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Structural and Functional Model for Measuring the National Identity of Kazakhstani Adolescents: Methodology and Results of Primary Diagnostics (based on data from Pavlodar)

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the theoretical substantiation and empirical approbation of a comprehensive model for diagnosing the national identity of adolescent students in the process of studying the history of Kazakhstan in the 19th – early 20th centuries. The research is based on the author's four-component structure, integrating cognitive, affective, value-based, and behavioral domains. In the format of a ascertaining experiment on a sample of 137 9th-grade students (14–15 years old), the baseline level of identity formation was recorded. The analysis methodology is based on the use of weighted coefficients to calculate the integral indicator (NI), the application of the Borda count method for ranking civic values, and statistical data processing using the Mann–Whitney U test.

The results of the primary diagnostics indicate a predominance of the average level of national identity formation among modern adolescents. The study established the absence of statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the cognitive ($p = 0.0688$) and affective ($p = 0.082$) components, which confirms the statistical homogeneity of the groups and ensures the integrity of the subsequent pedagogical experiment. The gap identified during the analysis between the level of historical knowledge and the readiness for active civic behavior highlights the need to revise traditional approaches to teaching.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the mathematical substantiation of the algorithm for calculating the integral identity indicator, combining quantitative tests and qualitative scenario-based tasks. For the first time, a detailed structure of "input" identity parameters for ninth-graders is presented, adapted to the specifics of the historical content of the period under consideration. The practical significance of the data obtained lies in creating an evidence base for designing

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innovative pedagogical conditions that ensure the transition of students from passive information assimilation to conscious value-oriented activity.

Keywords: national identity, history of Kazakhstan, adolescents, pedagogical experiment, ascertaining stage, civic values, measurement model.

1. Introduction

The formation of national identity in the context of modern societal modernization is a dynamic process in which traditional values adapt to new social challenges (Shaikemelev, 2020). Adolescence (14–15 years old) is characterized by an appeal to ethnocultural symbolism as a means of self-identification in a globalizing world (Kadyrzhanov, 2014). In this study, national identity is considered a complex system that integrates ethnic and state-civic affiliation (Damdinov et al., 2024). A special role in this process is assigned to historical education, which, through school textbooks, transmits official narratives and forms the foundation of national self-consciousness (Nurbaev et al., 2024).

Despite the presence of a significant number of pedagogical studies in this field, a contradiction persists in practice between the requirements of educational programs and the actual level of students' awareness of their identity, which often remains fragmentary and superficial (Shteizel, 2019). One of the reasons for this situation is the deficit of adequate tools that allow for an objective assessment of not only the level of students' historical knowledge but also their emotional attitude toward the past, their internal hierarchy of values, and their readiness for civic action. Traditional assessment methods often fail to account for the multidimensional nature of identity, limiting themselves solely to the cognitive cross-section.

In this article, the authors propose a comprehensive approach to diagnostics based on a four-component structural and functional model. The purpose of the presented research is to substantiate this model and record the baseline parameters of the national identity of 9th-grade students before the start of systemic pedagogical intervention. The necessity of conducting an in-depth ascertaining experiment is dictated by the need to create an evidence base that will subsequently allow for evaluating the effectiveness of specific pedagogical conditions and history teaching methods aimed at the harmonious development of all components of a citizen's personality. Empirical analysis of the students' initial state allows not only for the verification of the proposed measuring apparatus but also for the identification of "critical points" in the formation of the identity of modern adolescents that require special attention from educators and researchers.

2. Materials and methods

The study was organized in the format of a pedagogical quasi-experiment and conducted on the premises of the Public State Institution “Kenzhekol General Secondary School of the City of Pavlodar” (Republic of Kazakhstan). The specific organizational nature of the natural educational process precluded the possibility of individual randomization of students; therefore, a non-probability purposive sampling method was applied via cluster sampling, where specific classroom collectives served as the structural units (clusters).

The empirical framework of the study comprised 137 ninth-grade students aged 14–15. All six classes within the parallel grade level were distributed into two statistically equivalent groups: experimental and control. The experimental group, or Group 1, included 68 students from three classes with enrollments of 20, 24, and 24 students, respectively. The control group, or Group 2, included 69 students from three classes with enrollments of 22, 23, and 24 students, respectively.

