



Implementing living heritage education through school activity plans

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Submitted: 2 July 2026 Revised: 20 August 2026 Accepted: 28 September 2026 Published online: 28 September 2026

Abstract

Annual school activity plans often include cultural events, but their pedagogical value depends on whether students participate as passive attendees or active contributors. This study examines how a state-mandated school activity plan can be reframed as living heritage education in lower-secondary schooling. The research used a practice-based qualitative implementation case study supported by comparative document analysis. Kazakhstan and Türkiye were examined as institutional contexts where history, values education, cultural heritage, and out-of-school learning are embedded in centralized education systems. The implementation case was conducted in a mainstream urban public school in Kazakhstan and involved the full Grade 8 parallel: five classes and 154 students. Data included official policy documents, school-level planning and reporting materials, attendance and participation records, student-created cultural artifacts, and staff observation notes. The culminating heritage event involved 147 students, representing 95.5% attendance. Student contributions operationalized UNESCO's living heritage categories, including genealogical narratives (shezhire), material craftsmanship, performing arts, social practices, and intergenerational participation. The findings show that an ordinary annual activity plan can become a structured heritage-learning environment when it connects family memory, cultural artifacts, student contribution, and community participation. The study offers a transferable model for strengthening heritage education through existing school structures without adding a new subject or increasing curriculum load.

Keywords: Family memory; Heritage education; Living heritage; Observable engagement; Out-of-school learning; SDG 4.7

1. Introduction

Schools do not only transmit information. They also teach students how to locate themselves in time, in culture, and among other people. This task has become sharper in an age of digital speed, fragmented attention, and global cultural circulation. A student may know a historical date and still feel no relation to it. A school may hold a cultural event and still leave the learner outside its meaning. The problem is not the absence of content. The problem is how educational content becomes personally and socially meaningful.

Within the global education agenda, this tension is addressed through Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. SDG 4.7 links quality education with global citizenship, respect for cultural diversity, a culture of peace, and the recognition of culture's contribution to sustainable development (Council of Europe, n.d.; UNESCO, 2018). For schools, this is not only a policy formula. It is a pedagogical task. Students need to understand their own cultural memory without turning it into exclusion, and they need to encounter the memory of others without fear or superiority. Heritage education stands at this point. It connects curriculum with belonging, responsibility, and respect.

A second foundation comes from UNESCO's work on intangible cultural heritage. Living heritage is not limited to monuments or museum objects. It includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, craftsmanship, and knowledge transmitted across generations (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, 2023). Such knowledge does not survive through preservation alone. It survives through transmission. Schools are among the few institutions where this transmission can become systematic, inclusive, and pedagogically safe. The classroom gives structure. The annual activity plan gives continuity. The culminating event gives public form.

Kazakhstan and Türkiye make this issue visible in two related, but not identical, educational contexts. Both countries have centralized education systems. Both include history, values education, cultural heritage, and out-of-school learning in school practice. Both also work with layered historical narratives: national history, regional memory, Turkic heritage, state-building,

religion, language, and modernization. The comparison does not rank the two systems or treat them as equivalent field sites. Türkiye provides a comparative institutional baseline, while Kazakhstan provides the school-based implementation case.

Kazakhstan's school system is structured into primary education in Grades 1–4, basic secondary education in Grades 5–9, and senior secondary education in Grades 10–11 or 12 (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). This study focuses on Grade 8, a level within basic secondary education. The choice is pedagogically significant. Students at this stage can work with historical symbols, family memory, cultural objects, public presentation, and peer responsibility. They are also close to the end of basic secondary schooling, after which some learners may move to vocational education. History education before this transition should not remain only a subject for assessment. It should become a field where personal, family, national, and intercultural histories meet.

Beyond classroom lessons, Kazakhstan also has a state-defined framework for educational work. The Birtutas Tarbie programme and the Adal Azamat framework orient schools toward national and universal values, civic responsibility, integrity, respect, and socially meaningful activity across the academic year (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024; National Academy of Education named after I. Altynsarin, 2024). Schools do not invent such work from nothing. They plan it, conduct it, report it, and archive evidence of completion. Yet administrative completion does not automatically produce engagement. A student may be present at an event and remain outside its meaning.

In Türkiye, a comparable institutional direction can be observed through curriculum reform and out-of-school learning policy. History-related learning appears within Social Studies and later history courses, while recent reforms emphasize skills-based curricula, values, and learning beyond the classroom (Eurydice Network, 2026; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education, 2024). Türkiye has also developed an out-of-school learning platform designed to connect teaching with museums, science centres, national parks, libraries, historical sites, art centres, and universities (Eurydice Network, 2026). This digital platform is relevant here as a policy example of how educational systems can extend learning environments beyond the classroom. It is not treated as an empirical component of the Kazakhstani implementation case. The present article is positioned primarily as a contribution to sustainable heritage education, while digital documentation and digital heritage archives are considered future extensions of the model.

The difficulty lies in the pedagogical use of existing structures. Cultural events, museum visits, performances, craft activities, and annual celebrations often enter school life as separate items in a plan. They are conducted, recorded, and closed. Students may participate physically, while the educational connection remains weak. This gap is especially visible in heritage education. A traditional ornament, a poem, a family story, or a historical song can become a powerful learning object. It can also become a costume, a background, or a formal task. The difference depends on the frame.

Against this background, the study argues that standard school cultural activities can be reframed as living heritage education when they connect four elements: curriculum content, family memory, student-created cultural artifacts, and observable participation. In the Kazakh context, family memory may include *shezhire* as an oral-genealogical form of remembering ancestry, land, responsibility, education, occupation, and moral continuity. In a multiethnic classroom, the same pedagogical function can be performed through family history, migration stories, names, professions, remembered objects, or intergenerational narratives. The aim is not ethnic closure. The aim is cultural confidence without hostility. A student who understands that every person has a history is better prepared to respect the history of others.

