

Measures For Preserving The Mother Tongue For Ethnic Minority Students Through Experiential Activities In Primary Schools In The Northern Mountainous Region Of Vietnam To Meet The Requirements Of Educational Innovation In General Education

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Abstract:

This Study Is Based On Theoretical Foundations And Practical Experiences To Propose Measures For Preserving The Mother Tongue For Primary School Students In The Northern Mountainous Region Of Vietnam Through Experiential Activities. The Study Suggests Five Measures For Preserving The Mother Tongue For Ethnic Minority Students Through Experiential Activities In Primary Schools In The Northern Mountainous Region Of Vietnam. These Measures Are As Follows: Proposing A List Of Educational Topics For Preserving The Mother Tongue For Primary School Students Through Experiential Activities; Developing A Process For Organizing Experiential Educational Activities For Preserving The Mother Tongue For Ethnic Minority Students In Primary Schools; Diversifying Methods Of Preserving The Mother Tongue For Students Through Experiential Activities In Primary Schools; Establishing Criteria For Evaluating The Activities Of Preserving The Mother Tongue For Students Through Experiential Activities In Primary Schools; And Providing Language Training For Primary School Teachers In Ethnic Minority Areas To Meet The Requirements Of Teaching The Mother Tongue To Ethnic Minority Students.

These Measures Are In Line With The Orientation In The 2018 General Education Program And The Current Situation Of Preserving The Mother Tongue For Primary School Students.

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I. Introduction

Vietnam is a country consisting of 54 ethnic groups living together, in which the majority is the Kinh ethnic group (accounting for about 85.8% of the population), while the remaining 53 ethnic minority groups have about 14.2 million people (making up 14.7% of the population) (Results of the 2019 Population Census). With the goal of building a unified and diverse culture within the community of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, with a priority on developing the cultures of small ethnic groups with very few people, the Party and the State affirm: "Ethnic groups have the right to use their spoken and written languages, preserve their ethnic identity, and promote their good customs, practices, traditions, and cultures" (Constitution, 2013). Preserving the languages of ethnic minority groups and providing education in ethnic minority languages is a common issue in all countries around the world. The preservation of ethnic languages goes beyond the importance of language as a tool for communication and thinking; it also involves preserving the cultural characteristics and unique identity of each ethnic group. Therefore, the preservation of the mother tongue for ethnic groups is highly valued in countries worldwide.

In the 2018 General Education Program, the language of ethnic minority groups is one of the elective subjects. The program specifies that teaching the languages of ethnic minority groups is a major policy of the Party and the State to preserve and promote the linguistic and cultural values of ethnic minority groups. The State focuses on investing in and prioritizing the teaching of ethnic minority languages, especially for ethnic minority groups with a small population. It also encourages and creates favorable conditions for mainstream students who are ethnic minorities and have the desire and need to learn and complete the curriculum for ethnic minority languages that have a writing system (2018 General Education Program).

The following article addresses measures for preserving the mother tongue for ethnic minority students through experiential activities in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam to meet the requirements of educational innovation in general education.

II. Literature review

There are numerous research studies on the preservation of cultural values of ethnic minority groups, including language preservation. In a study on Linguistics and Literature at a university in South Africa, author Busani Maseko asserts: The existence of any language depends on its usage, and speakers need to embrace bilingualism as a benefit and a resource (Busani Maseko, 2016). Therefore, it is encouraged to develop high-quality teaching materials in the languages of ethnic minority groups at all levels of education. Education in ethnic minority languages is an important way to maintain the status and further develop those languages (Van Dongera, 2017).

In Vietnam, the preservation of the languages of ethnic minority groups has always been a matter of concern for the Party and the State. The Prime Minister has issued Decision No. 1719/QĐ-TTg on October 14, 2021, approving the National Target Program for Socio-economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the period 2021-2030. Within this program, Project No. 5 "Development of Education and Training to Enhance the Quality of Human Resources" addresses the task of nurturing the languages of ethnic minority groups for district and commune-level officials, as well as personnel in the police and military forces stationed in the areas inhabited by ethnic minority communities and in the mountainous regions.