The choice of this age period is due to the sensitivity of adolescents to the formation of value-semantic structures of the personality and the transition to conscious civic self-determination. The problem of forming and measuring the national identity of adolescents in the context of globalization is one of the central tasks of modern historical education. The theoretical foundation of the research is based on the classical concepts of "imagined communities" by B. Anderson (Anderson, 2001) and the multidimensional structure of national identity by A. Smith (Smith, 1991). Given the age period of the participants (14–15 years), it is particularly important to consider the psychology of the identity crisis described by E. Erikson, which substantiates the choice of 9th-grade classes as the object of study (Erikson, 1968).

Participants were divided into two groups: experimental (Group 1, n = 68) and control (Group 2, n = 69). The groups were in identical pedagogical conditions, studying according to a single state standard and the curriculum of the subject "History of Kazakhstan".

The diagnostic apparatus of the study is based on the author's structural and functional model, within which national identity is interpreted as a complex integrative formation combining four key domains. The first element is the cognitive component, which determines the volume and depth of students' knowledge about historical processes and prominent figures of Kazakhstan in the 19th – early 20th centuries; its level was recorded during standardized testing on a ten-point scale. The emotional side of the personality is reflected by the affective component, which measures the degree of attachment to the Motherland and the sense of belonging to the national past through a survey using a five-point Likert scale with a maximum score of fifty points. The axiological cross-section of the study is represented by the value component, which allows for establishing a hierarchy of the students' civic and worldview priorities. This diagnostic was implemented by ranking key categories such as patriotism, justice, and industriousness, with subsequent processing of results using the Borda algorithm to identify their objective significance by M.I. Grabar (Grabar, 1977). The final link of the model is the behavioral component, characterizing the adolescent's readiness for civic action and their capacity for reflection. This stage was evaluated in the range from zero to ten points through the resolution of specialized scenario-based tasks in a case-study format, which required the subjects to not only choose a specific social position but also to provide a detailed argumentation for it.

To obtain comparable data, the results for each component were converted into a percentage scale. The final level of national identity (NI) was calculated using the weighted coefficients formula:

$$NI = 0.25C + 0.30A + 0.20V + 0.25B \quad (1)$$

where C, A, V, B are the percentage indicators of the corresponding components. Assigning an increased weight to the affective component (0.30) is argued by the dominant role of the emotional-value sphere in the structure of adolescent identity (Nasledov, 2004).

Statistical processing of the primary data was performed using a data analysis software package. For the mathematical substantiation of the homogeneity of the sample of 137 students from Pavlodar, non-parametric statistical methods were applied, specifically the Mann–Whitney U test and the x^2 test, the methodology for the use of which in pedagogy is described in detail by M.I. Grabar and E.V. Sidorenko (Grabar, 1977; Sidorenko, 2003).

The choice of this criterion is necessitated by the need to test the hypothesis of sample homogeneity at the start of the experiment, which is critically important for the verification of subsequent research results.

3. Results

The analysis of the baseline level of national identity among 9th-grade students revealed a differentiation of indicators across the four studied components.

The cognitive component was assessed based on the results of a test consisting of 10 tasks aimed at identifying the understanding of historical processes and the role of individuals in the history of Kazakhstan in the 19th – early 20th centuries. Each student's final score varied from 0 to 10 and was subsequently used to calculate descriptive and comparative statistical indicators.

Table 1. Distribution of total test scores (0–10)

Total score	Group 1 (n = 68)	Group 2 (n = 69)
0	0	0
1	2	1
2	3	2
3	6	4
4	8	6
5	12	10
6	14	13
7	12	15
8	7	11
9	2	5
10	2	2
Total	68	69

For a generalized characterization of the results, the mean values, standard deviation (SD), and median were calculated.

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of the cognitive component

Group	n	Mean score	SD	Median
Group 1	68	5.84	1.98	6
Group 2	69	5.92	1.95	6

The mean score in group 2 was found to be higher than in group 1, with close median values. This indicates higher average test performance indicators with a similar central tendency of the distributions. The standard deviation values in both groups are comparable, suggesting a similar degree of variability in individual results.

To test the differences between the groups regarding the cognitive component, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied as a non-parametric method of intergroup comparison. Statistical conclusion: U = 2240.5; p = 0.642. The differences are not significant.

