic and patriotic orientation levels.

The qualitative dataset consisted of 87 written reflections collected from students in the experimental group during the intervention. These reflections were used to explore participants' perceptions of regional literature, cultural heritage, civic responsibility, and future teaching practice.

Instructional Intervention

The intervention was implemented over eight weeks and integrated into literature and pedagogy coursework. Students in the experimental group participated in two 90-minute sessions per week (24 instructional hours in total). The instructional module was structured around regional literary works from the Aktobe region and western Kazakhstan (Table 1) and followed a sequence of guided reading, textual analysis, group discussion, and reflective activities.

Table 1

Literary Materials Included in the Instructional Module

Author	Work	Genre
Äbubäkir Kerderi	<i>My Kazakh People (Qazağym)</i>	Poetry
Nürpeis Baiğanin	<i>Memoirs (Estelikter)</i>	Memoirs
Aisa Baitabynov	<i>Koblandy and Zhaskelen</i>	Epic narrative
Sarysholaq	<i>Epic Poems (Dastandar)</i>	Epic poetry
Boranbaiuly	<i>Epic Poems (Dastandar)</i>	Epic poetry
Zh. Shañgytbaiuly	<i>A Saint of the Steppe: Monke Bi (Bozkırda Bir Evliya: Monke Biy)</i>	Historical-biographical narrative
Asan Zh.	<i>Collected Works (Shyğarmalary)</i>	Poetry and literary works

During the intervention, students examined literary representations of cultural heritage, historical memory, civic responsibility, and national identity. Classroom discussions focused on the social and educational significance of the texts, while collaborative tasks encouraged participants to relate literary themes to contemporary civic issues and their future professional roles as teachers. Written reflections collected at multiple points during the intervention encouraged critical engagement with questions of cultural heritage, patriotism, and citizenship.

The control group followed the regular literature and pedagogy curriculum during the same period. While students completed standard course activities, they did not participate in the regional-literature-based instructional module or the associated reflective and discussion-based activities centred on regional literary texts.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire administered before and after the intervention. The instrument consisted of 24 items assessing participants' overall civic and patriotic orientation. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists in teacher education, literature education, and civic education. Based on their feedback, several items were revised to improve clarity and alignment with the study objectives. Internal consistency reliability was satisfactory, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$ (Cronbach, 1951).

Participants' total scores ranged from 24 to 120 and were classified into four developmental levels: low (24–47), medium (48–71), sufficient (72–95), and high (96–120). These score ranges were adopted from the original intervention study and were used as descriptive categories to facilitate comparison of orientation levels across groups and measurement points. To reduce social desirability bias, participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and students were informed that their responses would not affect academic evaluation.

Qualitative data consisted of written reflections collected at three points during the intervention (Weeks 2, 5, and 8). Students responded to open-ended prompts concerning cultural heritage, patriotism, civic responsibility, emotional responses to literary texts, and the educational value of regional literature. A total of 87 reflections were collected across the three reflection periods.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to examine changes in civic and patriotic orientation levels. Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to compare the distributions of orientation levels between the experimental and control groups at pre-test and post-test. Effect sizes were estimated using Cramer's V.

Qualitative data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification and refinement of themes, and interpretation of thematic patterns. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with the quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and all procedures complied with institutional ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

Results

RQ1: To What Extent Do Civic and Patriotic Orientation Levels Differ Between Pre-Service Teachers Who Participated in the Regional-Literature-Based Instructional Module and Those Who Followed the Regular Curriculum?

To examine changes in civic and patriotic orientations, the distributions of students across four developmental levels (low, medium, sufficient, and high) were compared before and after the intervention in both the experimental and control groups.

Table 2

Changes in Participants' Civic and Patriotic Orientation Levels in the Experimental and Control Groups

Level	Experimental Group (n = 51)		Control Group (n = 49)	
	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)
Low	18	3	17	24
Medium	65	18	63	65
Sufficient	17	51	20	11
High	0	28	0	0

As shown in Table 2, both groups demonstrated broadly similar distributions at the pre-test stage. In the experimental group, most students were classified at the medium level (65%), followed by the low (18%) and sufficient (17%) levels. Similarly, in the control group, 63% of students were classified at the medium level, 20% at the sufficient level, and 17% at the low level. No participants in either group were classified at the high level before the intervention.

To determine whether the groups differed at baseline, a chi-square test was conducted using the pre-test distributions. The analysis indicated no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 0.13$, $p = .935$, Cramer's $V = .04$, suggesting that the groups were comparable prior to the intervention.

