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The Pedagogical System for the Effective Organization of Folklore Use in Developing Cognitive Abilities

Abstract

This study examines the pedagogical significance of teaching folklore in primary education and explores how modern instructional methods can be applied to make folklore-based learning more effective. It focuses on the role of folklore genres—such as lullabies, riddles, folktales, legends, and myths—in developing children’s cognitive abilities and creative thinking. While lullabies are traditionally transmitted within the family, other genres are primarily taught by teachers as part of the educational process. The research highlights the contribution of folklore materials to the holistic development of children by enriching their emotional, moral, and cultural worlds. Through analytical discussion, the study reveals the spiritual and educational value of folklore in fostering children’s imagination, linguistic expression, and national consciousness. The findings affirm that incorporating folklore into the curriculum supports not only intellectual growth but also the cultivation of national identity and ethical awareness among young learners.

Keywords: Folklore, Primary Education, Cognitive Development, Creativity, National Identity

Bilişsel Yeteneklerin Geliştirilmesinde Halk Biliminin Etkili Kullanımına Yönelik Pedagojik Sistem

Öz

Bu çalışma, ilkökul eğitiminde halk biliminin öğretimsel önemini incelemekte ve halk bilimi temelli öğrenmenin daha verimli hâle getirilmesi için modern öğretim yöntemlerinin nasıl uygulanabileceğini araştırmaktadır. Araştırma, ninni, bilmece, halk masalı, efsane ve mit gibi halk bilimi türlerinin çocukların bilişsel yeteneklerinin ve yaratıcı düşünme becerilerinin geliştirilmesindeki rolünü ele almaktadır. Ninniler genellikle aile içinde aktarılırken, diğer türlerin öğretimi çoğunlukla öğretmenler tarafından eğitim sürecinin bir parçası olarak yürütülmektedir. Çalışma, halk bilimi materyallerinin çocukların duygusal, ahlaki ve kültürel dünyalarını zenginleştirerek onların bütüncül gelişimine katkı sağladığını vurgulamaktadır. Analitik bir yaklaşımla, halk biliminin çocukların hayal gücü, dilsel ifade becerisi ve ulusal bilinçlerinin oluşumundaki eğitsel ve manevi değerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, halk biliminin öğretim programlarına dâhil edilmesinin yalnızca entelektüel gelişimi desteklemekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda genç öğrencilerde ulusal kimlik ve etik farkındalık oluşumuna da katkı sunduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Halk bilimi, İlkokul eğitimi, Bilişsel gelişim, Yaratıcılık, Ulusal kimlik

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Introduction

The goal of the educational reforms being implemented in our country is to ensure the effectiveness of the education process by nurturing individuals who are imbued with national and universal values, capable of creative and critical thinking, and active personalities. Improving the education system and addressing issues of quality in education are important and pressing problems. To solve these problems, reforms in the content of education, which is one of the essential components of the learning process with a focus on personality development, are being implemented. A series of changes have been made in the school system to ensure that the teaching of subjects taught in the early grades of secondary schools is structured to meet the demands of modern times. Although the educational reforms, including the implementation of subject curricula in the early grades, have created some difficulties for teachers, they have also created conditions for ensuring the students' active participation and perceptual engagement, increasing their creative and reflective characteristics, and improving the quality of education (Heydarova, 2002).

As a result of the measures taken in connection with these reforms, it has become evident that one of the significant issues in the development of modern pedagogical theory and practice is the activation of students' perceptual activity. Russian researcher G. Selevko emphasizes that active mental activity is one of the most important qualities of a modern individual, characterized by critical thinking, a desire and ability to explore new ideas, and the capacity to acquire knowledge independently (Selevko, 2004).

The theoretical understanding of teaching methodologies across various scientific disciplines is viewed as a process of dialectical development. Effective teaching can only occur when the educational process is based on the student's investigative stance and cognitive interests, following the principle of personalized training. Researcher Jolanta Lugowska highlighted the significant role that folklore plays in enhancing students' cognitive abilities and in occupying an important place in their thinking (Baş, Tuncay, & Akyol, 2014). In addition, Kazakh scholar A. Baytursinov discussed how fairy tales stimulate imagination and quick thinking during children's education (Baytursinov, 1991). Similarly, Turkish folklorist P. Boratav emphasized the vital role of folklore materials in developing children's listening and comprehension skills (Boratav, 1958) and further elaborated on this in later studies (Boratav, 1969; Boratav, 1987).

