# Tales Passed Down: Investigating the Integration of Philippine Folklore in Kindergarten Classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examines the integration of Philippine folklore in the kindergarten classrooms of selected schools in San Fernando City, La Union Philippines. Understanding the significance of traditional stories in fostering cultural identity as well as the impacts on the development of the children such as language skills, creativity, and cultural awareness. The study explores how different types of Philippine Folklore are integrated in kindergarten classrooms as well as what are the delivery modes nowadays as we live in 21st century. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten experienced kindergarten teachers, alongside classroom observations and document analysis. The findings highlight the value of integrating folklore through storytelling, songs, and interactive play. These methods not only promote imagination and critical thinking but also strengthen students' appreciation for Filipino heritage and community values. The research suggests that incorporating folklore into daily routines enhances both cognitive development and emotional well-being by instilling a sense of belonging and pride in Filipino culture.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage, early childhood education, kindergarten, Philippine folklore, storytelling.

## INTRODUCTION

Culture represents the people and shapes their identity. It helps us be recognized not only within our own communities but also across different countries. It is expressed in various ways, such as traditions, clothing, and other unique practices. Although some cultural expressions may seem unusual to others, they hold deep meaning and should be respected. Culture is also preserved through art, artifacts, and oral traditions.

Folklore are traditional stories that consist of the traditions, beliefs and cultures of people passed from generation to generation around the world. Today, folklore is not only passed down by elders but is also used by teachers as an instructional tool in schools.

Integrating folklore in kindergarten classrooms plays an important role in educating the young generation as it preserves cultural traditions and values (Kholmurodova, 2024). Teachers use different strategies to insert folklore not only to keep learners actively engaged, but also to support their overall learning. Teachers use various strategies, such as storytelling, songs, drawings, and media, to engage learners effectively. Among these methods, storytelling is especially effective in kindergarten education because it captures the attention and imagination of young children.

Each country has its own unique culture, and stories reflect this—often showing its history. Folklore reflects a country's history and cultural identity and helps children understand what is right and wrong (Tineh, Rorintulus, & Wuntu, 2023). In the same way, (Flores, Abat, Duran, Galboy, & Ong, 2025) demonstrated that developmentally appropriate and context-based instructional materials significantly improved the learning outcomes of daycare students, highlighting the importance of using age-appropriate resources in early childhood education. This is supported by local research showing that well-planned and context-sensitive early childhood programs contribute to children's cognitive, language, and social development (Ancheta & Fabrigas, Evaluative Analysis of Children in the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Program, 2025)Exposure to meaningful cultural stories supports moral development and values formation. Students who join culture and arts activities do better in school and in other areas of life. Taking part in music, dance, and

visual arts helps improve their school grades, reading skills, creative thinking, problem-solving, flexibility, and teamwork. (Unesco, 2024).

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In South Africa, a study named "Exploring the Role of Teaching Using Folklore in Developing Grade R Learners' Mother Tongue" showed that using stories like folktales, myths, legends, praise poems, and riddles in class helps children improve how they speak and understand their home language. Folklore also makes learning more meaningful, helps children feel proud of their culture, and provides opportunities to speak and listen actively (Mzimela, 2016). Similarly, in Indonesia, local folklore was found to enhance students' reading comprehension and cultural awareness, as familiar stories allowed learners to connect with the material more deeply and develop interest in their own culture (Soplantila, 2024).

In the Philippines, folklore represents the diverse cultures and beliefs of over 17 million indigenous peoples, who make up 110 ethnolinguistic groups (Santos, 2022). Philippine folklore, including myths, legends, folktales, folk ballads, riddles, and proverbs, plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity and values. Despite this, modern technology and foreign literature have reduced children's exposure to traditional stories, putting cultural knowledge at risk (Eslit, 2011). The Department of Education supports culturally relevant teaching materials through DepEd Order No.21, s.2019 and No. 42, s.2017, emphasizing locally produced resources and strategies that reflect leaners' cultural and linguistic ( (DepEd, 2019); (DepEd, 2017).

In connection with that, the Provincial Government of La Union conducted a reading program called La Union BASAnihan for 702 learners from the 20 selected elementary/ integrated schools last March 2024. This helps young learners to improve in reading while also teaching them about the province's culture and history (Obillo, 2024). However, research on integrating Philippine folklore in kindergarten education is still limited. Most programs focus on elementary learners, leaving a gap in early childhood education, despite evidence that introducing folklore early supports cultural pride and cognitive development (Sugue & Reyes, 2022) .

## Framework

This study is grounded on three theories: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Contextual Theory of Folklore, and Sociocultural Theory, which support the benefits of integrating Philippine folklore in kindergarten education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching emphasizes including and respecting students' cultural backgrounds to make learning meaningful. It views cultural differences as strengths, allowing students to use prior knowledge from their culture to learn new concepts (Will & Najarro, 2022). This theory supports using familiar folklore to engage learners, enhance understanding, and build cultural pride.

