

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

Folklore Tale for Young Children Precuring a Polyculture Textbook

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Abstract

The development of benevolent relationships between people of different races and ethnicities living in the same areas, such as the city of Moscow is highly relevant modern issue can be beneficially addressed in early childhood. This article discusses challenges of multicultural education in Moscow preschools and kindergartens. Folk tales characterized as an early precursor of a textbook for children who do not attend a school and cannot read. The article depicts the ability of folk tales to introduce young children to different ethnic cultures such as everyday lives and households, traditions, and models of behavior. Data collected in Moscow preschools and kindergartens is presented and discussed. The objectives of this research were to study, analyze and draw conclusions from the collected data to find out what folk tales are used in preschools of multicultural Moscow. It was concluded that full potential of folk tales was never utilized in multicultural education. Furthermore, objectives to make new pedagogical technology for multicultural education based on folk tales were defined based on this study.

Keywords: folk tale, multicultural education, preschool teacher, textbook.

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Introduction

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Complex and ever-changing modern world offers novel challenges for human survival. These challenges include not only issues of biological survival of human species, but thriving of groups of people, and individuals, in social structures. Successful and beneficial co-existence of different ethnic cultures in the same territories became high-level issues of modern age for governments and nations.

Progress of globalization and continuously growing migration of population around the world has become obvious and rather common. Relationships within all, government and social, structures are becoming increasingly tenuous with increased migration. Psychological comfort, social and interpersonal relationships among members of different ethnic groups are suffering as a result. Integration of different ethnicities into one culture has own specific side effects. Boda Z, Néray B, Snijders TAB. (2020) showed that young generations growing up in today's world are assuming highly competitive relationships between the group and individually.

Kraus PA (2012), Tareva E.G. (2019) noted that growing misunderstanding between individuals, as well as social groups, of different ethnic origins are increasingly alarming tendencies of global integration. The basis for these relationships is opposing friends and foes as a conflict. This conflict became the reason for social barriers in relationships between people. Friend always means similar, good, and friendly. Foe is fundamentally different, speaking foreign language and thinking foreign thoughts. Foe is different looking, speaking, dressing, cultural habits, and expressions. Foe is strange, unclear, and dangerous.

World's sociocultural space is full of contradictions caused by division into friends and foes. This poses threat to stability and peaceful coexistence of people on Earth. Conflicts caused by hate between some ethnic groups harms not only conflicting ones but can destabilize worldwide political situation potentially harming communities worldwide.

Currently growing interethnic issues are handled by political powers, government structures and public organizations. These organizations create conditions of peaceful and good-neighborly multicultural co-existence in modern world. Scientific community of educators anticipates the future development and looks for ways to raise young generations in tolerant multicultural environment.

Researchers Remorenko I.M., Elkonin V.D., Barannikov K.A., Klarin M.V., Asmolov A.G., Nezhnov P.G. et al. (2018) developed pedagogical approaches for a positive socialization. Scientists created new educational methods to teach non-conflict relationships between children and adults in schools (Gevorkyan E.N., Savenkov A.I., Ajgunova O.A., Vachkova S.N., Voropaev M.V., Zinov'eva T.I., L'vova A.S., Lyubchenko O.A., Postavnev V.M., Smirnova P.V., 2015; Savenkov A.I., Gavrilova O.Ya. 2020).

Researchers Lesin S.M., Osipenko L.E., Polkovnikova N.B. (2019, 2020) looked for ways to raise tolerant children educated to be capable find themselves comfortable in different scenarios of the multicultural world.

Folk tales can be used to solve these challenges in preschool education. It was suggested that folk tales are an effective means of multicultural education for preschoolers. Children who do not go to school and do not read can learn from folk tales about the life of different ethnic groups. In this sense, folk tales were envisioned as a prototype for a textbook on multicultural education for preschoolers.

In authors' opinion, it is necessary in kindergarten to familiarize children with the tales of peoples that are living next to them, interacting daily, but may be different in appearance and behavior. In this case, children will know about the everyday life, household settings, customs, and traditions of their neighbors. From the first years of life, children will form a positive attitude towards people of other ethnicities. In the future, this will prevent interethnic conflicts in which the foe, the "other" is a stranger, or even enemy just because this "other" is different from the common.

This is extra important for megacities with ethnically multicultural environments. For example, according to the "Strategy of the National Policy of the City of Moscow until 2025", Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Jews, and other peoples lawfully permanently reside in the city. Up to 1.5 million foreign citizens are residing in Moscow on permanent or temporary basis. The majority are labor migrants from Central Asia: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and others.