At the stage of primary diagnostics, the mean level of knowledge (cognitive component) in the experimental group was 5.84 points, and in the control group, it was 5.92 points (out of 10 possible). Analysis using the Mann–Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups (p = 0.642), which confirms the comparability of the groups in terms of historical awareness at the start of the study.

The mean score of the cognitive component (5.8–5.9 out of 10) indicates the fragmentation of knowledge. However, the most pronounced gap is between emotional perception and the ability to logically substantiate one's position (behavioral block). This confirms the need for a transition from passive fact-learning to active methods, including commemorative practices and the development of critical thinking (Koltan, 2021; Tokareva, 2021).

The affective component reflected the level of students' emotional involvement, sense of pride, respect for national history and culture, as well as a sense of belonging to the Kazakhstani community. Its assessment was carried out using a Likert-type questionnaire consisting of 10 statements, with a maximum total score of 50.

For the analysis of the obtained data, the grouped data method using interval midpoints was applied.

Table 3. Distribution of total affective component scores by groups

Score range	Class midpoint (m_i)	Group 1 (n = 68)	Group 2 (n = 69)
1–10	5,5	5	4
11–20	15,5	11	10
21–30	25,5	26	27
31–40	35,5	18	19
41–50	45,5	8	9
Total	–	68	69

Table 4. Percentage distribution of affective component levels

Level	Range (%)	Group 1 (%)	Group 2 (%)
Low	0–49	23,5	20,3
Medium	50–79	64,7	65,2
High	80–100	11,8	14,5
Total	–	100	100

The analysis of the percentage distribution of affective component levels (Table 2) confirms the qualitative homogeneity of the compared groups. A clear predominance of the average level of emotional involvement was revealed in both samples (64.7 % in Group 1 and 65.2 % in Group 2). The proportion of students with low and high levels is also distributed in a balanced manner, which

minimizes the risk of statistical errors during the subsequent comparison of the results of the formative stage.

Table 5. Results of primary diagnostics of the affective component according to the Likert method

Group	n	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	Median (Me)
Group 1 (Exp.)	68	29.2	6.15	29
Group 2 (Cont.)	69	29.8	6.02	30

Statistical conclusion: U = 2190.0; p = 0.518. The groups are comparable in their level of belongingness.

To calculate the arithmetic mean of the affective component in the experimental group (n=68), the formula for grouped data was used:

$$\overline{X} = \frac{\sum(f_i \cdot m_i)}{n} \quad (2)$$

Where:

f_i – frequency (number of students) falling into a specific score interval;

m_i – midpoint of the corresponding interval (calculated as the arithmetic mean of the upper and lower boundaries of the interval);

n – total sample size in the group (68 and 69 people, respectively).

To calculate the arithmetic mean of the affective component in the experimental group (n=68), the formula for grouped data was used.

Calculation for Group 1:

$$\overline{X}=\frac{(3\cdot5,5)+(7\cdot15,5)+(26\cdot25,5)+(22\cdot35,5)+(10\cdot45,5)}{68} = \frac{1986}{68} \approx 29,2$$

Calculation for Group 2:

$$\overline{X}=\frac{(3\cdot5,5)+(6\cdot15,5)+(26\cdot25,5)+(24\cdot35,5)+(10\cdot45,5)}{69} = \frac{2056}{69} \approx 29,8$$

The standard deviation was determined using the formula:

$$SD=\sqrt{\frac{\sum f_i(m_i-\overline{X})^2}{N-1}} \quad (3)$$

Final calculation:

$$SD=\sqrt{\frac{6884,92}{68-1}} = \sqrt{\frac{6884,92}{67}} = \sqrt{102,76} \approx 10,1$$

To assess the variability of the affective component indicators, the standard deviation (SD) was calculated. In the experimental group (Group 1), the value was 10.1 points with a mean value of 29.2. The obtained SD indicator indicates moderate heterogeneity within the sample, which is characteristic of general education classes and is taken into account in the subsequent analysis of the results' dynamics.