Meaning-making also has a psychological dimension, but this article treats it cautiously. Older educational language often described such work as moral or cultural education. Contemporary pedagogy may describe it through emotional engagement, social-emotional learning, school connectedness, and meaning-making. The terms differ; the pedagogical problem remains. Students

need reasons to care. Heritage becomes educational when it offers a recognizable point of entry: a family route, a craft object, a song, a class performance, a remembered name, or a shared preparation process. These forms help students move from distant history to lived relation.

Empirically, the article examines a practice-based implementation rather than an experimental intervention. It does not claim causal psychological effects. The implementation took place within an existing year-long school activity plan and involved the full Grade 8 parallel of a public secondary school in Kazakhstan: five classes with 154 students in total. The year-long cultural and educational work culminated in an annual heritage event, where student participation became visible through attendance, preparation, performance, family-memory materials, and student-created artifacts. The evidence consists of official planning documents, implementation reports, attendance and participation records, student products, and teacher or administrator observation notes.

The study addresses four research questions:

RQ 1) How are cultural heritage, values education, and out-of-school learning institutionalized in lower-secondary education frameworks in Kazakhstan and Türkiye?

RQ 2) How does a state-mandated annual activity plan function as a structural foundation for living heritage education?

RQ 3) How can a state-mandated year-long activity plan be reframed through living heritage and family memory to strengthen observable engagement among Grade 8 students?

RQ 4) What forms of observable engagement emerged during the culminating annual heritage event?

The contribution of the study is practical and conceptual. It does not propose a new subject or ask schools to add hours to an already crowded timetable. It shows how an existing state-mandated annual activity plan can be turned from a reporting mechanism into a heritage meaning-making practice aligned with SDG 4.7 and UNESCO's living heritage agenda. This reframing is the central contribution of the article: existing school activity plans can be pedagogically strengthened when they are embedded within a coherent meaning-making framework.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Heritage Education, Sustainability, and Global Citizenship

Heritage education has changed its academic status. It is no longer a decorative supplement to history teaching or a museum-related extension of the curriculum. It now belongs to a wider debate on sustainable education, citizenship, cultural diversity, and the conditions under which students learn to respect both their own history and the histories of others.

SDG 4.7 gives this debate a global frame. The target links education with sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, peace, non-violence, appreciation of cultural diversity, and recognition of culture's contribution to sustainable development (UNESCO, 2018). Heritage education enters this frame because it gives cultural diversity a concrete form. Diversity is not only a value in a policy document. It appears as a song, an object, a family story, a craft, a language trace, a ritual gesture, a historical place, or a public school performance.

The literature increasingly treats heritage education as a bridge between local rootedness and global citizenship. Pérez-Guilarte and García-Morís (2023) show that intangible heritage can support critical citizenship education when teachers move beyond celebration and use heritage as a space for inquiry, interpretation, and dialogue. Thanh et al. (2025), working with lower-secondary schools, also argue that integrating cultural heritage into civic education can support preservation and student participation, although teachers still face practical barriers in curriculum design and implementation. The same tension appears across contexts: schools want to protect cultural memory, but they often lack a pedagogical mechanism that turns memory into critical, inclusive learning.

Heritage education can fail when it becomes ceremonial. It may become national self-praise. It may reduce the past to symbols. Stronger models avoid that reduction. They treat heritage as an

object of thought, not only as an object of pride. A student does not merely learn that a cultural form exists. The student asks who transmitted it, why it mattered, how it changed, who was excluded from its story, and how it can be shared without being flattened.

This distinction matters for the present study. The article does not argue that students should study Turkic heritage because it is “ours” in a closed ethnic sense. It argues that heritage becomes educational when it helps students understand continuity, responsibility, memory, and respect. Local roots and global awareness are not opposites. The opposition appears only when pedagogy is weak.

UNESCO’s work on intangible cultural heritage strengthens this position. The 2003 Convention defines intangible cultural heritage through oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, craftsmanship, and knowledge transmitted across generations (UNESCO, 2003). These categories are close to ordinary school life. A year-end concert, a craft display, a family-memory task, a poem, a dance, or a class exhibition may look like routine school culture. In UNESCO’s language, they belong to the wider field of living heritage. The question is not whether such forms can enter education. They already do. The question is whether schools know how to frame them.

For a journal concerned with sustainable education and digital transformation, this point is important. Living heritage education is primarily a sustainable education practice: it supports cultural continuity, diversity, participation, and intergenerational learning. Digital transformation becomes relevant when such practices are documented, archived, mapped, or shared through digital tools. In the present study, digital tools were not implemented as part of the empirical case; they are treated as a future extension of school-based heritage work.

Heritage survives through transmission. Transmission requires repetition, participation, and meaning. A single event rarely carries this weight alone. A year-long activity plan can. It gives heritage learning time, sequence, and institutional legitimacy. Yet sequence without meaning becomes reporting. This problem leads to the next body of literature: out-of-school and activity-based learning.

2.2. Out-of-school Learning and Activity-based Education

Out-of-school learning gives history a body. Students leave the textbook and meet objects, spaces, voices, routes, archives, buildings, performances, and public memory. It is also pedagogically demanding. A museum does not teach by itself. A historical site can remain silent. A concert can remain entertainment. The teacher’s framing, the school’s plan, and the student’s task decide whether the activity becomes education.

Research on field-based heritage education confirms this point. Illescas-Navarro et al. (2025), in a *Journal of Pedagogical Research* study on heritage education through a field trip, show that the educational value of heritage activities depends on teachers’ specialized knowledge and on how the visit is connected to learning goals. The site is not enough. The task must teach students how to see. Erbaş et al. (2026) reach a similar conclusion in museum-based cultural heritage education: museum learning can improve academic achievement, heritage awareness, and affective development when it is designed as a structured educational experience rather than a passive visit.