In addition to this, Contextual Theory of Folklore emphasizes that the meaning of the story depends on its delivery, audience, setting, and purpose (Ben- Amos, 1993). In kindergarten, this guides teachers to present folklore effectively, ensuring children understand the lessons while staying actively engaged.

Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky highlights that cognitive development occurs through social interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers, parents, or peers. Folklore integration aligns with this theory by providing culturally rich content that develops children's thinking, encourages questions, and promotes social interaction as they retell stories (Hoose, 2020).

# METHODS

## Research Design

The researchers used phenomenological research design. Phenomenological research design is a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding and describing individuals lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences (Bliss, 2016). It aimed to explore how different kindergarten teachers in selected public schools in La Union integrate Philippine folklore into their teaching, the types of Philippine folklore used, perceived educational, challenges faced, and supports needed.

## Settings and Participants

The study was conducted in ten selected public schools in San Fernando City, La Union. Ten kindergarten

teachers were selected using criterion sampling base on these criteria: (1) currently teaching in kindergarten, (2) integrating Philippine folklore in their teaching, and (3) willingness to participate in the study.

### Instrument

This study utilized a semi-structured interview which is composed of both structured and unstructured questions (Wilson, 2014). The interview questions were validated by three experts: one early childhood teacher, one principal, and one faculty professor from an early childhood education program and pilot tested by five kindergarten teachers.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase method, was used: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Ahmed, et al., 2025).

### Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to the DMMMSU Research Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. The researchers we're given a certificate from the DMMMSU Research Ethics Committee as well as a code was given that serves as proof that the study has undergone ethical review. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured through anonymization and secure storage of data, and participants could withdraw at any time (Bell & Bryman, 2006).

## RESULTS

These results showed that kindergarten teachers integrate Philippine folklore in teaching young learners through the following approaches: (1) Integration Across Learning Areas, (2) Multimodal Teaching, (3) Theme-Based Teaching, and (4) Use of Varied Materials. Integration across learning areas refers to the application of Philippine folklore across different subject to make learning meaningful and culturally relevant. As one participant shared, *"I integrate it in Language, Values, Arts, Music, Mathematics, and Science because it naturally connects to children's learning experience"*. This finding is consistent with local studies of (Miravalles, 2025) and (Galigao, 2023) which highlight folklore as an effective cross-curricular tool, and aligns with international research emphasizing culturally grounded instruction for holistic learning (Suleymanova, 2025).

Multimodal teaching refers to the use of varied strategies such as storytelling, songs, games, arts, and audio-visual materials. One teacher stated, "I do not use storytelling only; I combine it with songs, arts, games, and film viewing. This practice reflects similarities with international studies that highlight multimodal instruction as effective in sustaining engagement and enhancing cognitive development (MUHARRIR, 2025), while local studies emphasize its role in strengthening cultural identity through indigenous content. Moreover, this aligns with the study of (Ong, 2025) emphasizing the importance of social presence in learning environments, where multimedia and interactive strategies enhance engagement and learning satisfaction. Theme-based teaching involves aligning folklore lessons with classroom themes to ensure relevance and coherence, whereas the use of varied materials refers to employing storybooks, puppets, visuals, and digital media to support comprehension and engagement.

The common types of Philippine folklore used include: (1) Fables, (2) Legends, (3) Folksongs, (4) Riddles, (5) Folktales, and (6) Myths. Teachers integrate these forms to address different learning goals. Fables teach moral lessons through relatable characters, while legends explain cultural origins. Folk songs engage learners through music, riddles promote critical thinking, folktales share traditional stories, and myths explain beliefs natural events. As one teacher noted, *"I commonly use fables and folktales because it develops imagination and helps children understand moral lessons that they will carry, while learning about culture and history"*. This finding

is supported by (Kusuma & Nurzaman, 2024) wherein it highlights the significance of folktales in instilling moral values, develop strong cultural identity, and develop empathy in young learners.

The findings further revealed that the educational value of integrating Philippine folklore in early childhood education includes the development of (1) Cognitive Skills, (2) Moral Values, and (3) Cultural Identity. Cognitive skills involve enhanced thinking, memory, and problem-solving abilities. Moral values are developed as children learn positive behaviors through culturally meaningful stories. Cultural identity supports children's understanding and appreciation of their own culture. As expressed by one participant, "*Folklore helps children understand Filipino values and tradition at an early age*". This supports the local study of (Ancheta & Ochoco, 2024) which shows that using local content in the curriculum provides more inclusive and engaging learning experience that exercises the cultural identity, and is corroborated by (Kusuma & Nurzaman, 2024) who highlight that folktales instill moral values, develop cultural identity, and develop empathy in young learners.

