

CURRENT ISSUES IN DEVELOPING A READING CULTURE IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article analyzes the theoretical and practical foundations of developing a reading culture in preschool educational institutions. It highlights the pedagogical opportunities for fostering preschool children's interest in books and developing their speech, thinking, imagination, and moral qualities through children's literature. Furthermore, the study scientifically substantiates the role of modern educational technologies, digital tools, the family reading environment, and collaboration between preschool teachers and parents in promoting a reading culture. Based on international experience and recent educational reforms in Uzbekistan, practical recommendations are proposed for further improving the reading culture within the preschool education system.

Keywords: preschool education, reading culture, children's literature, literary works, speech development, family reading, digital education, preschool teacher, parent–teacher cooperation, school readiness

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and rapidly advancing information technologies, raising a well-rounded younger generation has become one of the highest priorities of state policy. As one of the key factors driving social development, the enhancement of human capital places significant responsibility on the education system, particularly on preschool education. This is because the foundation of a child's intellectual, moral, and aesthetic development is established between the ages of 3 and 7.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has implemented comprehensive reforms aimed at improving the preschool education system, expanding access to quality education, introducing modern pedagogical technologies, and promoting a reading culture. Special attention has been given to fostering children's love of books, developing regular reading habits, and strengthening moral education through children's literature, which has become one of the priority areas of national educational policy.

Books are among the most important tools for enriching children's thinking, developing language skills, and expanding imagination and creativity. Research conducted by psychologists and educational scholars demonstrates that reading to children regularly enriches their vocabulary, improves communication skills, strengthens emotional intelligence, and significantly enhances their readiness for formal schooling.

Therefore, cultivating a reading culture from the preschool years is considered one of the most pressing tasks of modern education.

As digital technologies become increasingly integrated into everyday life, maintaining and strengthening children's interest in books has become a significant challenge. Although smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices easily capture children's attention, they cannot fully replace printed books. Consequently, modern pedagogical approaches emphasize combining traditional reading practices with innovative methods, organizing interactive reading activities, and promoting family reading traditions.

The aim of this article is to examine the theoretical foundations of developing a reading culture in preschool educational institutions, analyze the existing challenges, ...to examine the theoretical foundations of developing a reading culture in preschool educational institutions, analyze the existing challenges, explore international experience, and develop practical recommendations based on modern pedagogical approaches.

Reading culture refers to an individual's appreciation of books, the development of a regular reading habit, the ability to understand the content of what is read, draw meaningful life lessons from it, and continuously enrich their knowledge and worldview. In educational science, reading culture encompasses not only reading skills but also the ability to select appropriate books, analyze their content, reflect critically on what has been read, and apply acquired knowledge in practical situations.

In the preschool education system, the concept of reading culture extends far beyond teaching children to recognize letters. At this stage, the primary objective is to cultivate a love of books, foster an interest in reading, and develop attentive listening skills. Fairy tales, stories, and poems read expressively by preschool teachers enrich children's imagination, language development, and emotional well-being.

Recent studies indicate that reading to children for 15–20 minutes each day significantly expands their vocabulary, enhances logical thinking, and strengthens memory. Therefore, introducing children to books should begin at an early age.

The main components of a reading culture include:

- interest in books and a positive attitude toward reading;
- attentive listening to literary works;
- analyzing and evaluating literary characters;
- retelling the events of a story in one's own words;
- developing habits of handling books carefully and using them appropriately.

These competencies provide a solid foundation for children's future academic success.

Psychological and Developmental Characteristics of Preschool Children

The preschool period is one of the most critical stages of human development. According to psychologists, the brain develops most rapidly between the ages of 3 and 7. During this period, children's speech, memory, attention, imagination, and thinking skills develop intensively. Therefore, the literature selected for preschool children should be appropriate to their age and individual developmental characteristics.

Children Aged 3–4

At this age, children are attracted to short fairy tales, repetitive sentences, and colorful illustrations. Pictures in books are often more important to them than the written text itself. When preschool teachers read with expressive intonation, facial expressions, and gestures, children are able to maintain their attention for a longer period.

Children Aged 4–5

At this stage, children begin to understand cause-and-effect relationships. They become more capable of evaluating story characters, remembering the sequence of events, and asking questions about what they have heard.

Children Aged 5–6

During this period, children's vocabulary expands considerably. They are able to listen to more complex stories, retell events in their own words, and begin to analyze the actions and behavior of literary characters.

Children Aged 6–7

At the school readiness stage, children develop a growing interest in exploring books independently, recognizing letters, and reading short texts. It is during this period that the first stable foundations of a reading culture are established.

Therefore, when selecting books for preschool children, educators and parents should consider not only the child's age but also their interests, psychological development, and individual abilities.

Pedagogical Foundations for Developing a Reading Culture in Preschool Education

Developing a reading culture in preschool educational institutions requires a systematic pedagogical approach. This process is most effective when it is carried out through close cooperation among preschool teachers, parents, and educational institutions.

A preschool teacher is not only a source of knowledge but also a person who inspires children to love books. When reading activities are organized in an engaging and interactive way, children develop positive motivation toward reading and books.

The following pedagogical methods have proven to be effective in practice:

- reading fairy tales and stories with expressive intonation;
- discussing story events based on illustrations;
- role-based reading activities;

- dramatization and storytelling performances;
- Using interactive methods such as "Question and Answer" and "What Would You Do If You Were the Character?";
- establishing a reading corner in the classroom;
- organizing a weekly "Best Book of the Week" project.