In 2020, the authors conducted a study in eight kindergartens in the Moscow metropolis. Different ethnic groups receiving preschool education in these kindergartens were named, listed, and researched. It was also researched what kinds of ethnic cultures learn from folk tales taught by parents at home or in kindergartens by teachers.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was research, review and analyze the use of the folk and fairy tales for children education in preschools and kindergartens in the multicultural Moscow metropolis.

Research objectives were as follows. First, to study the ethnic composition of kindergarten children. Second, to study the fairy tales taught to preschoolers by their parents and preschool teachers. Next, to determine the dependency between the ethnic composition of preschool groups and folk tales that adults tell preschoolers. The objectives aimed at obtaining statistically significant data and further analysis and interpretation of the data.

Literature review

All cultures of people around the world are rich in folk tales, a wonderful universal means of carrying native wisdoms and humanistic values to the younger generations. Tales are equally friendly and attractive to the listener and the narrator, to a small child and an adult. Articles by Niklas F, Cohrssen C, Tayler C. (2016); Tareva E.G., Luchina E.V. (2020) confirm that the folk language gathers members of an ethnic group. Fairy tales in the languages of the peoples inhabiting the common territory help a preschool teacher in the work on the multicultural education of children.

In the context of globalization, a folk tale is of particular importance for the preservation of the national language. It is not always told in the language in which it was created. But it contains the words of the people in whose language it is written. These are the names of household items and rituals, national names of characters, characteristic turns of speech and so on. Based on works of Eisenchlas SA, Schalley AC, Guillemin D. (2013); Prevoo, M. J. L., Malda, M., Mesman, J., Emmen, R. A. G., Yenziad, N., van Ijzendoorn, M. H., Linting, M. (2014); Rydland V, Grover V, Lawrence J. (2014) it may be concluded that the national language of a folk tale creates a dialogue with ancestors, their own "roots" or with the culture of a neighboring nation. Re-creation of the history, traditions, and life of different people in the folk tale allows to see the national originality, characteristics of the people, and gives a standpoint for building an intercultural dialogue.

Articles by Chen H, Zeng Q, Peng Z. (2020); Mary, L. (2014); Wulf, C., Bittner, M., Clemens, I., Kellermann, I. (2012) confirm that the attitude to the world originated in the childhood, and then formed throughout human life, accompanies human life. The environment that surrounds a child in the early years of life determines this child's self-relationship and relationships with others as he grows older.

The fairy tale plays an important role. Folk tales live with a child throughout a childhood, starting from the youngest preschool age, from three to five years, and continues in the later preschool age, from five to seven years. In preschool childhood, the acuity of a fairy tale becomes an age-specific activity that develops intelligence and personality. A folk tale passes through preschool age but stays with the person throughout whole life. After learning to read, the person through different stages of life - a junior schoolboy, a teenager, and then an adult - perceives a folk tale in different ways, colors, and levels. A person sees beauty and artistic features, evaluates the heroes, follows the events of the folk tale plot differently as one growing up and maturing into the old age.

It is difficult to overestimate the pedagogical significance of a folk tale. A special place is given to a tale at preschool age. When telling a child folk tales, an adult is teaching a child about their own or different

culture and creates conditions for the development of interest in different ethnic groups and people. Looking into the ethnic history with the help of a folk tale, a small child understands and accepts their mentality and way of life. A readiness to creatively transform the situations presented in the plots of a tale encourages a child, to try them on himself.

From a folk tale, a preschooler learns about the existence, everyday life, and work, about traditions and customs, everyday affairs, and exploits, about the peculiarities inherent in representatives of different cultures, about the inner world of another person. By showing children the characters, feelings, actions of people of different ethnic groups, a folk tale evokes an emotional response in preschoolers. It involves a listener into an enchanted world, makes to get emotionally involved in a story, to worry about the hero, to sympathize with the characters or to condemn them, to evaluate actions, to assume characters, ways of thinking of people described in a tale, either own or other cultures. For a small child, these experiences and feelings represent a complex internal mental activity. Preschooler needs much help and guidance from an adult to learn and master such reach emotional and mental load correctly.

A folk tale is a product of the labor of millions of people who talked about the important, discarding the insignificant. In folk tales, all the problems that a person faces throughout life are reflected, and ways to solve these problems are shown. A folk tale teaches about relationships between people, allows look and see a variety of life situations from the outside perspective, brings a child into the circle of social relations that may left unnoticed in real everyday life.

