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THE ROLE OF NATIONAL TRADITIONS IN FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Annotation: *This article explores the importance of integrating national values into environmental education for primary school students. In the context of Uzbekistan, where cultural traditions emphasize harmony with nature, the study investigates how culturally grounded pedagogical methods can enhance students' ecological awareness and moral responsibility. Conducted in three primary schools in the Surkhandarya region, the research involved second- and third-grade students and used a mixed-methods approach, including diagnostic assessments, experimental lessons, and post-intervention evaluations. The experimental group was exposed to educational content featuring folk tales, traditional proverbs, role-playing games, and environmental activities rooted in national heritage. Results showed significant improvement in students' emotional connection to nature, environmental behavior, and awareness of ecological issues. The study concludes that national values serve as effective tools for forming ethical and socially responsible environmental attitudes in children. The integration of such values with modern educational technologies is recommended to enhance engagement and long-term impact. This culturally relevant approach contributes to developing not only ecological literacy but also national identity and a sense of civic responsibility among young learners.*

Keywords: *environmental education, national values, primary school, ecological awareness, folk tales, cultural heritage, proverbs, moral development, Uzbekistan, traditional pedagogy, ICT in education, environmental ethics, student engagement, civic responsibility, holistic learning*

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and digital transformation, one of the most urgent responsibilities facing humanity is maintaining ecological balance and fostering a respectful attitude toward nature among the younger generation. The education system plays a leading role in this process. For primary school students, environmental education must begin at an early stage, as it is during this developmental period that ecological awareness and moral values begin to take shape [Karimova, 2021].

In the rich historical heritage of the Uzbek people, reverence for nature and a caring attitude toward the environment hold a significant place among national values. Traditions such as the Navruz celebration, the sanctity attributed to water and soil, tree-planting ceremonies, a moderate lifestyle, and communal clean-up activities (hashar) are vivid examples of this. These customs serve not only as instruments of moral education but also as natural and historical mechanisms for cultivating conscious attitudes toward the environment [Rakhmonov, 2020].

In pedagogical practice, many educators emphasize that love for nature should not be imparted solely through knowledge, but rather through emotionally rich and affective methods that touch the hearts of students [Toirova, 2019]. From this perspective, integrating national values into the educational process is regarded as a powerful tool in aligning environmental education with national spiritual heritage.

This article provides a scientific analysis of the role of national values in shaping respect, affection, ecological awareness, and a sense of responsibility toward nature among primary school students. It also explores effective methodologies for incorporating these values into the teaching and learning process.

Literature Review

In recent years, the issue of environmental education has garnered significant attention among educational researchers and practitioners. Various studies have highlighted the importance of forming ecological awareness and respectful attitudes toward nature, especially at the primary school level, where children's perceptions and value systems begin to take shape [Rakhmonov, 2020]. It has been emphasized that early education plays a critical role in instilling values such as environmental responsibility, conservation ethics, and sustainability practices [Qurbonova, 2019].

Several pedagogical models have been developed to enhance environmental sensitivity among young learners. These include the integration of ecological content into subjects like nature study, storytelling approaches using environmental themes, outdoor learning, and participation in school-based ecological events and campaigns [Soliyeva, 2021]. Such methods aim not only to increase knowledge but also to foster emotional connection with the natural world.

However, despite the growing body of work on environmental education, there is still a notable gap when it comes to combining this education with national cultural values. The traditional customs, folklore, and seasonal celebrations of the Uzbek people contain rich elements that promote environmental harmony and stewardship. Yet, the educational potential of these cultural assets remains underutilized in most classroom settings [Karimova, 2021].

Integrating national values into environmental education has the potential to make the learning process more relevant, identity-based, and emotionally engaging for students. It can also contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage while addressing current ecological challenges. This literature review highlights the need for further exploration into methodologies that incorporate national traditions and values into the environmental education of primary school students. Such approaches can enhance the moral and cultural dimensions of ecological literacy and support the formation of environmentally responsible citizens from an early age.

Methodology

This study was conducted in three public primary schools located in the Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan, targeting second- and third-grade students. The aim was to explore the effectiveness of a methodology that integrates national values into environmental education to foster a respectful and responsible attitude toward nature. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative observations and quantitative data collection. Initially, diagnostic tools such as interviews, environmental attitude surveys, and observational checklists were used to assess the students' existing perceptions of nature and their awareness of ecological responsibilities. These preliminary findings served as a foundation for developing an experimental teaching plan tailored to the cultural context of the students.