Despite these benefits, teachers encountered challenges such as (1) Selecting Materials, (2) Time Constraints, and (3) Lack of Technical Support. Teachers reported difficulty accessing the age-appropriate and updated materials, noting that some stories use complex or outdated language. One teacher explained, ""*In using Philippine folklore in my lessons, I sometimes face a few challenges. One of these is the lack of materials that are suitable for my pupils' age and understanding. Some stories use deep or old Filipino words, so I have to simplify them for my learners*". These challenges are also reflected in international studies (Laksana, et al., 2025) while a local study of (Flores, Abat, Duran, Galboy, & Ong, 2025) reveled that using developmentally appropriate and context-based approaches, such as discovery learning through Eco Explorer, significantly enhances the skills of daycare learners, showing that learning is more effective when strategies and materials match the learners' level and context.

Lastly, the results revealed that teachers need the following support to effectively integrate Philippine Folklore: (1) Professional Development, (2) Materials, (3) Technological Support, and (4) Elder's Cultural Support. Professional development through training and seminars enhances teachers' storytelling and instructional skills. Access to appropriate materials and technological support like stable internet connection, enables effective lesson delivery. The need for localized and developmentally appropriate material is supported by (Orine, et al., 2024) and (Ong & Ancheta, 2024), who found that materials designed according to learners; context and abilities improve understanding and engagement. Moreover, the involvement of local elders in sharing traditional stories provides authentic cultural experiences and supports cultural preservation.

## DISCUSSION

The findings support Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of culture and social interaction in children's cognitive development. Engaging in meaningful cultural activities, such as storytelling with Philippine Folklore, helps children develop higher order thinking skills. The findings illustrate that the use of storytelling in a strategy in understanding experience which is in line with Narrative Theory, wherein narratives help individuals make sense of time, change, and social interactions (Narrative, 2025).

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory is also relevant, highlighting that children learn in different ways and benefit from teaching that matches their learning preferences. This underscores the importance of multimodal approaches, including storytelling, music, and games, to make learning more effective and meaningful. This supports (Ong D. J., 2024), who emphasized that instructional designs integrating music, arts, and movement are essential in addressing learners' developmental tasks, reinforcing the effectiveness of folklore-based and arts-integrated instruction. Bruner's Constructivist Theory further provides a basis for theme-based teaching, as connecting new information to children's prior knowledge helps them construct understanding and retain lessons. Finally, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development in the Concrete Operational Stage shows that children learn best when they can see or manipulate objects, supporting the use of visual and interactive materials alongside folklore integration.

The discussion highlights that integrating Philippine Folklore in kindergarten education does not only help the young learners to exercise the cultural identity. Along with it, it also makes learning fun and engaging while

making sure that they can learn different moral values that they can easily apply. To add on, integrating Philippine Folklore in learning also helps to develop several factors such as language skills, cognitive skills, and more.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the given findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. The integration of Philippine folklore across learning areas through multimodal, theme-based teaching and the use of varied materials demonstrates that folklore is an effective instructional approach that supports holistic development among kindergarten learners.
2. The use of different types of Philippine folklore, including fables, legends, folktales, myths, folksongs, and riddles, indicates that culturally relevant materials enhance learner engagement and facilitate language development, moral formation, and cultural understanding.
3. The perceived educational value of integrating Philippine folklore highlights its significant role in developing learners' cognitive skills, moral values, and cultural identity, emphasizing the importance of strengthening its inclusion in early childhood education.
4. The challenges encountered by teachers, such as difficulty in selecting age-appropriate materials, time constraints, and lack of technical support, suggest that effective folklore integration is influenced by the availability of resources and institutional support.
5. The identified need for professional development, instructional materials, elder's cultural support, and technological support implies that equipping teachers with adequate training and resources is essential for sustaining meaningful and effective folklore-based instruction.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Kindergarten teachers may continue integrating Philippine folklore across learning areas by applying multimodal and theme-based strategies and utilizing varied instructional materials to enhance holistic learning among young learners.
2. Schools may encourage the consistent use of different forms of Philippine folklore, such as fables, legends, folktales, myths, folksongs, and riddles, to strengthen learner engagement, language development, moral formation, and cultural understanding.
3. School administrators may address the challenges faced by teachers by allocating sufficient time for lesson preparation and supporting the selection of age-appropriate and culturally accurate folklore materials.
4. Educational institutions may provide continuous professional development programs focused on storytelling skills, culturally responsive teaching, and effective integration of Philippine folklore in kindergarten instruction.
5. Schools and local education offices may ensure the availability of culturally relevant instructional materials and technological resources to support effective and innovative folklore-based teaching. Additionally, having a partnership with the local elders is essential as they can share firsthand stories and cultural knowledge.
6. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the integration of Philippine folklore in kindergarten classrooms from other perspectives, such as students, parents, or school administrators, as this study focused solely on teachers' perceptions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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