

Folk Games as an Effektive Pedagogical Tool and Factor in Education

Salimjon Valievich Yuldashev

Associate Professor, Department of History of Uzbekistan, Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article addresses the role of folk games in shaping young people's physical and professional skills and in their upbringing. Children's games serve as a means and factor of education, facilitating mutual understanding, social bonding, and interaction among youth across all spheres of social life, providing a universally comprehensible language for fostering socialization. Since folk games are primarily played outdoors and in groups, they are presented from an ethnopedagogical perspective as one of the most accessible and voluntary sources for educating today's generation in intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic aspects.

Key words: ethnography, primitive society, customs, traditions, rituals, daily life, national-ethnographic identity, life impressions, observations, experiences, emotions, music, dance forms.

Introduction

Folk games represent a unique genre of folklore with a centuries-old history, reflecting specific social events characteristic of various stages of societal development.

In examining the gradual development of folk games throughout history and their educational applications, it is essential to pay special attention to the distinctive aspects of each type of game. Created by the people, these games artistically mirror events and happenings from everyday life, encapsulating their life impressions, observations, experiences, and emotions. They often incorporate elements of music and dance, bringing a comprehensive form of expression to the games.

In primitive societies, ceremonies aimed at integrating youth into the adult community, as well as religious rituals, were widespread. These events, often featuring unique games and competitions, were centered around activities such as labor practices, tribal customs, traditions, and oral folk art. During such competitive games, young men were expected to demonstrate their skills in weapon handling, knowledge of religious customs, songs, and tribal legends. These ceremonies also included dances, through which early humans expressed the events, achievements, failures, joys, and sorrows of their lives.

Primitive people's pursuits of hunting wild animals and their attempts to tame them led to the creation and performance of hunting games. D. U. Elkonin, studying the origins of games and art, concluded that "primitive people used games to depict hunting, warfare, and other serious activities. Reenacting failures in hunting helped them identify mistakes and understand the reasons behind their lack of success". [1.-p 23]

Literature Review and Methodology

The historiographical analysis of the research reveals that the ethno-territorial history of the population in the Fergana Valley has sparked interest among various groups of people visiting this region.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Central Asia, including the Fergana Valley, attracted hundreds of geographers, travelers, military personnel, traders, and spies from the Russian Empire and foreign countries, who were intrigued by the ethno-cultural and economic aspects of the local population. Many left memoirs and notes, documenting the customs, traditions, rituals, and daily lives of the local people, while others included captivating information in their works and articles.

After the conquest of Central Asia by the Russian Empire, Russian researchers focused significant attention on studying the ethno-social characteristics of the Fergana Valley and began collecting scientifically grounded data. Although these studies often aligned with the researchers' primary interests, they nevertheless provided a wealth of valuable information on the ethnography of the valley's people. Noteworthy scholars in this regard include Kh. Potanin, A. Middendorf, V. Velyaminov-Zernov, A. Shishov, A. P. Khoroshkin, V. Firsov.[2.-p173-179] Their research presents insights into the daily lives and customs of the Fergana Valley inhabitants, with specific references to folk games.

In particular, the articles by A. Divaev and A. Firsov stand out for providing valuable information on children's games and equestrian traditions in Turkestan. Interest in studying folk games, including their regional and general characteristics, has grown significantly in recent years. Numerous historical, ethnographic, archaeological, pedagogical, folkloristic, local history, and ethnological studies have been conducted. For instance, researchers such as M. Juraev, T. S. Usmonkhojaev, F. Khojaev, R. Yuldosheva, Habibulla Gofur, F. Nasriddinov, A. Qosimov, M. Daminova, G. Adambekova, E. G. Goziyev.[3.-p 90] have all contributed research on the history of children's games, their types, and their significance in strengthening spiritual and national values, as well as their educational impact. However, these researchers have largely limited their studies to their areas of specialization.

Results

The games preserved by various peoples over long periods have become integral to their lives, reflecting their desires, past, and way of life. Like other customs and traditions, folk games have a long history. While some of these games and competitions have been modernized due to various influences, others have retained their local characteristics, demonstrating elements of joy, humor, enthusiasm for celebrations, and a strong inclination toward hosting events-attributes that stem from the people's social and psychological state.

No society exists without games. Humans begin to understand the external world from infancy, often gaining an initial sense of it through toys. Games during childhood, adolescence, and youth serve as forms of voluntary activity that fulfill objective educational, moral, social, and aesthetic functions. For instance, the game "Khola-Khola" (Guest-Guest) helps children develop positive traits, such as welcoming and bidding farewell to guests and learning table-setting etiquette, which serves as a step in preparing girls for family life and positively influences children's behavior in group settings.