Preschool teachers should use folk tales as an educational tool for ethnic identity development in children, for teaching tolerance, and fostering respect for different peoples and other cultures. It is highly anticipated that the reading of folk tales to children by preschool teachers and parents will help smooth the rough edges in multicultural states and societies in the long term by making different cultures familiar, bringing warm childhood feelings children had when they used to gather around parents or teachers for interesting, warm, and exiting story telling time.

Methodology

The research methodology was based on the cultural and historical concept of the psychological development in young children. An activity-based approach was implemented.

Surveys of parents (388 people) and preschool teachers (241 people) of eight Moscow kindergartens were conducted for this study. The subjects were kept undivided by age and gender groups. The survey was conducted using Google-Form web application within the single week. The questionnaire included closed

and open questions.

Results

To achieve the first objective of this study, the questionnaire for parents was used to assess the ethnic composition of kindergarten pupils. Parents were asked to name their ethnic group or nationality. Quantitative data of answers is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of kindergarten pupils (answered by the parents)

1.	Russians	140
2.	Tatars	59
3.	Azerbaijanis	58
4.	Armenians	36
5.	Jewish	17
6.	Ukrainians	16
7.	Chechens	15
8.	Tajiks	15
9.	Dagestanis	8
10.	Kazakhs	7
11.	Uzbeks	7
12.	Belarusians	1
13.	Koreans	1
14.	Refused to answer	8

The data in the table allowed to conclude the presence of a rich multicultural environment in Moscow kindergartens. The majority were Russians (36%); Tatars and Azerbaijanis were equally represented by 15% each. Armenians made up 9%; Jewish 5%; Tajiks, Ukrainians, and Chechens 4% each; then Dagestanis, Kazakhs and Uzbeks had representation of 2% each. Least of all (less than 1% each) answered that they were Belarusians and Koreans. However, 2% of parents refused to answer the question.

Second, to reveal what kinds of fairy tales were used by parents and preschool teachers for reading to

children, adults were asked to answer several new questions as follows. 1). Do you read fairy tales to children? 2). What kind of ethnic origins are these fairy tales? 3). Do children know folk tales? If they do know, how did they learn about these folk tales? The Figure 1 illustrates the result of the survey.