Author Tran Tri Doi (2003) conducted a study on "The Current Situation of Language Education in the Ethnic Minority Regions of Three Northern Provinces in Vietnam - Recommendations and Solutions." The author particularly emphasized the need for ethnic minorities to have access to education in their mother tongue. The author affirmed that establishing a language education policy that aligns with the objective reality of the ethnic minority communities in the mountainous regions of Northern Vietnam will serve as the foundation for preserving and promoting the cultural identity values, including the mother tongue.

The issue of preserving and developing the culture and language of ethnic minority groups is a significant and complex matter both in theory and practice. Analyzing the conditions for preserving and developing the language and culture of ethnic minority groups in the Viet Bac region, several solutions and recommendations have been proposed to conserve and develop the language and culture of ethnic minority groups (Nguyen Van Loc, 2014). In the study "Preserving Ethnic Languages for Ethnic Minority Students in the Northern Mountainous Region," author Ha Thi Kim Linh highlights the current communication situation using ethnic minority languages among students and the challenges in preserving ethnic minority languages for students (Ha Thi Kim Linh, 2016).

Language education in Vietnam's ethnic minority areas needs to preserve and develop the unique cultural characteristics of each ethnic minority group, including their mother tongues. This is a requirement for educational institutions in the current phase, in order to implement the ethnic policies of the Party and the State (Ta Van Thong, 2019).

In the context where the languages of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam are at risk of gradually disappearing, the current situation of language education for these groups is very limited. The survival level of many ethnic minority groups such as Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer, Nung, Dao, San Chay, etc. is assessed as "weak," which poses urgent requirements for language preservation (Ta Van Thong, Ta Quang Hung, 2021).

The current situation of education for the preservation and promotion of cultural values and ethnic identity among students from ethnic minority groups, in the context of international integration, has revealed the following issues: There are significant difficulties and limitations in the work of education for the preservation and promotion of cultural values and ethnic identity in both boarding schools and semi-boarding schools for ethnic minority students. This is due to the diverse ethnic backgrounds of students, each with their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Many teachers have limited knowledge about the cultural values of ethnic minority groups and have little knowledge of their languages. There are also limitations in terms of educational materials and curriculum. Moreover, in many localities, the importance of preserving the cultural values of ethnic minority groups through education has not been fully recognized, leading to further difficulties and limitations in this work (Vu Thi Thanh Minh, 2021).

The model of organizing the teaching of languages of ethnic minority groups for the officials and civil servants in ethnic minority and mountainous areas is also mentioned as an important solution for preserving the languages of ethnic minority groups (Hoang Thi Xuan, 2022).

III. Methodology

This research employs a theoretical research method to analyze theoretical issues regarding the preservation of mother tongue education for ethnic minority students, based on research findings on the current situation of mother tongue education for ethnic minority students and theoretical considerations of experiential

activity organization. From these, it proposes a list of educational topics for preserving mother tongue education for ethnic minority students in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam through experiential activities.

IV. Research result

Suggest a list of educational topics to preserve mother tongue education for students in primary through experiential activities.

This measure aims to create favorable conditions for primary school teachers to be more explicit in the design and organization of experiential activities to educate and preserve the mother tongue for ethnic minority students. The development of a specific list of thematic experiential activities will serve as an important handbook to guide and empower teachers in designing and organizing experiential activities with the goal of educating and preserving the mother tongue for ethnic minority students.