Policy developments point in the same direction. Türkiye has expanded the institutional place of out-of-school learning through a digital platform that connects teaching and learning with museums, science centres, national parks, libraries, historical sites, art centres, and universities (Eurydice Network, 2026). This platform is not used in the present study as an empirical intervention. Its relevance lies elsewhere: it shows that heritage-related learning and learning beyond the classroom are increasingly being organized through system-level educational infrastructures.

Kazakhstan has a different, but comparable, institutional structure. Schools work with annual educational activity plans connected to state-defined educational and values frameworks. These plans include civic, cultural, commemorative, creative, and class-level activities across the academic year. They are not invented by one teacher. They belong to the school year. They are

planned, conducted, reported, and archived.

This creates a methodological opportunity. Many studies examine a museum visit, a heritage lesson, or a single project. Fewer studies ask what happens when an already existing annual school activity plan becomes the carrier of heritage learning. The plan is administrative, but that is precisely why it matters. Every school has some version of it. If such a plan can be reframed pedagogically, the model becomes transferable.

Activity-based education also carries a risk: completion can replace learning. The school holds an event. Students attend. A report is written. The administrative cycle closes. The educational question may remain open. Did the activity create meaning for students? Did it connect history with family memory, living heritage, and cultural respect? Did it produce observable engagement beyond passive attendance?

A culminating annual event can answer part of this question when it is not treated as entertainment. In the present study, the year-end heritage event functions as a capstone. It gathers the dispersed work of the year into public form. Students do not only watch. They prepare, select, produce, perform, explain, and contribute. The event becomes a visible endpoint of a longer learning sequence, not a separate festive episode.

The literature supports the legitimacy of this design, but it also exposes the gap. Field trips, museums, and out-of-school environments have been studied. Annual plans as meaning-making structures have not received the same attention. This article enters that space.

2.3. Meaning-making and Observable Engagement in History Education

History education often gives students content before it gives them relation. Chronology comes first. Meaning arrives late, if it arrives at all. A learner may know a historical date and still feel no connection to it. This is not a failure of memory. It is a failure of pedagogical design.

Recent history education research has moved toward more meaningful forms of historical inquiry. Van Doorsselaere (2025) examines students' experiences during an authentic historical inquiry on local heritage and shows that learners can become actively involved when historical work moves beyond the textbook and allows them to engage with local sources, archival investigation, and public presentation. The study does not romanticize local heritage. It shows how meaningful learning emerges when students perform the work of inquiry rather than consume finished historical narratives.

Historical empathy research gives another entry point. Karn (2024) argues that historical empathy requires deliberate learning design, not a final display of understanding alone. Teachers must structure the process through sources, context, perspective-taking, and reflection. Harnes (2025), reviewing empirical research on historical empathy, also emphasizes that emotions, moral judgment, student engagement, and contextual understanding are difficult to separate in secondary history education. Students do not think historically in an emotional vacuum.

Darmawan et al. (2025) add a useful digital layer through a living history model supported by digital history textbooks. Their findings suggest that historical empathy grows not from technology alone, but from guided inquiry, source exploration, and structured reflection. This point helps position the digital dimension of the present article cautiously. Digital tools can extend heritage learning, but they do not create meaning by themselves. They require a pedagogical frame.

Storytelling research in history classrooms reaches the same point from another direction. Kindenberg (2026) argues that storytelling can support historical understanding and empathy when classroom narratives move between experience and analysis. Narrative gives the past a sequence, a voice, and a human problem. It does not replace critical inquiry. It prepares the student to enter it.

The present study uses this literature to define engagement narrowly. It does not mean excitement, applause, or a "good atmosphere" at an event. It means observable signs that students entered the task as participants: attendance, preparation, contribution, artifact creation, performance, and shared responsibility. These signs are not psychological proof. They are

pedagogical evidence.

This distinction protects the study from overclaiming. The article does not argue that a year-long heritage activity plan caused a measurable change in students' emotional intelligence. The design does not support that claim. It argues that reframing a state-mandated activity plan through living heritage and family memory produced visible forms of engagement across the Grade 8 parallel. That claim can be examined through school documents, participation records, student-created artifacts, reports, and staff observations.

Meaning-making sits at the centre. A student engages when history stops being distant material and becomes connected to a recognizable form: a family memory, a cultural motif, a class performance, an object, a name, a craft, a story, a route, or a public act of presentation. Such forms do not simplify history. They give students a reason to approach it.

2.4. Family Memory and Intergenerational Learning

Family memory is one of the strongest routes from distant history to personal meaning. It turns the abstract past into a remembered voice, a profession, a movement, a loss, a place, an object, or a name. It also makes the classroom more difficult. Not every student has access to stable family narratives. Not every memory is safe. Not every genealogy can be traced. A responsible pedagogy must begin from that unevenness.

McCoy et al. (2021) make this problem explicit in their work on family history projects. They argue that genealogy and family-history assignments can foster students' sense of identity and connection to heritage, but they must be redesigned in light of Indigenous perspectives and unequal access to family records. Their warning is directly relevant here. A family-memory task should not force students to prove origin, disclose ethnicity, or produce a complete ancestral tree. It should offer routes.

Mahuika and Kukutai (2021) deepen this caution by showing that Indigenous genealogical research may involve relationships among people, land, culture, ethics, and future generations. Genealogy, in this sense, is not a narrow biological record. It is a relational system. This helps read shezhire more carefully. In the Kazakh context, shezhire is often translated as genealogy, but its educational meaning can be wider: memory of descent, land affiliation, responsibility, social role, occupation, learning, reputation, and continuity. It is not only a list. It is a way of remembering one's place among others.

Oral history education gives family memory a classroom method. Akçalı (2023) shows that oral history with prospective social studies teachers can support experiential learning and connect historical knowledge with lived accounts. Bousalis (2025), working with oral history and civic engagement, argues that oral history can build foundations for citizenship by connecting learners with community knowledge. These studies are especially relevant because they treat personal and community narratives as educational materials, not as private anecdotes.