Substantial changes were observed in the experimental group following participation in the regional-literature-based instructional module. The proportion of students at the low level decreased from 18% to 3%, while the proportion at the sufficient level increased from 17% to 51%. In addition, 28% of participants reached the high level of civic and patriotic orientation, whereas no students had been classified at this level before the intervention. The proportion of students at the medium level decreased from 65% to 18%, reflecting movement toward higher levels of development.

In contrast, the control group demonstrated little evidence of positive development. The proportion of students at the low level increased from 17% to 24%, while the proportion at the sufficient level decreased from 20% to 11%. No participants in the control group reached the high level at either measurement point. Overall, the distribution of orientation levels remained largely stable in the control group.

A chi-square test of independence revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups at post-test, $\chi^2(3, N = 100) = 48.25$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .69$, indicating a strong association between group membership and civic and patriotic orientation level at post-test. Students in the experimental group were substantially more likely to achieve sufficient and high levels of orientation than students in the control group.

Taken together, these findings suggest that participation in the regional-literature-based instructional module was associated with positive changes in students' civic and patriotic orientations, whereas comparable changes were not observed in the control group.

RQ2: How Do Pre-Service Teachers Perceive the Contribution of Regional Literature to Their Understanding of Cultural Heritage, Civic Responsibility, and Future Teaching Practice?

To address the second research question, 87 written reflections produced by students in the experimental group were analysed using thematic analysis. The reflections were generated in response to poetry, epic narratives, memoirs, and historical-biographical texts included in the instructional module. Three interrelated themes emerged from the data: (1) regional literature as a source of cultural and historical understanding, (2) regional literature as a catalyst for emotional and civic engagement, and (3) regional literature as a pedagogical resource for future teaching.

Regional Literature as a Source of Cultural and Historical Understanding

Participants frequently described regional literature as an important source of knowledge about local history, traditions, and cultural identity. Many students indicated that literary texts enabled them to move beyond factual knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, values, and historical memories of previous generations.

One participant explained:

“Through these literary works, I learned not only historical facts but also how people felt, lived, and preserved their traditions. This made the history of our region much more meaningful to me.”

Another student noted:

“Regional literature helped me better understand the cultural heritage of my homeland. I realized that many traditions and values described in the texts are still relevant today.”

These reflections suggest that literary texts served as a bridge between historical knowledge and personal understanding, helping students connect regional history with their own cultural identities.

Regional Literature as a Catalyst for Emotional and Civic Engagement

A second theme concerned the emotional and value-based influence of regional literature. Participants frequently referred to feelings of pride, belonging, appreciation, and responsibility toward their homeland and cultural heritage. Literary narratives appeared to stimulate reflection on the importance of preserving cultural traditions and contributing positively to society.

One participant stated:

“Reading these texts made me feel proud of my region and its people. I began to think more seriously about my responsibility to preserve our cultural heritage.”

Similarly, another student wrote:

“The stories encouraged me to appreciate my homeland more deeply and reminded me that patriotism is expressed through actions and responsibility, not only through words.”

Many participants described patriotism as a form of civic commitment rather than simple loyalty. This interpretation suggests that engagement with regional literary materials encouraged reflection on social responsibility, cultural preservation, and active citizenship. This theme helps explain the positive shift toward higher levels of civic and patriotic orientation observed in the experimental group.

Regional Literature as a Pedagogical Resource for Future Teaching

The third theme reflected participants’ growing awareness of the educational value of regional literature for primary school teaching. Students frequently emphasized that local literary texts could help young learners connect educational content with their own cultural experiences and communities.

One participant observed:

“Regional literature can make lessons more meaningful because children recognize familiar places, traditions, and stories. This helps them feel connected to what they are learning.”

Another participant explained:

“As a future teacher, I would like to use regional literary materials because they teach cultural values while also developing reading, discussion, and critical-thinking skills.”