The construction of a list of educational themes for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students through experiential activities needs to follow a rigorous process based on thorough research of the requirements in the 2018 General Education Program. This process should be based on theoretical foundations and practical considerations in order to produce materials that can serve as a handbook for teachers working in minority areas. The process can be carried out in the following steps:

- Step 1: Determine the basis for proposing educational themes for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students through experiential activities. This is done by referring to the guiding documents of the Party and the State on the education of ethnic minority cultural identity in general and the preservation of the mother tongue of ethnic minority groups in particular. Also, consider the orientation and content of the 2018 General Education Program, experiential activities, and career guidance. From there, identify the advantageous experiential themes in the preservation of the mother tongue for ethnic minority students in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

- Step 2: Propose a list of educational themes for experiential activities that preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

- Step 3: Organize workshops and seminars to gather consultative opinions from experts, primary school teachers, and management officials regarding the list of themes.

- Step 4: Conduct pilot testing of using the list of educational themes for experiential activities that preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools.

- Step 5: Refine the list of themes and provide guidelines for teachers on how to use the list effectively.

- Step 6: Officially release the list of themes and conduct training for teachers working in ethnic minority areas.

The list of experiential themes should contain content that highlights the advantages of preserving the mother tongue, closely relates to the lives of the ethnic minority communities and students, and creates a natural environment for students to use their mother tongue in activities.

Based on our research, we suggest the following list of themes: (i) I love my village; (ii) I love my ethnic language; (iii) Festival in my village; (iv) Cultural corner of my village; (v) Uncle Ho with ethnic minorities; (vi) The history of my homeland; (vii) My family and I; (viii) Me as a tour guide; (ix) My ethnic language and the profession I choose

The above themes all contain content that is closely related to village life, daily activities, and encompass the cultural aspects, customs, and traditions of the ethnic minority communities. Engaging in experiential activities based on these themes not only contributes to the development of students' qualities and abilities according to the 2018 General Education Program but also provides optimal conditions for creating an environment that preserves and nurtures their mother tongue.

Developing a process for organizing experiential activities in the education and preservation of mother tongue for ethnic minority students in primary schools

When organizing experiential activities, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the process to ensure that the activities are organized properly and align with the established direction in the chosen theme. This measure aims to help teachers develop the skills to design and organize effective experiential activities for the education and preservation of the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools.

Based on our research, we propose the following process:

Stage 1: Activity Design

Step 1: Determine the experiential theme: The experiential theme should be in line with the overall plan of the school, suitable for the characteristics of primary school students, relatable to them, and carry educational values and meanings.

Step 2: Establish objectives: The educational objectives should be explicitly stated in the design of experiential educational activities. The objective of preserving the mother tongue through experiential activities

can be the main objective or a dual objective within the activity content, depending on the educational ideas, theme, and design of the organizer.

Step 3: Develop experiential content: After clarifying the objectives, teachers proceed to develop the content of the experiential educational activities. This step significantly influences the quality of the activity design. The more engaging, diverse, and imbued with human values the content is, the more successful the educational activities will be.

Step 4: Determine methods, resources, and forms of organizing activities: Based on the activity content, teachers determine the methods, resources, and forms of organizing the activities. In other words, they identify the appropriate activity approach that aligns with the objectives, content, and practical conditions of the school.

Step 5: Identify participants: Based on the activity content, teachers need to clearly identify the participants involved in the experiential activities. For educational activities, the main participants should be students and teachers in the school. However, depending on the content, we can expand the participant scope to achieve optimal results for the program. This will create excitement and provide more interesting experiences for the students.

Step 6: Construct the activity organization script: After determining the specific content and participants, teachers need to construct a detailed script for the activity following the managed process. Each activity should convey specific educational messages, including the message of preserving the mother tongue, throughout its progression. The more detailed and comprehensive the script is, covering various scenarios, the more successful the organization of experiential activities will be.

Step 7: Finalize the design and prepare for activity organization: A completed design of experiential activities for preserving the mother tongue among ethnic minority students in primary schools will assist teachers in effectively carrying out their educational duties.

