

THE USE OF FOLK NARRATIVE WORKS IN EDUCATING 5–6-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN THROUGH LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT KINDERGARTENS IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS

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<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2025.0983>

ABSTRACT

Folk narrative works possess numerous advantages for the holistic education of preschool-aged children. This study aims to assess the current situation and propose measures for utilizing folk narrative works in the education of 5–6-year-old children through learning activities at kindergartens in ethnic minority areas. Data were collected using survey questionnaires administered to 30 teachers and through the observation of 60 children at two kindergartens in Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen province, from October 2024 to April 2025. The results indicate that teachers have a positive awareness of the role of folk tales; however, the effectiveness of their use remains limited due to children's shyness and their limited Vietnamese vocabulary. Based on these findings, the study proposes three measures: developing a list of folk narrative works appropriate for children; designing an experience-rich learning environment connected to local culture; and collaborating with parents to support children's access to folk narratives. These measures aim to improve educational quality, promote the value of folk culture, and meet the requirements of innovations in early childhood education programs.

Keywords: Folk Narrative, 5–6-year-old Children, Learning Activities, Early Childhood Education, Ethnic Minority.

1. INTRODUCTION

Folk narrative works constitute a significant component of the rich heritage of Vietnamese folklore. These narratives not only reflect the lived experiences, ways of thinking, and indigenous knowledge of the people, but also carry substantial educational value for preschool-aged children. Through a system of characters, plotlines, and story structures, folk tales contribute to children's initial understanding of the natural world, human relations, and social environments (Rahiem & Rahim, 2020; Yilmaz et al., 2020); furthermore, they support the development of key competencies such as physical, linguistic, emotional, and social skills (Guo, 2018; Kang et al., 2013; Kirkina & Ustinova; Ng et al., 2020; Peng & Ishak, 2009; Stavrou, 2015). Folk tales typically feature simple, familiar content that is rich in expression and easily accessible, making them well-suited to the psychological and developmental characteristics of preschool children.

At kindergartens in ethnic minority areas, where children are often influenced by bilingual environments and face challenges in acquiring the Vietnamese language, the use of folk narrative works holds particular significance. Folk tales not only support the development of Vietnamese language skills but also provide opportunities for children to connect with local culture and to form an early sense of ethnic identity (Kang et al., 2013; Lenox, 2000; Nhung et al., 2023).

Although numerous studies have addressed the use of literary works in early childhood education, there remains a lack of research specifically focused on the use of folk narrative works in organizing learning activities for 5–6-year-old children at kindergartens in ethnic minority areas (Guo, 2018; Lee, 2011; Liu, 2020; Peng & Ishak, 2009). From that real existence, the present article aims to examine the current situation and propose specific measures to enhance the effectiveness of using folk tales in learning activities for older preschool children in these regions.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data concerning the use of folk narrative works in organizing learning activities for 5–6-year-old children at kindergartens in ethnic minority areas.

Survey Method by questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was designed for teachers to investigate their perceptions, the extent to which they organize learning activities involving folk narratives, and the effectiveness of using such stories in teaching. The questionnaire underwent a pilot test to ensure its reliability and relevance to the target respondents.

Observation Method: Systematic classroom observations were conducted involving 60 children aged 5–6 at two kindergartens - Phuong Giao Kindergarten and Dan Tien II Kindergarten (Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen province). The observations focused on children's verbal expressions, participation attitudes, and interactive abilities when engaging with folk narrative works.

Opinion Polling Method: Opinions were collected from 30 teachers to provide additional qualitative data on the challenges, facilitating factors, and proposed solutions in the process of integrating folk storytelling into classroom instruction.

The research was conducted from October 2024 to April 2025. The data collected were synthesized and analyzed using descriptive and comparative approaches, forming the basis for proposing intervention measures tailored to the local cultural and linguistic context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Theoretical Issues

3.1.1. Key Conceptual Definitions

* Concept of Folk Narrative Works

Folk narrative works are a category of folk literature that employ narrative and descriptive techniques to present events, occurrences, and characters in a sequential manner. Through the development of plot and characters, the folk narrator conveys particular ideological themes or messages to the audience or reader (myths, legends, fairy tales, humorous stories, anecdotes, and fables). Given the developmental characteristics of children aged 5–6, suitable subgenres of folk narrative for educational use include myths, legends, fairy tales, and fables.