Turkish researcher Z. Çetinkaya explored effective ways to use folklore to develop students' cognitive abilities in her work *The Place and Importance of Teaching Folktales in Turkish* (Erbaş, Çetinkaya, Alacacı, Kertil, & Çakıroğlu, 2014). Kazakh author M. Bayjanova,

in *Jalpi Pedagogika*, discusses the pedagogical importance of education and the role of learning in human life, focusing particularly on the formation of cognitive thinking in students (Bayjanova, 2008).

Assuming that students' comprehension is one of the main aspects to be strengthened, folklore materials represent one of the most effective means to achieve this goal. Teaching folklore to primary school students, in particular, is an important pedagogical task, as their minds are fresh and receptive to learning. Folklore instills in them ethical, traditional, national, and spiritual values such as love for their homeland, respect for elders, and devotion to parents. Teaching folklore is crucial in the fourth grade, as it marks the final stage of primary education before the transition to secondary education. Students must be well prepared at this level and possess an understanding of folklore poetics and key literary elements, as required by the curriculum. Researcher M. Sağır notes that folklore is not only a form of national education but also a people's educational system that fosters individuals connected to both material and spiritual culture (Sağır, 1986).

The Educational and Moral Significance of Folklore in Primary Education

Folklore plays an important role in transmitting our historical roots to the younger generation. When we speak of folklore, we refer to tales, legends, proverbs, riddles, sayings, and other forms of folk expression. It is important to consider what we provide to primary school children when introducing these materials. These cultural treasures have been preserved through the collective memory of our people, passed down across generations, and have reached us today. It should be noted that the majority of rich folklore examples were specifically created for children.

As the national leader Heydar Aliyev stated, "Children are our future. Our future depends on how we educate and raise them, and our country's, nation's, and state's future will depend on it." Indeed, children are the guarantors of our future. Folklore examples play a significant role in nurturing them with a patriotic spirit and instilling love for their homeland from an early age.

It is well known that folklore texts play an essential role in children's development. This valuable heritage is enriched by the wisdom and life experience of our ancestors. Folklore exerts a positive influence on children in many ways. As the distinguished scholar Ramazan Qafarlı notes, folklore "helps children learn the secrets of events that occur in nature, gather information about the signs, qualities, and nature of things they see, understand the peculiarities of animals and birds, better comprehend adults, and increase their verbal awareness" (Qafarlı, 2013).

It is gratifying that a large portion of folklore materials constitutes children's folklore. Children's folklore includes both examples created by adults for children and those created by children themselves. The aim of children's folklore is to reflect their daily lives, games, entertainment, rest, activities, and desires. Its themes, ideas, forms, content, and even linguistic style must be adapted to children's taste, knowledge, worldview, age, and psychology (Qafarlı, 2013).

However, it should be emphasized that teaching through encouraging thinking must be one of our main pedagogical principles. Teaching by stimulating thought fosters a conscious attitude toward education and prevents mechanical memorization. Thinking is an activity of the intellect — the process of reaching conclusions, discovering objective truths, and assigning them meaning. Children are naturally inclined toward thinking and exploration. Preventing them from engaging in such activities and turning them into passive listeners in the educational process hinders their intellectual growth.

Folktales, in particular, play a crucial role in the moral and spiritual development of children. They have been transmitted from generation to generation, from tongue to tongue, and from century to century, reflecting the very essence of human experience. As has been noted by many folklorists, "Folktales are the vibrant poetic chronicle of human life. They observe the spiritual world from the moment life begins until its end, instilling aesthetic and artistic taste in the human soul."

Due to their thematic richness, folktales occupy a vital place in children's moral education. Stories focusing on patriotism, homeland, courage and cowardice, love, happiness, abundance, separation, hope, longing, advice, respect, honour, and joy portray universal human virtues such as pure love, devotion, empathy, and the joy of life. They also embody friendship, loyalty, and humanistic values, expressed in a poetic yet concise language filled with profound meaning. Therefore, we must teach children folktales centered on themes such as mother, homeland, and family. These stories transcend age boundaries, nurturing in every child a deep and lasting love for family and homeland from the earliest years of life.