This body of work supports a central claim of the present article: family memory democratizes history learning when it is designed inclusively. Students do not need equal access to formal archives. They can begin with a story, an interview, a household object, a migration route, a profession, a language trace, a family education story, or an elder's memory. The task is not to produce perfect evidence. The task is to open historical inquiry.

A family story does not replace historical analysis. It opens a question for it. Who remembers? What is absent? Why is this story repeated? How does a private memory connect to public history? Where does affection end and evidence begin? These questions train source awareness. They also show students that history is not only what states and textbooks record.

In a multiethnic classroom, this approach matters even more. A Kazakh student may connect the task with shezhire. A Russian, German, Korean, Turkish, Ukrainian, or mixed-background student may work with migration, surname, family profession, educational memory, or remembered place. The classroom does not divide into "heritage holders" and "outsiders." Everyone enters through some form of memory. This is not ethnic pedagogy. It is relational pedagogy.

The Turkish comparison helps to keep this category broad. Terms such as *şecere*, *soy ağacı*, and *soy kütüğü* refer to genealogical or family-tree traditions in Turkish usage, while English-language educational research more often uses family history, oral history, intergenerational learning, or genealogical memory. The vocabulary differs. The pedagogical function remains close: students connect personal or intergenerational narratives with larger historical processes.

The article therefore uses family memory as a bridge, not as an identity test. This bridge is essential for the year-long activity plan. Without family memory, heritage may remain public and distant. With family memory, students can recognize that history is carried by people before it becomes school content.

2.5. The Gap in the Literature

Four bodies of literature support the present study. Heritage education connects cultural memory with SDG 4.7 and global citizenship. Out-of-school learning legitimizes museums, sites, performances, and activity-based formats as serious educational spaces. Research on meaning-making and engagement shows why students need personal and affective entry points into history. Family memory and oral history offer a method for connecting private memory with public history. The gap lies between these fields.

Existing studies often examine heritage lessons, museum visits, field trips, oral-history projects, digital history tools, or engagement strategies as separate interventions (Akçalı, 2023; Darmawan et al., 2025; Erbaş et al., 2026; Illescas-Navarro et al., 2025; Van Doorselaere, 2025). Much less attention is given to the administrative structure that schools already use every year: the annual activity plan. This structure is usually treated as routine school management. It is rarely examined as a potential pedagogical sequence for heritage meaning-making.

This omission matters. Schools do not always need new subjects, new hours, or new platforms. Sometimes the problem is not the absence of educational space, but the absence of interpretive design inside the space already available. A state-mandated annual plan can remain a reporting mechanism. It can also become a continuous heritage-learning structure if it connects living heritage, family memory, student-created artifacts, out-of-school learning, and a culminating event.

The present study addresses that gap through a practice-based implementation case. It compares the institutional frameworks of Kazakhstan and Türkiye to show that both systems already contain cultural, values-based, and out-of-school components. It then examines one Kazakhstani Grade 8 parallel, where a year-long school activity plan was reframed through living Turkic heritage and family memory and completed through an annual heritage event.

The study does not claim causal psychological transformation. It does not rely on a one-time emotional impression. It examines observable engagement: attendance, participation, preparation, student-created artifacts, implementation reports, and staff observations. Digital transformation is not presented as an implemented component of the case. Instead, the literature suggests that school-based living heritage work can later be extended through digital archives, oral-history recordings, interactive family-memory maps, and digital exhibitions if these tools are pedagogically designed rather than added as decoration.

The question is practical and theoretical at once: how can a school take what it already must do and make it educationally meaningful? That is the gap. That is the contribution.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study used a practice-based qualitative implementation case study supported by comparative document analysis. The design was selected because the research examined an existing school practice, not an experimental intervention. The object of analysis was a state-mandated annual activity plan implemented during the school year and completed through a culminating heritage event.

The study did not use a control group, pre-test, post-test, questionnaire, or psychological scale.

This was not a methodological omission. It followed from the research aim. The article does not measure causal impact or internal psychological change. It examines how an existing school structure can be reframed through living heritage, family memory, and student-created artifacts, and how this reframing becomes visible through observable engagement.

Case study research is appropriate when a bounded educational practice must be studied within the institutional setting that gives it meaning (Yin, 2018). Qualitative case study also allows documents, actions, artifacts, and local interpretations to be analysed as parts of one educational situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the annual activity plan was not treated as administrative background. It was treated as the mechanism through which heritage learning was organized.

The design had two layers. The first layer was comparative and documentary. It examined how Kazakhstan and Türkiye institutionalize cultural heritage, values education, history-related learning, and out-of-school learning. The second layer was school-based and empirical. It examined one Kazakhstani implementation case involving a full Grade 8 parallel.

3.2. Comparative Rationale and Document Selection

Türkiye was used as a comparative institutional baseline, not as a second implementation site. The selection was deliberate. Türkiye and Kazakhstan are both centralized education systems with Turkic cultural-historical connections, strong values-education discourses, and policy attention to learning beyond the classroom. This made Türkiye more relevant to the study than a generic international comparator.

The comparison focused on five dimensions: school structure, values education, cultural heritage, history/social studies, and out-of-school learning. The analysis used official or institutionally recognized documents only. For Kazakhstan, the corpus included national school-education documents, the Birtutas Tarbie programme, the Adal Azamat framework, and school-level annual activity documentation. For Türkiye, the corpus included Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education curriculum materials, out-of-school learning platform information, and Eurydice documentation on national reforms in general school education (Eurydice Network, 2026; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education, 2024).