* Concept of Learning Activity in Kindergarten

Teaching and learning activities for preschool children are cooperative processes involving both educators and children. In these activities, the teacher plays the role of organizer and facilitator, creating conditions and opportunities for children to explore the surrounding world. Meanwhile, children actively engage in the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for their later academic success in 1st grade.

According to the Early Childhood Education Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (Unified Document, 2021), learning activities are purposefully

organized and planned under the direct guidance of teachers. In kindergartens, these activities are primarily conducted through play-based methods (Training, 2021).

According to Ferholt and Lecusay (2012), *learning activity* is defined as a form of activity in which the object is the acquisition of theoretical concepts that serve as the foundation for future learning and development. The authors emphasize that learning activity is not merely the reception of knowledge but a process of internal transformation on the part of the learner, achieved through active participation in theoretically-oriented tasks that foster conceptual thinking and self-regulatory learning abilities (Ljung-Djärf & Holmqvist Olander, 2013). This perspective builds upon and extends the foundational theories of Leontiev and Davydov, which highlight the critical role of learning activity in shaping children's personalities and scientific thinking within the context of modern education.

Learning activities for preschool children in kindergartens are linked to five developmental domains. In this study, we focus on the use of folk narrative works in organizing activities designed to familiarize preschool children with literary texts. These activities include: introducing children to stories; guiding them in dramatizing literary works; and encouraging creative storytelling based on folk narratives.

3.1.2. Advantages of Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens

Folk narrative works are rich in educational value: Folk tales contain numerous profound moral lessons, helping children understand virtuous human qualities such as compassion, honesty, perseverance, solidarity, and filial piety, as well as undesirable traits like greed, selfishness, and cruelty. Through familiarizing children with folk narrative works, they develop the ability to distinguish right from wrong, cultivate a sense of responsibility, and foster empathy.

Folk narrative works are engaging: Folk stories often feature compelling plots, vivid characters, and content that resonates with children. Particularly, fairy tales, myths, and legends often incorporate magical elements that stimulate imagination and spark interest. Children are actively involved in activities such as role-playing, creative storytelling, and illustrating scenes from the tales. As a result, the use of folk narrative works creates an enjoyable learning environment that stimulates children's curiosity and desire to learn.

Folk narrative works have a syncretism, suitable for integrated education in early childhood education programs. Folk narrative works are not only a form of literature but also serve as a repository of knowledge from various fields of science and the arts. When using folk narrative works, teachers can extract elements from the stories that relate to customs, traditions, scientific knowledge, and artistic knowledge in daily life. Through fairy tales, myths, and fables, these works contribute to nurturing a love for one's homeland, a sense of national pride, and awareness of preserving cultural identity from an early age. They help children connect with folk culture and develop their personal identity.

The themes of folk narrative works are often closely related to the daily life of children and align with educational themes in kindergarten. For example, myths help children understand the origins of humanity and the natural world in ancient times, while legends help children understand national cultural identity. Fairy tales help children grasp the relationships between people and learn appropriate ways to interact. Fables, on the other hand, use indirect methods to teach moral lessons or philosophies about life experiences. All of these elements are familiar and relevant to the world around preschool-aged children.

3.1.3. Objectives of Using Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens

Activities such as dramatization and movement based on the content of stories help children develop artistic creativity and train physical flexibility and dexterity. Integrated activities provide opportunities for children to practice fine motor skills and improve hand coordination. In addition, the content of folk narrative works educates children about proper nutrition and personal hygiene.

The use of folk narrative works in organizing learning activities for 5–6-year-old children aims to foster curiosity, a love for discovery, and an eagerness to explore the surrounding world. Children develop the ability to identify and solve simple problems in various ways; they can express their understanding through different forms of language; and they gain initial knowledge about people, objects, natural phenomena, and basic mathematical concepts. Through folk tales about nature, animals, and humans, children expand their understanding of life, form skills in observation and analysis, and recognize relationships within the world. Especially, the magical elements in folk tales - such as fairy, Buddha, magic wands, or talking animals - stimulate children's imagination, allowing them to create new stories, experiment with alternative endings, or transform themselves into characters in their own unique ways.