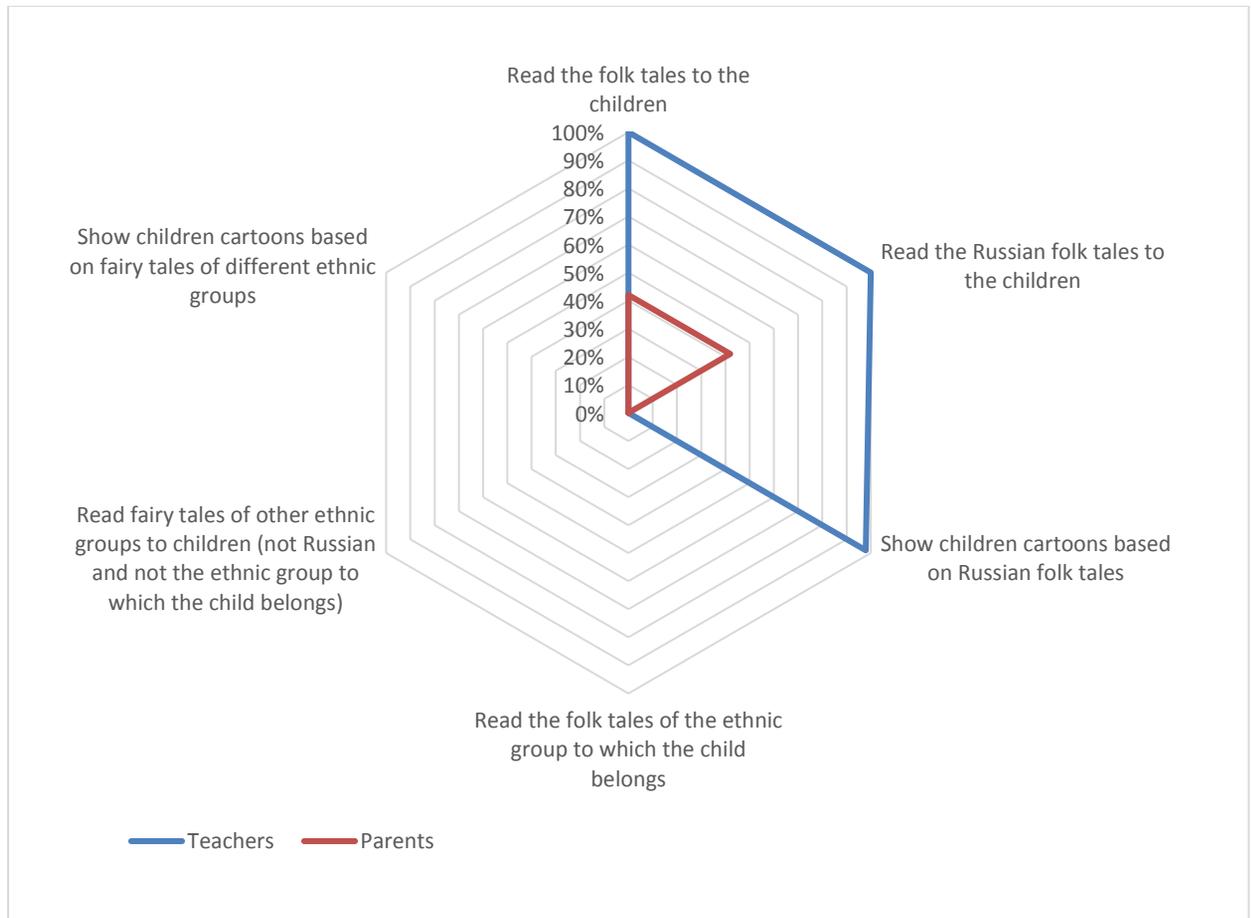


Figure 1 Results of the research survey

In general, the results showed (Figure 1) that all preschool teachers read folk tales to children. These are exclusively Russian folk tales that are included in the kindergarten program. Preschool teachers do not read fairy tales of other nations to children. Less than half (42%) of the parents read folk tales to their children. At the same time, almost all parents (98%) answered that their children watch cartoons based on folk tales. All parents named the popular Russian children's animated series "Masha and the Bear" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLeAkrd_kG8]. Other cartoons based on folk tales named by the parents were "Teremok", "Morozko", "Geese-Swans", "By the Pike's Command" and others. It was also noted that all the cartoons named by the parents were based on Russian folk tales.

The third objective of the study, to determine whether relationship between the ethnic composition of preschool groups and folk tales that adults read to preschoolers was exist, the data obtained earlier was compared. The results revealed deep discrepancy between the multicultural diversity in Moscow kindergartens and the singular ethnic origin of tales used by parents and preschool teachers.

Discussions

The results of an empirical study have shown deficiencies or mismatches in the multicultural education of preschool children in Moscow kindergartens. The ethnic composition of preschoolers in kindergartens in the multicultural Moscow metropolis is diverse. It includes Russians, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Jewish people, Tajiks, Ukrainians, Chechens, Dagestanis, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Belarusians, Koreans, and other ethnic groups.

Adults use exclusively Russian folk tales with the children: children hear or read Russian folk tales, children watch cartoons based on Russian folk tales or with elements of Russian folk tales. Consequently, the adults acquaint children with Russian ethnic culture only. Preschoolers are not given the opportunity to learn about variety of ethnic cultures from suitable folk tales.

Parents of preschoolers need to acquaint their children with the fairy tales of their own ethnic origin. To do this, parents need to know the original folk tales, to know where to find these folk and fairy tales (for example, search availability in a library, ask national elders, etc.) and what tales are age appropriate for young children. Preschool teachers need to include to their curriculum a variety of folk and fairy tales for reading to children. The curriculum should include tales of ethnic cultures to reflect the actual population. Apparently, using folk and fairy tales to introduce children with their own ethnic culture and with other nationalities and ethnicities will increase the effectiveness of multicultural education of young children in preschools and kindergartens.

Conclusion

The needs of modern multicultural society require the educational science to develop new generations of competencies for teaching full variety of effective communications between various ethnic groups. The pedagogical work should be started in kindergartens with preschool children. Creating a special technology for the multicultural education of children in kindergarten will lead to a successful intercultural dialogue between children and adults.

Literature review and the theoretical substantiation of the research issue allowed to conclude that the folk tales can be used as an early substitution for a textbook on multicultural education for young children and

preschoolers. From a folk tale, small children learn about how different people look and conduct themselves on a day-to-day basis, and the cultural life and traditions of neighboring ethnic groups. A folk tale is an interesting and friendly way for fostering tolerance in preschool children and learning about own culture and cultures of neighbors and friends of different nationalities or ethnic groups.

Empirical data have shown that Moscow teachers and parents do not read ethnic fairy tales to children, despite the obvious multicultural environment of the Moscow metropolis. The exception is Russian folk tales. At home, parents allow their children to watch cartoons based on Russian folk tales or with elements of Russian folk tales due to its wide availability. Preschoolers do not learn about different ethnic cultures from folk tales. The technology of multicultural education of preschoolers should include a special selection and reading of fairy tales of ethnic groups with which children interact in everyday life.

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