Stage 2: Implementation of experiential educational activities for preserving the mother tongue among ethnic minority students

After finalizing the Plan and scenario for the experiential activities, teachers will proceed with the implementation according to the design developed in Stage 1.

The implementation of experiential activities requires the participation of educational forces within the school, as well as the consensus, proactiveness, active support from colleagues, management levels, teachers, students, and other educational personnel.

The organization of the experiential activities also takes into account both objective and subjective factors such as weather conditions, infrastructure, financial resources, and other influencing factors. Based on these factors, adjustments can be made to certain aspects or details of the activities to ensure their appropriateness while still achieving educational objectives.

Stage 3: Evaluation of the outcomes of implementing the experiential activities for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools.

This is an essential step that helps teachers clearly understand the achieved results compared to the objectives of organizing educational activities, providing a basis for adjustments in the development and organization of future educational activities. Evaluating the outcomes of implementing experiential activities for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools is the assessment of the achievements that the program brings to the students. It evaluates the progress of students in emotions, thoughts, reasoning, and their awareness of preserving and conserving their mother tongue after participating in these experiential activities. Evaluation can take various forms, such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, and even long-term monitoring of students' psychological expressions. The results of implementing experiential educational activities are considered to be of good quality when the activities are organized according to the plan, ensuring the objectives, students are interested and actively participate, and they gain positive values in terms of awareness and thinking in preserving their mother tongue.

Diversifying the methods of preserving the mother tongue for students through experiential activities in primary schools.

The characteristics of experiential educational activities lie in the special emphasis on creating an active environment, which can be a natural environment or an artificial environment, a simulated environment. Diversifying educational methods, in other words, diverse teaching methods and organizational forms, will establish rich, captivating educational environments that engage students in experiential educational activities.

To create a favorable environment for students to experience and preserve their mother tongue, diversifying educational methods is an effective measure to enhance the quality of mother tongue preservation education for students. Diversification is manifested in the use of various methods in each activity or the

combination of different methods within a single activity. Here are some educational methods that can be used to educate and preserve the mother tongue for students through experiential activities in primary schools.

(i) *Exploration method*: This is a way to organize activities for students to explore, research, and discover new, good, beautiful, and interesting things in their mother tongue. Normally, at the primary school age, without the guidance of teachers, students would never ask themselves exploratory questions like: Why can I speak my mother tongue? When did my mother tongue exist? What is interesting and different about my mother tongue compared to the languages of other ethnic groups? What are the benefits of practicing my mother tongue for myself?

We identify "Field trip method" and "Camping method" as two exploration methods that are advantageous and can be used to preserve the mother tongue for students from ethnic minority groups in primary schools through experiential activities.

(ii) *Devotion method*: The devotion method is a way for students to demonstrate their dedication, talent, and intelligence by contributing their physical and intellectual resources to the values of the school in general and the preservation of their mother tongue in particular. This method fosters the maturity of students and showcases their material and spiritual contributions.

The basic forms of devotion include participating in voluntary labor activities, humanitarian programs, public service, and advocacy. These forms can encompass activities aimed at promoting the cultural beauty of ethnic minorities, educating students about the love and appreciation of their mother tongue, and creating an environment for students to speak their mother tongue and promote their ethnic culture.

(iii) *The experiential and interactive method*: The experiential and interactive method is highly effective in organizing experiences, through which students can exchange, interact, and comfortably express their creative ideas in topics aimed at preserving their mother tongue. Without specific activities and encouragement, students would rarely sing, dance, perform in plays, or create skits on their own to deepen their understanding and thinking about the values of their mother tongue. However, under the guidance and educational organization of teachers, students will have the opportunity to maximize their creative abilities and experience ideas through sharing, forums, role-playing, and games. Through this method, cultural beauty can be conveyed and students can be educated about the cultural richness of their ethnic community through melodies and music (such as the Tày's Then singing, the Nùng's Sli singing, the Mông's Khèn dance), nurturing their love for their mother tongue. It creates an environment for students to speak their mother tongue and promote the beauty of their ethnic culture.