Legends, fables, fairy tales, and other folk narrative works, with their vivid imagery and memorable rhythms, help children expand their vocabulary, develop expressive abilities, and improve pronunciation. As they listen to stories told by the teacher, children practice memory, listening comprehension, and verbal expression of ideas, thereby gradually developing more flexible and coherent use of language. Through activities such as dramatization, discussing story content, and creative storytelling, children learn to communicate confidently, respond quickly in conversations, and express their thoughts clearly.

Folk tales often contain profound moral lessons about honesty, solidarity, and filial piety, helping children naturally and intimately internalize ethical values. When listening to teachers tell stories or participating in role-playing activities, children not only learn to distinguish right from wrong and good from evil, but also develop empathy for virtuous characters and disapproval of bad ones. They are trained to express their thoughts and emotions regarding the story's situations. In addition, the process of group storytelling teaches children how to listen to others, share ideas, and thereby fosters communication skills and a spirit of teamwork.

When exposed to folk narratives, children are encouraged to express emotions through tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions, thereby enhancing their expressiveness and performance skills. They become familiar with beautiful, bright imagery that evokes aesthetic emotions and fosters the development of artistic taste. Moreover, engaging with literary works stimulates the imagination, encouraging children to create beauty or seek out and appreciate it.

3.1.4. Educational Content Derived from the Use of Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens

Folk narrative works are used to educate children about recognizing common foods and dishes, as well as their health benefits. For instance, the legend "*Su tich banh chung, banh day*" (*Story Of Vietnamese Rice Cake*) helps children learn about the ingredients used to make "*banh chung*" (Square sticky rice cake) and understand the colors, smells, and tastes associated with the

dish. Similarly, the fable "*Chan, tay, tai, mat, mieng*" (*Legs, Hands, Ears, Eyes, Mouth*) helps children understand the role of food in maintaining bodily functions

Folk narrative works also assist children in exploring the human body (e.g., *Legs, Hands, Ears, Eyes, Mouth*), and familiarizing themselves with objects such as the clay pot in *Thach Sanh*, the bamboo tray, the conical hat, and the iron whip in "*Thanh Giong*" (*Legend of the Heavenly King of Phu-Dong*), or the magical sword in "*Su tich Ho Guom*" (*The Legend of Sword Lake*). These stories enable children to understand characteristics, benefits, and potential dangers of animals, plants, flowers, and fruits; the growth processes of plants and animals; and the living conditions of various species. They also allow children to compare similarities and differences between animals, plants, flowers, and fruits - as in the stories "*Qua bau tien*" (*The Magic Gourd*) and "*Cay khe*" (*The Starfruit Tree*). Folk narrative works also help children identify natural phenomena such as weather, seasons, day and night, the sun and moon, water, air, light, and elements of the earth such as soil, rocks, sand, and gravel, with examples including "*Than thoai than tru troi*" (*Pillar of Heaven mythology*), "*Son Tinh - Thuy Tinh*" (*The Mountain God and the Water God*), and "*Mat trang va mat troi*" (*The Moon and the Sun*). Furthermore, folk tales introduce children to basic mathematical concepts such as sets, quantity, ordinal and cardinal numbers, comparison, measurement, shapes, and spatial and temporal orientation. Additionally, folk narrative works help children explore society and learn about themselves, their families, and their local communities. They become familiar with names, tools, products, activities, and the significance of common and traditional occupations in their locality. Children also learn about key features of historical relics, natural landmarks, and cultural events and festivals of their homeland and country through stories such as "*Su tich Ho Guom*" (*The Legend of Sword Lake*), "*Su tich Ho Ba Be*" (*The Origins of Ba Be Lake*), and "*Thanh Giong*" (*Legend of the Heavenly King of Phu-Dong*)...

Folk narrative works offer numerous advantages in supporting language development for preschool children. Listening to folk narratives provides children with age-appropriate storytelling experiences. Through discussions about folk narrative works, children practice clear pronunciation, express their needs and emotions, use appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures, respond to and ask questions, retell familiar stories in sequence, and narrate events based on objects, pictures, or chronological order. Role-play activities based on folk tales further enrich children's vocabulary, encourage active language use, and support the development of coherent speech.

Folk narrative works also help children develop a sense of self through stories about human origins, as well as fables that explore the human body, psychological traits, and character. Additionally, children learn to recognize and express emotions and feelings toward people, objects, and phenomena in their surroundings through exposure to folk narratives. These works also serve as a tool for teaching behavior and social norms, guiding children in appropriate conduct within the family, kindergarten, and broader community.