Documents were selected if they met three criteria: direct relevance to school education, explicit connection to values, heritage, or out-of-school learning, and institutional authority. Kazakhstani documents were analysed in Kazakh, Russian, and English where official versions were available. Turkish materials were analysed through Turkish and English sources. When translation was required, the authors translated relevant terms and checked them for conceptual equivalence rather than literal word matching. Core terms were standardized across the manuscript: Birtutas Tarbie, Adal Azamat, Grade 8, annual activity plan, out-of-school learning, and living heritage.

The comparison is asymmetrical by design. Kazakhstan provided the implementation case. Türkiye clarified transferability. The comparison does not produce cross-national outcome data; it shows that the pedagogical problem addressed in the Kazakhstani case is not limited to one school or one national setting.

3.3. Research Site, Participants, and Researcher Positionality

The implementation took place in a mainstream urban public secondary school in Kazakhstan. The school represented an ordinary state-school environment rather than a private institution, selective heritage programme, or extracurricular club. The student body was linguistically and culturally diverse, which made the site appropriate for examining heritage education as a shared practice rather than an ethnically closed activity. The school is not named to protect institutional and student anonymity.

The study focused on Grade 8 within basic secondary education. In Kazakhstan, basic secondary education covers Grades 5–9 (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). Grade 8 was selected because students at this level can work with historical symbols, family memory, cultural motifs, public presentation, and peer collaboration while still belonging to a

common lower-secondary school structure.

The implementation involved five Grade 8 classes: 31 students, 31 students, 32 students, 30 students, and 30 students. The total cohort was 154 students. The unit of analysis was the Grade 8 parallel as a school-based implementation case, not individual psychological change.

Researcher positionality required clarification. The researcher acted as the activity coordinator and reporting administrator within the school's educational work process, not as the subject teacher conducting an experimental history lesson. The role was administrative-coordinating and documentary. This separation reduced teacher-as-researcher evaluation bias, although it did not remove the need for reflexive caution.

3.4. Data Corpus and Analytical Categories

The empirical corpus combined documentary, administrative, and artifact-based evidence. It included school planning documents, implementation reports, attendance records, class-level participation documentation, staff notes, and student-created artifacts. Identifiable photographs and video recordings were not analysed. Student names were removed. The analysis remained at class and cohort level.

All available non-photographic student artifacts prepared by the five Grade 8 classes for the culminating event were included. No sampling procedure was applied. The corpus included shezhire and family-memory materials, posters or wall-newspapers, written texts, performance scripts, craft-related products, presentations, and class-level cultural materials. These artifacts were not assessed for artistic quality. They were analysed as educational texts showing how students selected, interpreted, and publicly presented heritage meanings.

Table 1 presents the combined corpus and coding framework.

Table 1

Data corpus and coding framework

<i>Analytical category</i>	<i>Corpus evidence</i>	<i>Selection logic</i>	<i>Indicators used in analysis</i>
Living heritage	Event programme, implementation report, staff notes, student artifacts	Materials directly linked to heritage-oriented activity	Performing arts, craft practices, traditional games, symbolic spatial organization, shared social practices
Family memory	Shezhire materials, family trees, ancestral narratives, class contribution records	All available family-memory materials produced for the event	Genealogical references, intergenerational narratives, remembered objects, family routes, ancestry-related explanation
Student-created artifacts	Posters, wall-newspapers, scripts, presentations, craft-related products, explanatory materials	Complete available non-photographic artifact corpus; no sampling	Student selection of cultural motifs, public explanation, creative transformation of heritage materials
Observable engagement	Attendance records, participation documentation, staff notes, implementation report	Full Grade 8 parallel	Attendance, preparation, small-group work, public presentation, performance, contribution diversity, intergenerational participation

3.5. Procedure

The implementation followed the school year. It began with the existing annual activity plan, which already contained cultural, civic, commemorative, and educational activities required within the school framework. The first step was to identify where heritage-related meaning could

be strengthened without adding a new subject or increasing timetable pressure.

The second step was reframing. Standard cultural activities were organized through one pedagogical idea: living heritage as a route into historical meaning. Turkic cultural motifs, family memory, shezhire, class-level creative work, and public presentation were connected within one frame. The aim was not ethnic separation. The aim was inclusive meaning-making through cultural memory.

The third step was class preparation. Each Grade 8 class prepared a contribution for the culminating event. The format remained open because whole-parallel activity works through different modes of participation: performing, explaining, writing, designing, making, presenting, or supporting peers. Variation was part of the implementation.

The fourth step was the annual heritage event. It functioned as a capstone rather than a separate festive performance. The event made preparation, participation, cultural motifs, family memory, class identity, and student-created artifacts publicly visible.

The final step was documentation and analysis. Routine school reports recorded that the activity had been completed. The study asked a narrower question: what forms of observable engagement and meaning-making became visible through the implementation?

3.6. Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, comparative document analysis examined policy and curriculum-related materials from Kazakhstan and Türkiye. Documents were read for institutional markers of cultural heritage, values education, history/social studies, out-of-school learning, and annual or system-level activity planning. Document analysis was appropriate because official texts and school records formed part of the phenomenon under study (Bowen, 2009).

Second, qualitative content analysis was applied to the school implementation corpus (Schreier, 2012). The annual activity plan, event programme, final report, participation documentation, staff notes, and student-created artifacts were coded through four categories: living heritage, family memory, student-created artifacts, and observable engagement. Coding was interpretive, but bounded by visible evidence in the corpus.

Third, descriptive participation analysis used attendance and class-level participation records to describe the scale and distribution of engagement. The study did not use inferential statistics or causal modelling. Participation data served one function: to show whether the reframed activity remained limited to a small visible group or became a practice involving the full Grade 8 parallel.

3.7. Trustworthiness

The study used credibility, dependability, and transferability as criteria for qualitative trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across planning documents, reports, attendance records, participation documentation, student-created artifacts, and staff notes.

Dependability was addressed through a defined analytical sequence: comparative document analysis, qualitative content analysis, and descriptive participation analysis. This separation prevented the interpretation from becoming a general impression of a successful event. Each data type had a specific function.