Students viewed regional literature as a resource capable of supporting both academic learning and the formation of values. Many also stressed its potential for fostering cultural awareness, civic responsibility, and emotional engagement among primary school pupils. These reflections indicate that the intervention influenced not only participants’ personal orientations but also their professional understandings of culturally responsive teaching.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a complementary pattern. Quantitative results demonstrated a substantial shift from low and medium levels toward sufficient and high levels of civic and patriotic orientation among participants in the experimental group, whereas comparable changes were not observed in the control group. Qualitative findings help explain these changes

by illustrating how participants developed deeper cultural understanding, stronger emotional engagement with cultural heritage, and greater awareness of the pedagogical value of regional literature. Together, the findings suggest that regional literary materials may contribute to both personal and professional development among future teachers.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how participation in a regional-literature-based instructional module was associated with changes in pre-service primary school teachers' civic and patriotic orientations and to explore participants' perceptions of the educational value of regional literary materials. The findings revealed clear differences between the experimental and control groups following the intervention. Whereas students who participated in the regional-literature-based module demonstrated substantial movement from low and medium levels toward sufficient and high levels of civic and patriotic orientation, comparable changes were not observed among students in the control group. The qualitative findings help explain these differences by illustrating how participants engaged with regional literary texts as sources of cultural understanding, civic reflection, and pedagogical learning.

The quantitative findings suggest that regional literature may represent a meaningful educational resource associated with higher levels of civic and patriotic orientation within teacher education. At the beginning of the study, the experimental and control groups demonstrated comparable distributions of orientation levels. Following the intervention, however, the experimental group showed markedly higher proportions of students at sufficient and high levels, while the control group remained concentrated primarily at the low and medium levels. These findings indicate that participation in the instructional module was associated with positive changes in orientation levels that were not observed among students who followed the regular curriculum.

One possible explanation for these changes lies in the contextual and culturally grounded nature of the literary materials. Consistent with place-based education, regional literary texts connected learning to local histories, cultural traditions, and community experiences that were familiar and meaningful to participants (Gruenewald, 2003). Rather than encountering civic concepts as abstract educational objectives, students engaged with narratives rooted in their own cultural environment. Such contextualization appears to have strengthened the relevance of civic and patriotic themes and encouraged deeper reflection on identity, belonging, and social responsibility.

These findings support UNESCO's (2015) view that engagement with cultural heritage can strengthen learners' sense of identity, belonging, and civic responsibility while fostering meaningful connections between local cultural knowledge and broader educational goals.

The qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation. Participants frequently described regional literature as helping them better understand local history, cultural traditions, and the experiences of previous generations. Literary narratives enabled students to connect cultural knowledge with personal experience and identity, transforming historical and cultural content into meaningful and relevant learning. These reflections suggest that regional literature functioned not merely as a source of information but as a medium through which students interpreted their relationship to their communities, cultural heritage, and civic responsibilities.

A second important finding concerns the role of emotional engagement. Participants repeatedly referred to feelings of pride, appreciation, belonging, and responsibility toward their homeland and cultural heritage. Literary texts appeared to stimulate reflection on the importance of preserving cultural traditions and contributing positively to society. This finding is consistent with contemporary understandings of constructive patriotism, which emphasize reflective attachment, civic responsibility, and active engagement rather than unquestioning loyalty (Kaya, 2022; Schatz et al., 1999). The findings therefore suggest that regional literature may be associated with higher civic and patriotic orientation levels not only through the transmission of cultural knowledge but also through the cultivation of meaningful emotional connections to cultural communities and shared values.

The study also revealed an important professional dimension of participants' learning. Beyond changes in civic and patriotic orientation, students increasingly viewed regional literature as a pedagogical resource capable of connecting educational content to learners' cultural experiences, identities, and communities. Participants emphasized that local literary texts could help future pupils engage more meaningfully with learning because the narratives, values, and cultural references reflected familiar contexts and lived realities.

This finding resonates strongly with culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of connecting curriculum content to learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It also aligns with research demonstrating the importance of contextualized and learner-centered educational approaches in teacher development and teacher preparation (Kuzembayeva et al., 2025; Kuzembayeva et al., 2024). Rather than perceiving

regional literature merely as content to be taught, participants increasingly viewed it as a pedagogical tool capable of supporting cultural awareness, identity development, ethical reflection, and civic learning. Such findings suggest that engagement with local literary materials may help future teachers recognize the educational value of culturally meaningful resources and develop greater confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

The findings also reflect Biesta's (2020) argument that education involves not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the formation of individuals as responsible and reflective social actors. Participants' reflections indicate that engagement with regional literature encouraged them to think critically about their own cultural identities, social responsibilities, and future professional roles. In this respect, regional literature appears to be associated with not only cultural learning but also the broader developmental goals of teacher education by supporting reflective professional formation.