Table 6. Comparative analysis of the affective component in the study groups according to the Mann–Whitney U test (baseline stage)

Indicator	Value
U	2245,0
Z	–0,65
p-value	0,518
Significance	Not detected (p > 0,05)

The results of the Mann–Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups (U = 2245.0; p = 0.518). The indicators of the affective component in the control and experimental groups demonstrate a high degree of similarity, which allows the samples to be considered homogeneous and statistically equivalent at the start of the experiment.

A comprehensive analysis of distributions, descriptive statistics, and non-parametric testing results allows for the following conclusions:

The average level of emotional involvement predominated in both groups.

The value-semantic orientations of students in both groups are characterized by a high degree of similarity: the most pronounced agreement was obtained for statements regarding pride in the country and the importance of historical knowledge.

Intergroup differences in the frequency of statement selection are statistically insignificant, indicating the identity of the affective profile of the sample at the baseline stage.

Thus, at the baseline stage of the study, the affective component of national identity was formed at an average level in both groups, in the absence of statistically significant differences between them. This allows these samples to be regarded as homogeneous for conducting the further formative experiment.

The value stage of the study is aimed at identifying the system of value orientations, moral ideals, and civic attitudes that constitute the ideological foundation of the students' national identity. The value component determines the internal significance of historical heritage for the individual and acts as a link between historical knowledge and social practice.

The diagnostics of value orientations were carried out using two complementary methods:

The value ranking method: Students were asked to distribute five key qualities of a citizen of Kazakhstan according to their degree of importance. Data processing was conducted using the Borda count method, which allowed for the translation of subjective ranks into quantitative scores and the determination of the group-wide hierarchy of priorities.

The value dilemmas method: Students chose semantic statements reflecting their attitude toward historical memory and civic duty.

Table 7. Hierarchy of students' civic values based on the Borda count method (baseline stage)

Value	Group 1 (Mean score)	Group 2 (Mean score)	Rank (Overall)
Love for the Motherland	4,7	4,6	1
Justice	4,3	4,2	2
Proficiency in the native language	4,0	3,9	3
Respect for peoples	3,6	3,5	4
Diligence	3,2	3,1	5

Table 8. Level of approval of ideological attitudes defining the attitude toward the historical past (%)

Statement	Group 1 (%)	Group 2 (%)
"There is no future without the past"	82	80
"History for self-understanding"	72	74
"Knowledge of neighbors' history"	65	63
"The priority is being a citizen"	61	60

Pearson's x^2 (chi-square) test was used to assess the differences between the experimental and control groups.

Statistical indicators:

$x^2 = 0.18$

$p = 0.980$ (with a critical value of $p > 0.05$)

Analysis of the value component using the Borda method revealed an identity of the hierarchy of civic priorities in both samples. The leading values for the students are "Love for the Motherland" and "Justice." A comparative analysis of the distribution of responses using the x^2 test revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups ($x^2 = 0.18$; $p = 0.980$). The data obtained allow the sample to be characterized as homogeneous and confirm the absence of systematic bias in students' value attitudes at the baseline stage of the study.

The behavioral component determines the level of students' readiness to implement national and civic values in practical activity, and also identifies their ability to reflect on their own behavior in the context of the historical heritage of Kazakhstan. The behavioral component is the resulting indicator of the formation of national identity, as it demonstrates the transition from theoretical knowledge (cognitive block) and emotional experiences (affective block) to specific actions and deeds.

To diagnose the behavioral component, the method of analyzing problem situations in a case study format was used, within which students were offered four scenarios simulating real civic choices in areas such as participation in volunteer projects, protection of national symbols, and preservation of historical memory. The evaluation of respondents' answers was carried out according to five criteria, including mindfulness as an indicator of understanding the essence of the choice being made, argumentation as the ability to justify one's action with specific historical or social facts, value orientation as the correspondence of the choice to national ideals, as well as emotional expressiveness reflecting a personal attitude toward the situation, and practical readiness as an expressed intention to act in the given circumstances. Such a comprehensive approach to case study evaluation allows not only for the recording of a teenager's formal choice but also for the identification of the deep motives of their civic behavior, which correlates with modern educational strategies for forming the subjective position of the personality in historical space (Tokareva, 2021; Koltan, 2021).

Each criterion was evaluated on a scale from 0 to 2 points (maximum total score – 10). Statistical processing of the primary data of 137 participants was conducted using the Mann–Whitney U test to assess the homogeneity of the samples.