Children experience and express emotions toward the beauty of nature and everyday life around them through folk narrative works. For example, through myths, children learn about the origins of the universe and natural phenomena such as rain, wind, storms, floods, and droughts. Through folk legends, they develop an appreciation for the natural beauty and landscapes of their homeland and country...

The use of folk narrative works in organizing learning activities for 5–6-year-old children not only contributes to the development of language, cognition, and social skills, but also helps

children strengthen their physical abilities, nurture a love for folk culture, and lay the foundations of moral character from an early age. Integrating folk narrative works into early childhood education fosters engagement and enables children to acquire knowledge in a natural and gentle manner.

3.1.5. Methods of Using Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens

The use of folk narrative works in early childhood education requires the application of appropriate methods to help children absorb knowledge naturally and develop comprehensively across the domains of physical, cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and aesthetic development.

The method of expressive reading and storytelling of folk narrative works: This method involves the teacher using vocal expression and tonal variation to convey the content of the story, allowing children to "see" what they hear and to evoke emotional resonance and imagination. In order to perform expressive storytelling effectively, the teacher must thoroughly study the story, grasp its content and central theme, and analyze its intonation structure. This includes determining the overall tone suitable for conveying the work, identifying the specific tone for each section, part, or character. Teachers must also master basic techniques of vocal modulation - intonation, rhythm, pauses, and volume - so that the expressive reading or storytelling aligns with the nature of folk narrative works.

The use of visual aids in storytelling of folk narrative works: The use of visual aids in storytelling of folk narrative works for children is an especially important and effective method. It aligns with the image-based and concrete thinking typical of preschool-aged children. While listening to the teacher read or tell a story, children are exposed to visual representations, which support the formation of new mental images and concepts. In kindergartens, visual aids used in storytelling may include: real objects; simulated visual materials representing objects or phenomena, such as drawings, puppets, models, dioramas...; modern audiovisual tools, such as audio recordings, projectors, and computers. Teachers can employ visual aids to introduce the story, create context, stimulate interest, enhance comprehension, or reinforce the story's content. When using visual aids, teachers should ensure: Aesthetic quality in shape and color, with alignment to the story's content; appropriate size in relation to the objects and the classroom space; avoidance of overly elaborate decoration that may distract children; integration of visual aids should be smooth and natural, in harmony with verbal narration.

Explanation and Conversation: Teachers use purposefully designed, guided, and pre-planned questions to engage in discussion with children, supporting them in gaining a deeper and more systematic understanding and appreciation of the folk narrative work. During these conversations, the teacher also incorporates explanation of difficult vocabulary and clarification of story details that may be unclear to the children. This method promotes cognitive development by encouraging children to ask questions, reflect, and express their opinions about the story's content. Teachers may use open-ended questions such as, "Which character do you like the most? Why?" or encourage children to predict what happens next in the story. Real-life connections can also be drawn to help children apply the lessons of the story to their everyday experiences.

Encouraging Children to Retell Stories: Teachers may guide children to retell the story in chronological order or encourage creative storytelling. This method enhances children's

comprehension, fosters cognitive and linguistic development, and improves their ability to express ideas. Additionally, engaging children in story retelling activities helps build their confidence and encourages them to speak assertively in front of groups.

Role-Playing Based on the Storyline: Teachers can organize dramatization activities in which children perform short plays based on folk narrative works. This is a form of learning through play that is highly engaging for young learners. Children assume the roles of story characters, expressing their dialogues, actions, and emotions. They may reenact the original storyline or creatively expand on it with new elements. This method fosters expressive ability, builds confidence in public speaking, and develops teamwork and creative thinking skills.

Educational Game-Based Method: Integrating story content into educational games allows children to absorb knowledge in an enjoyable and natural way. Teachers may organize games such as sequencing picture cards to help children understand the plot structure, or the game “Who said this?” to help them recognize characters. Movement-based games can also be used to make the learning process lively and engaging while enhancing children’s observation skills and logical reasoning.

3.2. Current Situation of Using Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens in Ethnic Minority Areas

Between October 2024 and April 2025, we conducted a survey involving 30 kindergarten teachers responsible for the care and education of 5–6-year-old children, and 60 children aged 5–6 in Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyên province. The aim was to analyze the current situation regarding teachers’ perceptions of the role of folk narrative works in educating 5–6-year-old children, as well as to examine objectives, content, methods, assessment practices, challenges, and influencing factors in the use of folk narrative works in kindergartens located in ethnic minority areas.