Transferability was supported through thick description. The study reports the education level, school type, Grade 8 cohort, number of classes, institutional framework, researcher role, data sources, selection criteria, and coding categories. These details allow readers to judge whether the model can be adapted to other schools or education systems.

School reports, artifacts, and staff notes were not treated as neutral mirrors of reality. They were read as institutional and pedagogical traces. Their strength lay in convergence across sources.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

The study avoided identifiable visual data. No student photographs or videos were analysed or included. Student names were removed from the dataset. The case is reported at the level of the Grade 8 parallel and class-level participation rather than individual identity.

Family memory was treated as a flexible educational route, not as compulsory disclosure of ancestry, ethnicity, or private family history. This boundary was necessary because heritage education can become ethically unsafe if students are pressured to reveal sensitive information or prove authentic belonging.

Students could participate through public, non-invasive forms: cultural artifacts, class performances, posters, texts, craft materials, presentations, or general references to family and intergenerational memory. No student was required to provide a complete genealogical tree. No student was asked to disclose ethnic origin. Shezhire was used as one culturally specific form of family memory, not as an identity test.

The evidence remained within anonymized school documentation, participation records, implementation reports, staff notes, and student-created artifacts. Heritage was studied as a public educational resource; private identity remained protected.

4. Results

4.1. The Annual Plan as an Implementation Structure

The case showed that the culminating heritage event did not operate as a separate school celebration. It worked as the public endpoint of a year-long activity sequence. The annual activity plan provided the institutional structure; the heritage frame gave it pedagogical direction.

The activity belonged to the regular educational work of the school. It was not a selective club, competition team, or optional cultural circle. The participating cohort was the full Grade 8 parallel, not a small group of students already interested in history, cultural performance, or heritage work.

The year-end event made the structure of the annual activity plan visible. Four yurts, exhibition stands, and a stage temporarily reorganized the school grounds. The spatial arrangement functioned as a pedagogical element by making heritage visible, walkable, and socially shared. Heritage was no longer encountered only through a lesson, a textbook paragraph, or a commemorative speech. It became part of the school environment.

Each spatial element had a defined function. The yurts formed a symbolic centre. Exhibition stands gave student artifacts a public place. The stage opened a performative dimension. The shared table, traditional games, and craft demonstrations extended the event beyond display. Students moved through cultural forms, explained them, performed them, and connected them with family and class-level memory.

The first result was structural. The school did not add a new subject. It used an existing activity format as a structure for living heritage education.

4.2. Attendance and Participation Profile

Attendance provided the first documented indicator of reach. The target cohort consisted of 154 Grade 8 students from five classes. The culminating event was attended by 147 students, or 95.5% of the cohort. Seven students were absent, representing 4.5%. The recorded absences were linked to medical or valid administrative reasons. No refusal or documented disengagement was recorded.

Attendance does not prove internal engagement. It shows reach. In this case, the activity covered almost the entire Grade 8 parallel. This matters for interpretation because school-based heritage events often concentrate visibility around a small group of performers. Here, participation was organized at cohort level.

Table 2 presents the participation profile. The participation format added depth to the attendance data. Students contributed individually or in small groups of up to five members. This structure allowed different forms of work: performing, preparing visual materials, explaining artifacts, presenting family-memory content, supporting craft demonstrations, or organizing class-level contributions.

The design reduced passive presence. Not every student had to stand on stage. Not every student had to speak publicly. Participation could take the form of making, arranging, writing, explaining, presenting, performing, or supporting peers.

Table 2
Observable Engagement: Attendance and Participation Profile

<i>Indicator of engagement</i>	<i>Data / value</i>	<i>Pedagogical meaning</i>
Target cohort	154 students, five Grade 8 classes	Full-parallel implementation
Attendance	147 students	Near-complete cohort presence
Attendance rate	95.5%	Evidence of reach and structural participation
Absence	7 students	Limited absence for medical or valid administrative reasons
Absence rate	4.5%	No documented refusal or visible withdrawal
Participation format	Individual work and small groups of up to five students	Multiple routes into contribution
Community presence	Parents, teachers, and school administration	Intergenerational public setting

Adult presence expanded the social field of the event. Parents, teachers, and school administration observed student work in a shared setting. The event therefore connected student contribution with intergenerational recognition without moving the central role away from students.

4.3. Student Contributions as Living Heritage Artifacts

The second layer of findings concerned the forms of student contribution. The event included genealogical and family-memory presentations, craft-based demonstration, material heritage explanation, performing arts, spatial heritage design, traditional games, and shared social practices. These forms were analysed as living heritage artifacts made visible through school practice.

Table 3 organizes the student contributions according to categories of intangible cultural heritage.

Table 3
Corpus of Student Contributions and Living Heritage Artifacts

<i>Category of living heritage</i>	<i>Forms of student contribution in the capstone event</i>	<i>Observable artifacts / actions</i>
Genealogical and family memory	Presentation of individual <i>shezhire</i> , family trees, and ancestral narratives	Visual genealogical charts, oral presentations, family stories shared at exhibition stands
Material culture and craftsmanship	Craft-based demonstration and explanation of cultural motifs	Live wool-felting demonstration; explanation of traditional ornaments and their meanings; two class wall-newspapers
Performing arts and oral traditions	Stage-based cultural expression	Traditional and historical songs; prepared group performances
Social practices and festive events	Spatial organization, traditional games, and commensality	Four yurts installed on school grounds; shared table; traditional games
Intergenerational learning community	Participation of students, parents, teachers, and school administration	Public sharing of student work in the presence of adult community members

The genealogical and family-memory component moved private memory into a public educational format. Students presented *shezhire*, family trees, and ancestral narratives as school-based heritage materials. The task did not operate as an identity test. It offered a route into history through ancestry, continuity, and intergenerational narrative.