Moral and Educational Aspects of Folklore and Myth in Primary Education

Folklore plays a crucial role in shaping the moral and intellectual development of children, transmitting national values, and strengthening their sense of identity. From early childhood, children encounter elements of folklore that nurture their linguistic sensitivity, imagination, and emotional expression. Among these, lullabies and short tales are particularly significant, as they introduce children to the richness and purity of their native language, fostering both moral awareness and cultural continuity.

As Namiq Kamal emphasized, “Education begins in the mother’s lap. Every word spoken to a child is a brick laid in the construction of his or her personality.” This statement underscores the formative power of language and oral tradition in a child’s early development.

According to Ramazan Qafarlı (2013), folklore enables children “to learn the secrets of events occurring in nature, to gather information about the qualities and behavior of things they see, to understand the peculiarities of animals and birds, to comprehend adults better, and to increase their verbal caution.” Moreover, Qafarlı (2013) highlights that children’s folklore—created both *by* and *for* children—should align with their worldview, age, and cognitive level, ensuring that learning occurs through engagement rather than memorization.

Within this framework, the teaching of myths and legends gains special importance in the primary school curriculum. Myths, as a subgenre of epic folklore, encapsulate a people’s worldview, moral code, and creative imagination. They not only entertain but also shape the ethical foundations of young learners. For example, the myth “*Wishful Goodness*” conveys that kindness and sincerity are always rewarded, while selfish or deceptive acts are punished. Such stories help children grasp moral distinctions and internalize the idea that true goodness arises from selflessness.

Rzayeva (2019) notes that integrating myths into early education can be made more effective through visualization techniques—such as slides or illustrated storytelling—which enhance comprehension and sustain children’s interest. Teachers can further encourage students to create their own myths about familiar objects, animals, or natural elements. This activity not only develops imagination and linguistic creativity but also promotes moral reasoning and critical thought.

Another exemplary case appears in the second-grade Azerbaijani-language curriculum through “*The Legend of Chahargah*.” This narrative depicts a musician who refuses to compose solely for a king, asserting that creativity cannot thrive when detached from the people. According to Qulusoy (2019), the legend instills patriotism, loyalty, and respect for communal unity, while condemning arrogance and hypocrisy. It also teaches children that cooperation and solidarity lead to moral and collective strength. Similarly, in the fourth-grade Azerbaijani-language lessons, folklore-based literary texts such as “*Why Does the Bat Come Out at Night?*” continue this educational mission. These texts present simple yet profound moral lessons that encourage honesty, humility, and social awareness.

In conclusion, the integration of myths and folklore into early education serves both cognitive and ethical functions. By engaging with these narratives, children develop their

thinking, creativity, and linguistic expression while internalizing fundamental human values. As the analyses of Qafarlı (2013), Rzayeva (2019), and Qulusoy (2019) demonstrate, folklore—when pedagogically adapted—becomes not only a bridge to cultural heritage but also a dynamic tool for forming moral consciousness in the citizens of the future.

Conclusion

The findings of this research demonstrate that the effectiveness of teaching folklore in primary education largely depends on the teacher's ability to make the learning process engaging, interactive, and emotionally appealing. When oral literature lessons are presented with visual and creative methods—such as slides, dramatizations, and storytelling—students not only comprehend the material more effectively but also develop a personal interest in folklore. This interest, in turn, fosters creativity and motivates them to produce their own narratives, folktales, or riddles.

Although these early attempts may lack structural or stylistic perfection, they play a crucial developmental role by nurturing imagination, linguistic competence, and self-confidence. Through such creative engagement, children begin to identify with the positive qualities of the heroes in their stories, internalizing virtues such as courage, kindness, and honesty. This process illustrates how folklore functions as a pedagogical bridge between moral education and cultural continuity.

The teacher's role remains central in guiding this process. By providing an encouraging learning environment, teachers can help students perceive folklore not merely as a subject of study, but as a living expression of national culture and ethical thought. When folklore is taught with enthusiasm and contextualized within children's daily experiences, it cultivates both intellectual curiosity and emotional attachment to cultural heritage.

Therefore, integrating folklore meaningfully into the curriculum is essential for enriching the spiritual and moral world of the younger generation. The genres of oral literature—myths, tales, legends, and proverbs—continue to shape collective identity and social consciousness. Ensuring their prominent place in education, both at school and at home, will contribute to raising creative, empathetic, and culturally rooted individuals capable of sustaining the values and worldview of their society.

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