It can be observed that the kindergarten teachers surveyed are all clearly aware of the importance of using folk narrative works in organizing learning activities for children. However, the effectiveness of achieving the intended educational objectives through the use of folk narrative works remains limited. One of the key goals of integrating folk narratives into learning is to cultivate qualities such as compassion, solidarity, attentive listening, and the ability to share, etc., with 6.7% at a very ineffective level.

Several instructional methods have not been utilized effectively, including expressive reading and storytelling of folk narrative works; the use of visual aids during storytelling; explanation and conversation; role-playing based on the story; and the use of learning games. The main reason behind the ineffective implementation of these methods lies in the children's limited Vietnamese vocabulary and lack of confidence in using the Vietnamese language to explore folk narrative works. Therefore, teachers need to adopt strategies that enhance children’s confidence when engaging with folk narrative texts in learning activities.

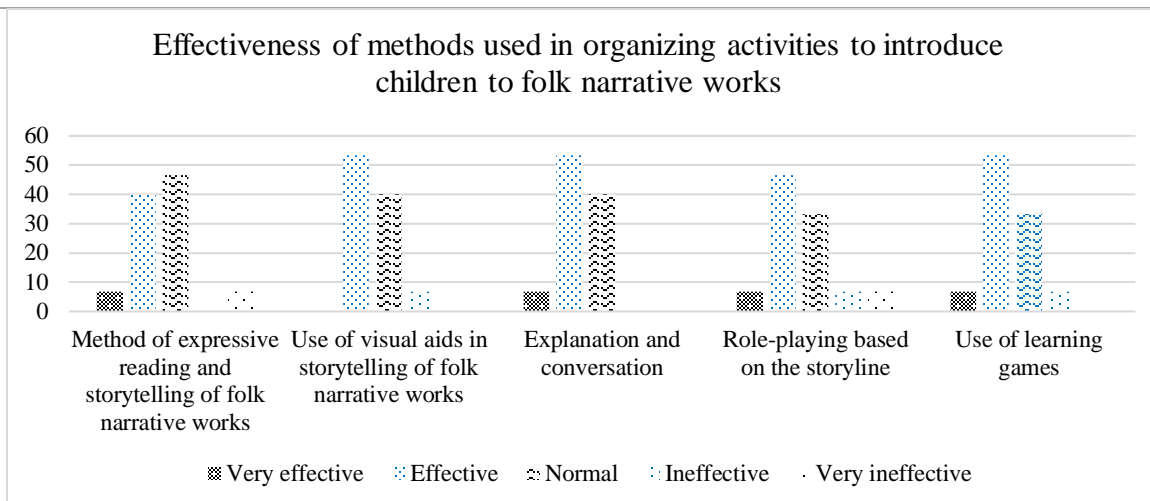


Figure 1. Current Status of the Effectiveness in Applying Methods for Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens in Ethnic Minority Areas

In addition, through opinion polling, we found that teachers rarely engage children with folk narrative works during learning activities due to the lack of a diverse and age-appropriate repertoire of folk literature available for use. Teachers also struggle to stimulate children's interest and participation, as the children are often shy, lack confidence, and have a limited Vietnamese vocabulary. Moreover, teachers have not fully leveraged the advantages of visual aids to create interactive learning environments in which children are encouraged to answer or pose questions. Opportunities for children to express themselves or to retell folk narratives with expressive language remain limited. As a result, children have not been able to fully realize or apply their existing knowledge during the learning process. This situation serves as a foundation for us to propose solutions for the effective integration of folk narrative works into learning activities for 5–6-year-old children in kindergartens in ethnic minority areas.

3.3. Solutions for Using Folk Narrative Works in Organizing Learning Activities for 5–6-Year-Old Children in Kindergartens in Ethnic Minority Areas

3.3.1. Developing a list of folk narrative works for use in kindergartens in ethnic minority areas

*** Objective:** To develop a system of folk narrative works that are appropriate to the psychological and cultural characteristics of children, enabling them to easily access folk stories. This in turn helps train listening and storytelling skills and fosters creative thinking, in alignment with multicultural education orientations.