These methods contribute not only to children's language development but also to the enhancement of their creativity, communication skills, and critical thinking.

In addition, creating a supportive reading environment in preschool educational institutions is essential. It is recommended that each classroom include a reading corner equipped with age-appropriate storybooks, fairy tales, children's encyclopedias, and illustrated books. Such an environment encourages children to develop the habit of choosing books and reading during their free time.

The Role of Modern Pedagogical Culture Technologies in Developing a Reading Culture in Preschool Education

A child's attitude toward books is first shaped within the family. If parents read regularly, children naturally adopt this habit. Therefore, family reading should be considered an integral part of educational activities in preschool education.

Parents can use the following simple yet effective methods to encourage a love of reading:

- read to their child for 15–20 minutes every day;
- discuss the characters and events in books;
- take their child to bookstores or libraries;
- create a small bookshelf or reading corner at home;
- give books as gifts on birthdays and special occasions.

In cooperation with parents, preschool teachers can organize activities such as "Family Reading Week," "The Most Active Reading Family," "Fairy Tale Evening," and "Let's Read Together." Such activities help foster a reading culture not only among children but also among parents.

International Experience and Best Practices

Developed countries place great emphasis on fostering a reading culture among preschool children.

Finland:

In Finland, every preschool has a children's library, and teachers read literary works to children every day. In addition, Family Reading programs are regularly organized in cooperation with parents to strengthen children's reading habits from an early age.

Japan:

In Japan, age-appropriate short stories, traditional folk tales, and picture books play a central role in preschool education. Reading is widely used as a means of developing important values such as discipline, respect, and responsibility.

Singapore:

In Singapore, reading is regarded as one of the primary tools for language development in preschool education programs. Interactive reading, role-playing activities, and storytelling techniques are widely implemented to improve children's language, imagination, and communication skills.

These international experiences demonstrate that developing a reading culture is not solely the responsibility of educational institutions but rather the result of coordinated efforts among families, society, and the government.

Priority Directions for Promoting a Reading Culture in Uzbekistan

In recent years, Uzbekistan has implemented significant reforms aimed at improving the preschool education system, expanding access to quality education, and promoting reading culture.

Systematic efforts are being made to provide preschool educational institutions with modern children's literature, enrich library collections, develop digital educational resources, and enhance the professional qualifications of preschool teachers.

In the future, greater attention should be given to the following priorities:

- establishing modern children's libraries in every preschool educational institution;
- increasing the publication and availability of national children's literature;
- organizing reading-related training programs for parents;
- developing high-quality audiobooks and electronic books for children;
- creating assessment criteria for evaluating children's reading culture.

These measures will play a significant role in fostering children's love of books, promoting reading habits, and preparing them effectively for formal schooling.

The theoretical analysis conducted within the framework of this study indicates that the preschool years represent the most appropriate and effective stage for developing a reading culture. During this period, children's speech, thinking, memory, imagination, and social-emotional development progress rapidly. Therefore, regular interaction with books has a direct and lasting impact on their comprehensive development.

My analysis indicates that children with a well-developed reading culture demonstrate the following positive outcomes:

- significant improvement in vocabulary and oral language skills;
- stronger independent thinking and logical reasoning abilities;
- better listening skills and concentration;
- enhanced creativity and imagination;
- stronger moral values and positive social behavior;

-increased psychological and intellectual readiness for school.

However, several challenges still exist today:

-children spending excessive amounts of time in front of screens;

-the weakening of the tradition of family reading;

-an insufficient supply of modern children's literature in some preschool educational institutions;

-inconsistent use of innovative reading methods by preschool teachers.

To address these challenges, stronger cooperation among the government, educational institutions, families, and local communities is essential.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the scientific literature reviewed and the best practices examined in this article, I propose the following recommendations:

1. Establish a modern collection of age-appropriate children's books in every preschool educational institution.
2. Establish comfortable and attractive Reading Corners in every preschool classroom.
3. Implement daily 15–20-minute expressive reading sessions.
4. Regularly organize family-oriented projects such as "Family Reading Day," "Fairy Tale Night," and "One Book – One Family" with the active participation of parents.
5. Organize professional development seminars for preschool teachers on promoting reading culture.
6. Use not only national children's literature but also outstanding works of world children's literature.
7. Make balanced use of electronic books and audiobooks while maintaining printed books as the primary learning resource.
8. Utilize artificial intelligence (AI) and modern information technologies to recommend age-appropriate books and organize interactive reading activities.
9. Strengthen cooperation among preschool teachers, parents, and libraries to promote children's reading culture.
10. Recommend books according to each child's interests, developmental level, and individual characteristics.

Conclusion

Developing a reading culture in preschool education is one of the key factors in raising a well-rounded and intellectually capable generation. Books have a direct influence on children's intellectual, linguistic, aesthetic, and moral development. Therefore, cultivating reading habits and a reading culture should begin during the preschool years.

Today, modern pedagogical technologies, interactive teaching methods, and digital tools provide broad opportunities for promoting children's reading culture. However, these technologies should not replace traditional book reading; instead, they should be used as complementary tools that enhance children's reading experiences.

Developing a reading culture requires close cooperation among preschool teachers, parents, and society. In particular, establishing family reading traditions provides a strong foundation for children's future academic success.

In the future, further development of modern children's libraries in preschool educational institutions, enrichment of national children's literature, continuous professional development of preschool teachers, and the wider implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies will contribute significantly to strengthening the reading culture among preschool children.

In conclusion, fostering a reading culture is not only essential for improving the quality of education but also serves as a key factor in promoting the spiritual and intellectual development of society.

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