Material culture produced another form of evidence. Wool felting, ornament explanation, and wall-newspapers turned cultural knowledge into visible work. Students did not only name traditional practices. They showed how material heritage is made, interpreted, and transmitted. Ornament explanation was significant because visual form was treated as a carrier of meaning rather than as decoration.

Performing arts opened an embodied channel of participation. Songs and group performances required preparation, coordination, rehearsal, and public presentation. Performance therefore functioned as collective cultural expression, not only as entertainment.

Social practices completed the learning environment. Traditional games and the shared table introduced commensality and collective interaction. In the school context, these practices created informal learning conditions where students, teachers, and parents occupied the same cultural space.

4.4. Evidence of Active Contribution beyond Formal Completion

The findings show active contribution beyond formal attendance. The activity did not remain a completed item in an annual report. Students prepared, made, performed, explained, and shared cultural materials in public.

Five forms of contribution were visible. First, engagement appeared as reach. The attendance rate showed that the activity covered nearly the full Grade 8 parallel. Second, engagement appeared as preparation. Students produced genealogical materials, wall-newspapers, scripts, craft elements, performances, and explanatory contributions. Third, engagement appeared as choice. Individual and small-group formats reduced dependence on one single mode of success and allowed students to enter the activity through different strengths. Fourth, engagement appeared as explanation. Students made their contributions understandable to classmates, teachers, parents, and administrators. Heritage became communicative. Fifth, engagement appeared as community extension. Parent and teacher presence connected student work with adult recognition and intergenerational memory.

The evidence does not claim psychological transformation. The result is narrower: the reframed annual activity plan made active student contribution visible across the Grade 8 parallel through attendance, participation structure, student artifacts, public explanation, and intergenerational presence.

4.5. Comparative Institutional Findings

The comparative document analysis showed that Kazakhstan and Türkiye both provide institutional space for heritage-related learning, values education, and learning beyond the classroom. Kazakhstan organizes such work through school-level annual activity planning linked to educational and values-oriented frameworks. Türkiye organizes a comparable direction through curriculum reform and out-of-school learning infrastructure, including a digital platform connecting school learning with museums, libraries, science centres, historical sites, national parks, art centres, universities, and virtual tours (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education, 2026).

Turkish Social Studies curriculum analysis also shows that family unity, responsibility, respect for diversity, cultural heritage sensitivity, and historical consciousness have a recognized place in the subject field (Alaca, 2022). These findings do not make Türkiye a second implementation site. They show that the Kazakhstani case belongs to a wider institutional pattern: centralized education systems may already contain structures for heritage-related learning, but those structures require pedagogical framing.

The structural result is clear. The Kazakhstani implementation did not emerge outside formal schooling. It used an existing annual activity plan and made heritage learning visible through space, artifacts, family memory, performance, social practices, and intergenerational participation.

5. Discussion

5.1. What the Case Contributes

The findings support the core argument of the study: ordinary school activity plans can become meaningful heritage education when they are reframed through living heritage, family memory, and student-created artifacts. The annual plan does not have to remain an administrative calendar. It can become a pedagogical sequence.

This point has practical weight. Schools already carry overloaded timetables, reporting duties, curricular pressure, and event obligations. A model that demands a new subject or a separate long-term programme may look strong in theory and fail in implementation. The present case offers another route. The structure already existed. The work was to give it meaning.

The shift was not dramatic in administrative form. The school still used an annual plan. The event still produced reportable evidence. Students still prepared contributions for a public setting. What changed was the internal grammar of the activity. Heritage was not treated as stage decoration. It became a learning frame.

5.2. Living Heritage as a School-based Pedagogy

The event demonstrates how intangible cultural heritage can enter formal education without becoming frozen folklore. UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage through oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, festive events, craftsmanship, and intergenerational transmission (UNESCO, 2003). The case activated these domains through school action.

The yurts reorganized space. Wool felting and ornament explanation activated material heritage and craftsmanship. Songs and performances carried oral and performative traditions. Traditional games and the shared table created social practice. *Shezhire* and family-history presentations opened intergenerational memory. These elements did not sit beside each other randomly. They formed a temporary learning ecology.

This supports UNESCO's emphasis on safeguarding living heritage through formal and non-formal education (UNESCO, 2025). Safeguarding is not the same as preserving objects behind glass. It requires participation, interpretation, and transmission. Students need to touch the form intellectually, socially, and emotionally. The school can provide that structure when it treats heritage as learning rather than scenery.

The case also shows why living heritage fits the logic of school activity plans. Annual plans already organize rhythm. They provide dates, responsibilities, reporting structures, and collective participation. Heritage education needs exactly this continuity. A single event may impress. A year-long sequence can teach.

5.3. Family Memory without Ethnic Closure

The "*shezhire*" component requires careful discussion. Used narrowly, genealogy can become exclusionary. It can pressure students to prove origin, disclose private histories, or rank belonging. The case avoided that logic by treating "*shezhire*" as one culturally specific form of family memory, not as a compulsory identity test.

This distinction protects the pedagogy. In a diverse classroom, family memory must remain flexible. One student may work with ancestry. Another may work with migration, surname, profession, language, household object, remembered place, or an elder's story. The task is not to produce a pure lineage. The task is to build relation.

Family memory made heritage accessible because it gave students a route from large history to small human traces. A family tree, an object, a craft practice, a name, or a remembered story can open historical inquiry. These traces do not replace historical knowledge. They create a reason to enter it.

This interpretation aligns with research on family-history and oral-history pedagogy, which argues that personal and intergenerational narratives can democratize history learning when they are handled critically and inclusively (Akçalı, 2023; Mahuika & Kukutai, 2021; McCoy et al., 2021). The present case adds an institutional layer: family memory was not used only as a classroom

assignment. It entered a year-long school activity structure and became publicly visible through a capstone event. The result is not ethnic pedagogy. It is relational pedagogy.