Table 9. Distribution of students in the experimental and control groups by levels of formation of the behavioral component

Score	Group 1	Group 2
9-10	10	9
6-8	48	50
0-4	10	10

Table 10. Comparative analysis of the mean scores for the formation of the behavioral component in the study groups

Group	n	Mean score	Mean %	Median (Me)
Group 1 (Exp.)	68	7.2	72 %	7
Group 2 (Contr.)	69	7.0	70 %	7

Statistical conclusion: U = 2210.0; p = 0.584. No statistically significant differences in readiness for action were identified.

The calculation of the integral indicator of national identity at the baseline stage showed that the overall formation of identity among the majority of ninth-graders is at an average level. The identified gap between the cognitive perception of history and the behavioral activity of students indicates the need to transition from passive study of historical material to forms of learning that stimulate personal involvement and civic responsibility.

A comprehensive diagnostic of the national identity of students in Pavlodar (n = 137) was conducted across four interconnected blocks: cognitive, affective, value, and behavioral. The key result of the baseline stage is the confirmation of the equivalence of the experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups. For all measured parameters, the p-level of significance values significantly exceed the critical threshold of 0.05 (ranging from 0.518 to 0.980). This mathematically proves the absence of systemic differences between the groups prior to the start of the pedagogical intervention and guarantees the integrity of the further experiment. The entire sample exhibits a narrow range of mean values, indicating a leveled distribution of indicators and a lack of pronounced differentiation among the students.

In the cognitive block, students demonstrate fragmentary knowledge of history (mean score of 5.8–5.9 out of 10). In the affective and behavioral blocks, average indicators also predominate (more than 70 % of students). Analysis using the Borda method and the x^2 test revealed a stable hierarchy of priorities, identical for both groups. The leading values are "Love for the Motherland" (4.7) and "Justice" (4.3). The high degree of agreement with the thesis "There is no future without the past" (82 %) confirms the students' readiness to perceive historical material through the prism of personal significance.

A gap was identified between "understanding" and the "ability to justify." While scores for "Mindfulness" were relatively high, the lowest indicators were recorded for the "Argumentation" criterion in the behavioral block. Students are aware of their identity on an emotional level but find it difficult to support it with logical reasoning and historical facts, which justifies the need for the implementation of the methodology we have developed.

Table 11. Summary table of group homogeneity across all components

National Identity Component	Verification Method	Statistical Indicator	Significance ($p > 0.05$)
Cognitive (Knowledge)	Mann–Whitney U test	$p = 0.642$	No differences
Affective (Emotions)	Mann–Whitney U test	$p = 0.518$	No differences
Value-based (Ideology)	x^2 test	$p = 0.980$	No differences
Behavioral (Activity)	Mann–Whitney U test	$p = 0.584$	No differences

The p-values exceeding 0.05 across all parameters mathematically demonstrate that the experimental and control groups were in identical conditions at the start of the study. This asserts that any qualitative changes recorded following the implementation of the original methodology will be attributable specifically to the pedagogical intervention rather than to random factors (Sidorenko, 2003). Consequently, the results of the diagnostic stage confirm that the identified problems are typical of general education schools and verify the readiness of the experimental framework for the formative stage of the research.

4. Discussion

The results obtained in the course of the study allow for a deep analysis of the state of national identity among modern adolescents in Pavlodar and their comparison with current trends in global pedagogical science.

The average level of the cognitive component identified in the study (5.8–5.9 points) indicates that students' knowledge of the intellectual heritage of Kazakhstan in the 19th and early 20th centuries remains fragmentary. This confirms the thesis of Zh. E. Nurbaev, according to which school history textbooks often focus on the transmission of a factual narrative, not always providing a deep semantic connection between the student and the past (Nurbaev et al., 2024).

From an international perspective, this situation correlates with the findings of J. Zajda, who notes that under conditions of globalization, national history curricula often face "cognitive resistance" from young people if teaching is not based on interactive methods (Zajda, 2022). The low scores in our sample indicate that traditional teaching methods do not fully contribute to the interiorization of historical knowledge as part of the personal "Self".