The pedagogical significance of these findings is particularly relevant for primary teacher education. Primary school teachers are expected to support learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development simultaneously (Grigg, 2015; Kairgozhin et al., 2023). The present findings suggest that regional literary materials may provide opportunities to integrate these dimensions within a single educational resource. Through engagement with local narratives, historical experiences, and cultural traditions, learners can develop cultural knowledge, emotional connection, civic awareness, and critical reflection in ways that are closely connected to their own communities and experiences.

The present study also contributes to the growing body of scholarship on culturally grounded and place-based education. Previous research conducted in Kazakhstan has demonstrated the potential of regional literary materials to support patriotic culture and cultural awareness among school students (Kairova et al., 2025). The current study extends this work to the context of teacher education by showing that regional literature may contribute not only to students' civic and patriotic orientations but also to their professional understanding of how culturally meaningful materials can be used pedagogically. In this respect, regional literature emerges not simply as a cultural resource but as a component of teacher preparation that supports the development of culturally responsive and socially responsible educators.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings provide converging evidence that regional literary materials may contribute to both the personal and professional development of future

teachers. Consistent with the perspectives advanced by Ladson-Billings (1995), Gruenewald (2003), UNESCO (2015), Biesta (2020), and recent research conducted in Kazakhstan (Kairova et al., 2025; Kuzembayeva et al., 2025; Kuzembayeva et al., 2024; Kairgozhin et al., 2023), the findings suggest that learning experiences grounded in local cultural contexts can foster cultural understanding, civic reflection, pedagogical awareness, and professional growth. Regional literature thus appears to function as a bridge between cultural heritage, citizenship education, and teacher preparation, supporting the development of educators who are culturally informed, socially responsible, and responsive to the communities they serve.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, although the study employed a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group, participants were not randomly assigned to conditions. Consequently, the observed differences between the experimental and control groups should be interpreted as associations rather than definitive causal effects.

Second, the study was conducted at a single university and involved a relatively limited sample of pre-service primary school teachers. The findings therefore reflect a specific educational and cultural context and may not be fully generalizable to other teacher education programmes, regions, or national settings.

Third, the questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. Although content validity was established through expert review and the instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability, further psychometric validation is warranted. Future studies should examine the instrument's factor structure and construct validity using larger samples and exploratory and confirmatory factor analytic procedures.

Fourth, the study relied primarily on self-reported measures of civic and patriotic orientation. Because patriotism is a socially valued construct within educational settings, participants may have been inclined to provide socially desirable responses despite the use of anonymous and voluntary data collection procedures. Future studies may benefit from incorporating additional sources of evidence, such as observations, behavioural indicators, interviews, or social desirability measures, to triangulate self-reported data.

Finally, the qualitative component was based on written reflections collected during the intervention. While these reflections provided valuable insight into participants' experiences and interpretations, they did not allow for the depth of exploration that may be achieved through interviews or focus groups. Future studies could employ multiple qualitative methods to develop a more nuanced understanding of how engagement with regional literature shapes civic, cultural, and professional learning.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the growing literature on culturally responsive and place-based approaches to teacher education by demonstrating the potential of regional literature to support civic reflection, cultural understanding, and professional development among future teachers.

Conclusion

This study explored how participation in a regional-literature-based instructional module was associated with changes in pre-service primary school teachers' civic and patriotic orientations and examined participants' perceptions of the educational value of regional literary materials. The findings revealed clear differences between the experimental and control groups following the intervention. Students who participated in the regional-literature-based module demonstrated substantially higher levels of civic and patriotic orientation than those who followed the regular curriculum, suggesting that engagement with regional literature was associated with enhanced cultural understanding, stronger emotional attachment to cultural heritage, and increased awareness of civic responsibility.

The qualitative findings complemented these results by demonstrating that participants viewed regional literature as a meaningful source of cultural and historical knowledge, a catalyst for emotional and civic engagement, and a valuable pedagogical resource for future teaching. Students increasingly recognized the potential of regional literary materials to connect educational content with learners' cultural experiences, identities, and communities. These findings suggest that regional literature may be a valuable resource for supporting personal and professional preparation by helping future teachers integrate cultural heritage, civic learning, and pedagogical practice.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on culturally responsive and place-based education by extending scholarship on regional literature and patriotic education into the domain of teacher preparation. While previous studies have primarily examined the influence of regional

literary materials on school students, the present study highlights their potential significance for the preparation of future teachers. The findings suggest that regional literature can serve as a bridge between cultural heritage and teacher education, supporting the development of educators who are culturally informed, socially responsible, and responsive to local contexts.

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