

The Role of Folk Oral Literature in the Development of National Identity in Early Childhood

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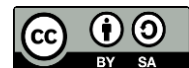
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Abstract. In the era of globalization, strengthening national identity in early childhood has become one of the main priorities in educational systems. This study aims to analyze the role of folklore in developing national identity among early childhood learners. Folklore, including folktales, traditional songs, riddles, proverbs, and heroic stories, contains moral, cultural, linguistic, and traditional values passed down from generation to generation. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review and content analysis approach. Data were collected from scientific literature, educational policy documents, and previous studies related to early childhood education and local culture. The findings indicate that integrating folklore into early childhood education significantly contributes to character building, strengthening love for the mother tongue, introducing cultural values, and improving children's language and socio-emotional skills. Furthermore, folklore serves as an effective medium for instilling patriotism, respect for traditions, and cultural awareness from an early age. Therefore, the use of folklore in early childhood education has strategic value in shaping generations who are not only academically competent but also possess a strong national identity.

Keywords: early childhood, national values, folk folklore, education, national identity.



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INTRODUCTION

In the globalization era, technological development and the influence of foreign cultures have significantly affected the mindset, behavior, and value systems of younger generations. This condition requires systematic efforts to instill national values from an early age. Early childhood education is a fundamental stage in shaping children's character, morality, and cultural identity.

Early childhood is considered the golden period of development, which strongly influences personality formation in later life. During this stage, children begin to recognize their social environment, culture, language, and societal norms. Therefore, introducing national identity should be conducted through learning media that align with children's developmental characteristics.

One effective medium for transmitting cultural values is folklore or oral literature. Folklore includes folktales, traditional songs, riddles, proverbs, rhymes, and legends passed down through generations. Through folklore, children not only gain entertainment but also learn moral values such as honesty, bravery, respect, and love for their homeland.

In the context of modern education, integrating folklore into early childhood learning is highly relevant as a strategy for preserving local culture while strengthening national identity. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the role of folklore in developing national identity in early childhood.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method using a library research approach. This approach was chosen to comprehensively examine the relationship between folklore and national identity formation in early childhood.

Research data were obtained from books, national and international journal articles, educational policy documents, and previous studies related to early childhood education, local culture, and oral literature. Data collection techniques involved systematic identification, classification, and literature analysis.

Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify cultural, moral, and nationalism values embedded in various forms of folklore. The results were then interpreted within the context of implementation in early childhood educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In today's era of globalization, educating the younger generation based on national values has become one of the priority directions of state policy. Particularly during early childhood, fostering national identity awareness, respect for the mother tongue, and interest in national customs and traditions is highly important. This is because early childhood is considered the most sensitive stage in shaping an individual's spirituality and character.

Early childhood is the most crucial period in a child's personal development. It is during this stage that the foundations of patriotism, respect for national values, language awareness, and self-identity begin to form. Therefore, the effective use of folklore in preschool educational institutions has become an actual educational issue.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, pays special attention to the radical reform of preschool and general secondary education, as well as to the upbringing of the younger generation. Several official documents signed by the President directly serve the purpose of educating children in a national spirit and preserving folklore art. These documents emphasize collecting examples of oral folklore, popularizing them among young people, and strengthening the "mentor-apprentice" tradition.

Listening to oral literature helps improve children's language skills. Folk tales often use descriptive and expressive language, introducing children to new vocabulary

and enhancing their communication abilities. In addition, folk stories usually contain complex plots and characters that contribute to children's cognitive development. Through storytelling, children learn to follow narratives, remember details, and establish connections between different elements of a story.

Visits to cultural centers, museums, and community events celebrating traditions and folk stories provide authentic experiences that strengthen children's understanding of oral traditions and connect them with their communities. Family participation is equally important. Parents and grandparents can be encouraged to share folk stories, sing traditional songs, or perform national dances. This strengthens intergenerational relationships and fosters a sense of community.

Integrating folklore into preschool education not only provides knowledge but also develops respect for cultural diversity, language skills, imagination, and socio-emotional competencies. It also nurtures a love for learning and creates a strong foundation for children's future educational journeys.

Folklore is one of the most important foundations for shaping national identity and moral-spiritual education in early childhood. It is a simple yet effective means of instilling national values, linguistic richness, and ancestral heritage in children's minds. Stories depicting the struggle between good and evil help cultivate honesty, courage, patriotism, and responsibility.

Connection to cultural heritage is also strengthened through lullabies, folk songs, and traditional poetic forms that emotionally convey the lifestyle, customs, and traditions of the people. In essence, the ultimate goal is to raise not only knowledgeable individuals but also spiritually mature generations with a strong sense of identity.

The Uzbek people possess a rich cultural heritage. Since ancient times, ancestors have cared deeply about the development of younger generations by instilling morality, courage, loyalty, patriotism, kindness, honesty, and purity. For this purpose, folklore has been effectively used as a means of character education.

To further enhance the learning experience, craft activities based on folk tales can be incorporated into education. For example, after listening to animal stories, children may create animal masks or puppets. Such activities help develop fine motor skills while encouraging creativity.

The role of folklore in early childhood is reflected in several areas: fostering national feelings and patriotism, developing the mother tongue and speech, and strengthening cultural and moral values. Children's understanding of the concept of "homeland" is shaped through mothers' lullabies, grandparents' advice, and legends about national heroes. In addition, riddles, tongue twisters, and proverbs enrich children's vocabulary, improve fluency, and help them appreciate the beauty of the national language.

CONCLUSION

Folklore plays a strategic role in developing national identity in early childhood. Through folktales, traditional songs, riddles, and other forms of oral literature, children gain exposure to their mother tongue, cultural values, social norms, and national character.

The integration of folklore into educational practices not only enhances children's language and cognitive abilities but also fosters patriotism, appreciation for traditions, and awareness of cultural identity. Therefore, the utilization of folklore in early childhood education should continue to be promoted as part of a culture-based character education strategy.

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