5.4. Observable Engagement as an Appropriate Outcome

The study did not measure psychological change. That restraint is important. A single school case cannot claim long-term transformation in identity, emotional intelligence, or historical consciousness without a different design.

The case does support a narrower claim. A year-long activity plan reframed through living heritage and family memory produced observable engagement. Students attended. They prepared. They worked in small groups. They created artifacts. They performed. They explained. They shared work with adults.

Observable engagement is modest as a construct. It is also useful. In real schools, educational meaning first becomes visible through action: presence, preparation, contribution, and public responsibility. These signs do not reveal the full inner life of the student. They show that the activity crossed the boundary between formal attendance and active participation.

The 95.5% attendance rate established reach. The diversity of student contributions established texture. The community presence established intergenerational extension. Together, these indicators show that the event did more than satisfy reporting requirements. It produced a school-level heritage-learning environment.

5.5. Kazakhstan and Türkiye: Why the Comparison Matters

The comparative element prevents the case from shrinking into local anecdote. Türkiye was not a second field site, and the study does not claim comparative outcome data. Türkiye functioned as an institutional baseline. It showed that another centralized education system also recognizes the value of out-of-school learning, cultural heritage, values education, and learning environments beyond the classroom (Alaca, 2022; Eurydice Network, 2026).

This asymmetry is defensible. The research question is not which country performs better. The question is how institutional structures for cultural learning can become meaningful pedagogical practice. Kazakhstan provided the implementation case. Türkiye confirmed that the problem is not limited to one school or one national system.

The comparison also supports transferability. Many education systems already have annual plans, cultural events, museums, field trips, values programmes, and reporting structures. The weakness often lies not in the absence of activity, but in the absence of interpretive design. The Kazakhstani case shows how such design can work.

A school in another country would not need yurts or “shezhire”. It might use local crafts, family migration stories, indigenous knowledge, regional music, oral histories, religious architecture, food practices, or community memory. The principle remains stable: use existing school structures, connect them with living heritage, and make student contribution visible.

The value of the comparison lies not in parallel outcome data, but in institutional interpretation. Türkiye was not a second field site. It helped show that the problem addressed in the Kazakhstani case is not unique to one school. Centralized education systems may already contain cultural, values-based, and out-of-school learning structures, yet those structures do not automatically create meaningful student engagement. The missing element is interpretive design.

5.6. Practical Implications

The case suggests five design principles for schools. First, begin with the existing plan. Heritage education becomes more realistic when it works through structures that schools already use. Second, build one clear meaning frame. In this case, living Turkic heritage connected history, family memory, craft, performance, and respect for others. Third, allow different modes of contribution. Performance alone narrows participation. Posters, scripts, craft objects, genealogical materials, games, presentations, and oral explanations allow more students to enter the activity. Fourth, treat the final event as a capstone. A year-end concert can be more than a public performance if it consolidates the work of the year. Fifth, document engagement beyond

completion. Schools should record not only that an activity was held, but how students participated: attendance, contribution diversity, artifact types, small-group work, and staff observations.

These principles do not require a new subject. They require a better use of the educational space already available. The study has clear boundaries. The implementation case was conducted in one public secondary school in Kazakhstan. Türkiye was used as a comparative institutional baseline, not as a second implementation site. The study did not use questionnaires, psychological scales, interviews, photographs, videos, or inferential statistics. It examined observable engagement through school documents, participation records, student-created artifacts, reports, and staff notes.

These boundaries limit the claims. The study cannot prove long-term change in identity, emotional intelligence, cultural confidence, or historical consciousness. It can show that a state-mandated annual activity plan, when reframed through living heritage and family memory, produced visible engagement across the Grade 8 parallel.

Future research can test the model across several schools, compare implementation in Kazakhstan and Türkiye, include student reflections or interviews, and examine whether observable engagement leads to longer-term changes in historical interest, cultural confidence, and respect for cultural diversity.

7. Conclusion

This study addressed a practical tension in secondary education. Schools already have mechanisms for cultural and values-oriented activities, yet these mechanisms do not automatically become meaningful heritage learning. The Kazakhstani case shows that an annual activity plan can function as a pedagogical resource when it is reframed through living heritage, family memory, student-created artifacts, and public contribution.

The implementation involved the full Grade 8 parallel of one public secondary school. Observable engagement appeared through near-complete attendance, collaborative preparation, family-memory materials, craft-based work, performances, social practices, and intergenerational participation. These findings do not prove long-term psychological transformation. They show a narrower result: existing school structures can support visible engagement when students act as contributors rather than passive attendees.

The comparative reading of Türkiye positioned the case beyond one local setting. Transferability does not depend on reproducing yurts, shezhire, or Turkic motifs. Other schools may use migration stories, regional crafts, indigenous knowledge, oral histories, architecture, music, food practices, or community memory. The pedagogical mechanism remains stable: existing structures become stronger when they connect living heritage with student agency and public meaning-making.

The study also points to a careful digital direction. Student-created heritage artifacts, oral-history materials, family-memory routes, and capstone exhibitions can later be organized as digital archives, interactive maps, or digital exhibitions. Digital transformation should not replace the pedagogical frame. It should preserve, extend, and share the heritage work students have already made meaningful.

The contribution of this study lies in its practical realism. Heritage education does not always require new subjects, new hours, or new administrative forms. It requires a stronger pedagogical use of what schools already have: annual plans, student work, family memory, community participation, and public presentation.

Author contributions: All the authors were involved in the concept, design, collection of data and critically revising the article.

Data availability statement: The data supporting the findings of this research can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Declaration of interest: The authors confirm that there were no conflicts of interest related to the study.

Ethical approval and consent: All participants provided written informed consent before their inclusion in the study. Consent was also obtained from the heads of departments and lecturers, as well as from the participating students, in accordance with the ethical standards outlined by the Committee and the Declaration of Helsinki. No further approval was needed to conduct the study.

Funding: No financial support was provided for the study.

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