*** Content:** Select stories suitable for the psychological characteristics of preschool-aged children. Categorize stories by thematic groups. Annotate key characteristics of each story, such as length, vocabulary level, complex details, and creative retelling potential. The list should be specific and adaptable for use in both annual educational planning and age-group-specific curricula.

*** Implementation Method:**

Step 1: Survey children's needs, cognitive abilities, and interests regarding different types of folk tales.

Step 2: Collect source materials from books, libraries, educational databases, and early childhood education programs.

Step 3: Select works based on the criteria: simple and understandable language, relatable content, well-defined characters, and fantasy elements that appeal to children.

Step 4: Categorize the works according to educational themes.

Step 5: Consult with teachers, education professionals, and parents to revise and finalize the list.

* Implementation Conditions:

- From the school: There must be a strategic orientation prioritizing the integration of folk tales into the educational program and conditions to help teachers access resources.

- From the teachers: They must possess knowledge of folk literature and the ability to select and evaluate stories suitable for children.

- From the parents: They are encouraged to participate in selecting works for children and to create opportunities for children to connect with national and local cultures.

3.2.2. Building a Learning Environment Suitable for Ethnic Minority Children

* Objective: To create conditions for children's holistic development through a learning environment that is closely connected to the local culture. At the same time, to help children enhance their Vietnamese language skills and develop a readiness for entering first grade.

* Content: Develop a physical environment that reflects ethnic identity, creating a flexible linguistic environment that integrates both the children's mother tongue and Vietnamese. This will support children in transitioning between languages, increase their ability to absorb knowledge, and boost their confidence in communication.

* Implementation Method:

Step 1: Survey the current status and characteristics of children's language and cognition in the local area

Step 2: Select content and design an environment that matches the ethnic characteristics of the children, both in terms of physical and psychological environments

Step 3: Organize learning activities within the established environment

Step 4: Evaluate and record children's reception results, and adjust accordingly

* Implementation Conditions:

- From the school: Provide support and create favorable conditions for teachers to decorate and build a learning space that reflects local culture. Organize experience-sharing sessions among teachers on how to build a suitable learning environment for children.

- From the teachers: Understand the local culture and know how to integrate folk tales into activities that are appropriate for the children.

- From the parents: Collaborate to provide local materials or assist in creating teaching tools with teachers. Also, help maintain and refresh the learning environment when necessary.

3.3.3. Collaborating with Parents to Support Children's Access to Folk Narrative Tales at Home

* Objective: To establish a connection between the school and the family in educating children through folk narrative tales. This helps children engage with this genre of literature regularly, contributing to the development of language, thinking, and emotional skills in their everyday living environment.

* Content: Provide parents with guidance on how to tell folk tales appropriate for the children's age and their ability to understand. Supply materials, a list of recommended stories, and

suggestions for simple activities that help children interact with the content of the tales through verbal communication, drawings, or games.

*** Implementation Method:**

Step 1: The teacher prepares a set of materials to guide parents on how to tell stories at home. This includes the story title, a brief summary, lively storytelling techniques, and thought-provoking questions to ask after the story.

Step 2: Distribute the materials to parents through meetings, online class groups, or communication notebook.

Step 3: Guide parents in establishing a regular storytelling routine for children at appropriate times, such as before bedtime or after meals. Encourage parents to converse with children after storytelling to enhance language development and memory skills.

Step 4: The teacher evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation and adjusts the content based on the specific needs and context of each family.

*** Implementation Conditions:**

- From the school: Provide support to ensure smooth cooperation between teachers and parents. Encourage family-school collaboration within the children's educational program.

- From the teachers: Proactively communicate and support parents throughout the coordination process.

- From the parents: Be willing to dedicate time to interact with children through storytelling and conversations. Be cooperative and share information with the teacher to ensure effective support for the children's development.

4. CONCLUSION

The research shows that using folk tales in educational activities at kindergartens in ethnic minority areas has great potential, but the practical effectiveness remains limited. Teachers are aware of the role of folk tales, but the application faces difficulties due to the use of visual aids that are not suitable for the local cultural characteristics, children's lack of confidence, and their limited Vietnamese language skills. From this situation, the article proposes three measures: building a catalog of suitable folk tales, designing a learning environment connected to local culture, and collaborating with parents to support children's access to folk narrative works at home. These measures contribute to enhancing educational effectiveness, promoting the holistic development of children, and preserving the ethnic cultural identity in kindergartens.

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