In today's era, where mutual understanding and social integration are valued, the universal language of games facilitates children's understanding of each other across different cultures. Participation in games from other nations fosters feelings of internationalism, respect, and affection for people from different backgrounds, and builds knowledge of their lifestyles, cultures, traditions, and customs. These games help children compare Uzbek culture and way of life with those of other nations, fostering a deeper understanding of their own culture and its unique emotional aspects. Games also enable children to delve deeper into adult life and activities, altering their perceptions of surrounding events, while the social context and storyline of the games increasingly reflect the conditions of society and the lives of its members. Therefore, the development of children's ability to play does not occur spontaneously but rather results from adult influence, including interaction with the environment, excursions, and an understanding of interpersonal relationships.

At first glance, folk games may appear to be a simple pastime. However, embedded within them are effective methods for fostering physical and spiritual development. Uzbek children's games, such as "Lappak," "Stone Lifting," "Rope," and other games involving stones and objects, play a significant role in children's physical and moral education. These games encompass national values, human emotions, love for nature and humanity, and respect for ancestral traditions, highlighting their inherent spiritual strength. Folk games are products of popular creativity, allowing individuals to understand their place and purpose in the world and create a beautiful life, with ethnographic elements evident in these games.

Games require qualities like intelligence, skill, creativity, agility, courage, resilience, and quick decision-making. Such qualities are emphasized in games like "Hidden Tag," "Eye Play," "Guard Boy," "Zim-Ziyo," "Catch-Catch," and "Gardener Guard," reflecting the broad capacity of games to instill physical, moral, aesthetic, and psychological components in children. The ease of nurturing well-rounded individuals through games lies in the fact that children voluntarily participate without the need for mandatory educational methods. Traditional methods, such as classroom teaching, transition to the playground, where students develop both moral and physical qualities, progressing gradually toward becoming well-rounded individuals.

Observing a child imitating the outside world and applying it to their life indicates their excitement and eagerness to explore complex aspects of the world. The essence of children's development is biologically grounded, as each generation of a nation follows a unique path. Folk games provide both physical vitality and intellectual enrichment. Notably, games like "Color Top," "Lappak," "Top Tosh," and "Riddles," primarily played in regions with thriving handicraft economies, enhance children's intellectual potential, serving as a foundation for their well-rounded growth.

Children who regularly participate in national sports and games develop teamwork skills, honesty, diligence, a sense of duty, agility, intensity, speed, precision, and mental clarity. Their competitive spirit also equips them to overcome life's future challenges. Games that foster noble qualities, such as bravery and patriotism, play a vital role in nurturing defenders and loyal citizens of the homeland. The revival of such traditional games in the years following independence has gradually developed children's understanding of patriotism and their roles as protectors of the nation. Since independence, sporting events like "Umid Nihollari" (Seedlings of Hope), "Barkamol Avlod" (Well-rounded Generation), and "Universiade" among university students have become widespread, transforming folk games into popular events.

Folk games are primarily played outdoors, often under the open sky and in all seasons, invigorating participants physically and mentally. The fact that these games have survived for centuries, evolving in various forms as they were passed down through generations, highlights their essential value as folk art. Studying and promoting the social and aesthetic significance of traditional folk games in raising well-rounded individuals marks an important step in reviving the ancient traditions of educating the younger generation.

As the government views the education of a healthy and morally upright generation as a matter of national importance, researching these games allows for an understanding of their role in shaping personal worldviews and psychological development, reflecting the national ethnographic identity of our people.

S.A. Shmakov highlighted the educational potential of games, writing, "Games accompany a child as a shadow, becoming a reliable friend. Yet, we do not regard their continuity over many years favorably. Games attract attention due to their vast, sometimes invisible, educational reserves and extensive pedagogical potential"[4.-p 26].

Competition-based games often distinguish winners from losers. However, the concept of loss in games is relative, as defeat motivates the losing side to strive for future victory, while the winning side aims to maintain their status. This creates a friendly competitive environment among children, fostering both physical and moral readiness. Thus, folk games manifest as an essential type of activity within the educational process.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research:

- In the context of globalization, folk games, while preserving their national content and form, play a significant role in fostering and strengthening interethnic relations.
- As social values within society, our traditional sports games should be viewed as essential tools for preserving and developing our ethnic culture and moral-spiritual values.
- Additionally, the harmony within children's games and the emphasis on careful interaction with the environment should be recognized as important factors in education.
- The growing popularity of games contributes to strengthening solidarity among the world's nations and maintaining socio-political stability.
- Since folk games are primarily played outdoors and in groups, they serve as one of the most accessible and voluntary sources for educating today's generation in intellectual, physical, psychological, moral, and aesthetic aspects.
- The physical qualities and human virtues imparted through various physical exercises, active games, and modern sports activities used in the upbringing of a healthy generation are fully embodied within the content of folk games, thus reflecting universal values.

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