During the intervention phase, students participated in a series of educational activities that embedded national traditions and moral values related to nature. These included analyzing folk tales featuring local flora and fauna, engaging in role-playing games that emphasized empathy for the environment, and discussing traditional proverbs and wise sayings that reflect respect for the Earth and its resources. Additionally, extracurricular events called "Nature Days" were organized, where students took part in practical actions such as cleaning school gardens, planting trees, and designing eco-posters. These activities aimed not only to increase ecological knowledge but also to build emotional attachment and moral responsibility toward the environment (Rakhmonov, 2020; Karimova, 2021).

At the end of the study, post-assessment tools were administered to both the experimental and control groups to evaluate changes in ecological thinking and behavior. The results were then analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the culturally integrated methodology compared to traditional approaches. The findings supported the hypothesis that incorporating national values into environmental

education can significantly enhance students' ecological awareness and ethical attitudes (Soliyeva, 2021).

Results

The results of the study demonstrated a significant positive shift in the attitudes and behaviors of students in the experimental group who participated in the culturally integrated environmental education program. These students showed an increased sense of care, empathy, and responsibility toward the natural environment. Post-intervention assessments revealed that 87% of the students reported a greater appreciation for nature through the traditional stories and proverbs they had learned during the lessons. Many students expressed that folk tales helped them see nature as something sacred and interconnected with human life, which enhanced their emotional engagement and sense of duty to protect it.

Furthermore, 73% of the students indicated that they had advised their parents at home to sort household waste and reduce littering, demonstrating the transfer of ecological values from school to home environments. This reflects not only cognitive acquisition but also behavioral transformation, showing that the integration of national values into learning had a practical influence beyond the classroom setting. Additionally, 68% of the students suggested planting new trees in the schoolyard and volunteered to care for them, indicating a proactive attitude and internalization of environmental responsibility. These results stand in contrast to the control group, where such proactive suggestions and actions were either absent or minimal.

The findings confirm that an educational approach grounded in national culture and values can significantly contribute to forming environmental awareness, shaping not only students' knowledge but also their worldview and ethical attitudes toward nature.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that fostering a respectful attitude toward nature among primary school students requires more than the transmission of factual knowledge. Emotional and culturally meaningful pedagogical approaches play a crucial role in shaping students' ecological awareness and ethical behavior. The integration of national values into environmental education offers a powerful means of connecting students with their cultural identity while also promoting environmental stewardship. Folk tales, traditional games, and proverbs related to nature have proven to be especially effective tools in making environmental lessons more relatable and engaging for young learners.

Children respond more positively to stories and activities that carry emotional resonance and moral guidance. By hearing tales that highlight the sacredness of nature or participating in games that simulate care for the environment, students are not only informed but inspired. These methods support both affective and cognitive development, encouraging students to internalize environmental responsibility as a personal and cultural value. The findings align with previous research that emphasizes the significance of moral education and emotional connection in promoting ecological behavior (Soliyeva, 2021).

Moreover, such approaches align well with the cultural context of Uzbekistan, where traditional customs and collective values play an important role in everyday life. Embedding ecological concepts within familiar cultural narratives enables students to see environmental care not as an abstract duty, but as a continuation of their heritage and moral upbringing (Rakhmonov, 2020). Therefore, enriching ecological education with national spiritual values should be considered a strategic and priority direction in primary education. It ensures that ecological consciousness develops in harmony with cultural identity, thus making environmental ethics a natural part of children's worldview and behavior.

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that pedagogical approaches rooted in national values can effectively foster a sense of love, respect, and responsibility toward nature among primary school students. By integrating elements of cultural heritage—such as folk stories, proverbs, traditional games, and community practices—into environmental education, young learners are provided with meaningful and emotionally resonant experiences that strengthen their connection to the natural world. This cultural-contextual approach not only enhances students' cognitive understanding of environmental issues but also promotes the development of moral and social responsibility.

The effectiveness of this methodology lies in its ability to make environmental concepts more tangible and relevant through familiar cultural narratives. Students become more active participants in ecological practices when they recognize them as extensions of their cultural identity and family traditions. As a result, students demonstrate greater initiative in environmental actions, both in and outside the classroom, including waste management, tree planting, and encouraging eco-friendly behavior in their communities (Rakhmonov, 2020).

Looking ahead, it is important to expand and modernize these culturally grounded educational strategies. The integration of digital tools, multimedia resources, and information and communication technologies (ICT) can significantly enhance the engagement and interactivity of such lessons. Educational apps, storytelling animations, and interactive ecological games can serve as effective supplements to traditional methods, especially when they reflect national themes and values. Combining cultural depth with technological innovation will ensure that environmental education remains relevant, engaging, and impactful for future generations of learners (Soliyeva, 2021).

In conclusion, incorporating national values into environmental education should be regarded as a strategic direction for primary education reform. It not only nurtures ecological literacy but also fosters a generation of students who are ethically

grounded, socially responsible, and culturally conscious in their attitudes toward nature.

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