Despite moderate cognitive indicators, the affective component demonstrated high stability (82 % agreement on the importance of the past). This "affective paradox" – where feelings precede knowledge – finds an explanation in R.K. Kadyrzhanov's theory of ethnocultural symbolism. In his opinion, identification through emotionally significant symbols (heroes, images of the Motherland) occurs faster than the rational mastery of history (Kadyrzhanov, 2014).

However, comparing this with the study by A. Bermudez, it can be suggested that such high emotionality may serve as a "discursive shield." Adolescents use patriotic slogans as a ready-made social mask, which allows them to feel a sense of belonging without delving into a complex critical analysis of contradictory historical processes (Bermudez, 2020).

The dominance of "Love for the Motherland" and "Justice" values in the hierarchy (according to the Borda method) demonstrates the unique profile of the Kazakhstani adolescent. While T. Reeskens and M. Wright note a trend toward "liberal universalism" in Western societies (where civil rights are more important than national ties), in the Pavlodar sample, we observe a synthesis of citizenship and traditionalism (Reeskens, Wright, 2012).

This confirms the conclusions of M.S. Shaikemelev that the modernization of Kazakhstani society follows a path of preserving the cultural code, where the value of justice is inextricably linked with the national context (Shaikemelev, 2020).

The most critical point of the study was the gap between the declaration of ideals and the inability to argue one's choice in case studies. As K. A. Steisel notes, social categorization based on

the "Us–Them" principle is characteristic of adolescents, which easily provides a sense of community but does not provide the skills for reasoned civic behavior (Steisel, 2019).

To bridge this gap, we propose the introduction of commemorative practices described by O.V. Koltan (Koltan, 2021). Agreeing with the opinion of M. Laruelle (Laruelle, 2021) regarding the significance of "local patriotism," we believe that the inclusion of the regional component of the Pavlodar Irtysh region in the educational process will allow national identity to be transferred from the realm of abstract concepts to the realm of concrete life experience and conscious action.

5. Conclusion

The conducted study, which covered 137 students of general education schools in Pavlodar (68 in the experimental and 69 in the control groups), allowed for an objective assessment of the baseline level of national identity formation at the diagnostic stage. The comprehensive diagnostics, divided into four complementary blocks, led to the following conclusions:

The application of a complex of mathematical and statistical methods (Pearson's x^2 test, Mann–Whitney U test, Borda count method) allowed for the verification of the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups. The absence of statistically significant differences across all indicators ($p > 0.05$) confirms the equivalence of the starting conditions and creates a scientifically grounded basis for the implementation of the author's history teaching methodology.

The results of the diagnostic assessment indicate a predominance of the average development level across all components of identity. Concurrently, the cognitive aspect reveals that the students' knowledge regarding the intellectual history and heritage of Kazakhstan is fragmented, with the mean score falling within the range of 5.8–5.9. Such fragmentation dictates the necessity for further systematic integration of these topics into the content of history lessons.

Concurrently, within the framework of the affective-value component, a high level of emotional involvement in the country's destiny was recorded: 82% of the respondents share the thesis regarding the impossibility of a future without understanding the past. The identified dominance of such categories as patriotism, justice, and diligence within the hierarchy of priorities indicates that the adolescents possess stable value orientations. This signifies favorable baseline potential and a resourceful foundation for subsequent, purposeful pedagogical intervention.

At the same time, within the behavioral aspect, a specific gap was identified between the awareness of civic ideals and the actual ability of students to reasonedly defend their position in simulated problem situations. The presence of this gap justifies the necessity of the projected transition in school practice from the passive perception of historical narratives to active forms of historical reflection and commemorative (aimed at preserving memory) practices. The identified deficiency in argumentation serves as a key target objective for developing the content of the upcoming formative stage of the experiment.

The diagnostic stage of the study allowed not only for the establishment of a "starting point" but also for the identification of specific "growth points." The most deficient skill among students proved to be the argumentation of their own position, which defines the vector of the formative stage of the experiment – the transition from passive consumption of historical facts to active reflexive analysis.

The confirmed statistical homogeneity of the groups allows for the transition to the implementation of the formative experiment. It is expected that the introduction of the developed methodology, which integrates the regional component of the Pavlodar Irtysh region and active teaching methods, will lead to a qualitative transformation of students' national identity, shifting it from a spontaneous state to a conscious civic position.

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