(iiii) *Research method*: It is a method of experiential learning that requires students to have the highest ability to work independently and creatively. With the theme of preserving the cultural identity of ethnic groups and conserving their mother tongue, students can be organized to undertake small projects, such as researching the vocabulary of their mother tongue. They can also engage in creative art projects by composing folk songs in their native language. This method requires consistent support, assistance, and encouragement from teachers and adults. For elementary school students, who may not yet have high levels of perseverance and attention, pursuing a long-term scientific or artistic project can be a significant challenge. However, if successful, it will greatly contribute to their exceptional personal growth.

The division of experiential learning methods is relative in nature. During the organization process, educators can utilize multiple methods simultaneously or combine different methods to achieve optimal pedagogical results. Depending on the physical infrastructure, circumstances, time, participant demographics, and the capacities of each school, the selection and coordination of methods should be done in the most reasonable and effective manner. Diversifying the methods is about diversifying the development opportunities for each student, including the development of their abilities to preserve their mother tongue.

Building criteria for evaluating educational activities that preserve the mother tongue for elementary school students through experiential learning.

Evaluation is an important stage in the organization of educational activities. Evaluation should adhere to general guidelines for evaluation in the 2018 general education curriculum. The purpose of evaluation is to collect accurate, timely, and valuable information about the extent to which the program requirements are met. It assesses students' progress during and after experiential learning phases. Evaluation needs to clearly define goals for students' progress during the activities in order to shape and develop their qualities and abilities. In this study, the evaluation focuses on assessing students' awareness of preserving and utilizing their mother tongue after each experiential program. Evaluating the effectiveness of educational activities that preserve the mother tongue for students from ethnic minority backgrounds involves assessing both students' progress and the quality and effectiveness of the educational activities themselves. Therefore, constructing objective evaluation criteria that align with the orientation requirements of the experiential program will help teachers proactively and adjust the organization of educational activities that preserve the mother tongue to achieve better quality outcomes.

+ *Regarding student evaluation:*

We have developed a scale with 12 evaluation criteria to assess the level of progress students make in using their mother tongue after experiential activities. The evaluation is conducted using observation sheets filled out by teachers who are proficient in the language and have been trained in observation techniques based on the 12 basic criteria. We assess students' progress in using the mother tongue primarily by analyzing the following basic criteria related to communication and language usage: Criterion 1: Basic communication; Criterion 2: Understanding simple language; Criterion 3: Expanded vocabulary; Criterion 4: Grammar; Criterion 5: Pronunciation; Criterion 6: Language thinking; Criterion 7: Confidence in communication; Criterion 8: Accuracy in conveying meaning; Criterion 9: Creativity in language usage; Criterion 10: Expression of emotions; Criterion 11: Self-learning and language development; Criterion 12: Active participation in the language environment.

+ *Regarding the evaluation of the quality of organizing mother tongue preservation educational activities through experiential activities:*

- Evaluating the level of achieving the objectives of each mother tongue education program through the organization of experiential activities. The objectives are reflected in the qualities and competencies that students need to achieve as targeted by each program.

- Evaluating the coherence in the structure of each experiential program implemented by teachers to educate and preserve the mother tongue for students. This structure should clearly demonstrate the general stages of an experiential activity, which are: Recognition - Exploration; Understanding - Expansion; Practice - Application; Evaluation - Development.

- Evaluating the practicality, richness, attractiveness, and engagement of students in educational experiential activities.

- Evaluating the capacity to organize mother tongue preservation educational activities through experiential activities by teachers, such as the ability to design activities, organize activities, coordinate with educational forces within the activity organization...

- Evaluating the opportunities for further development of activities after each educational experiential activity.

+ *Regarding the evaluation method: It should be based on both qualitative and quantitative information.*

Qualitative evaluation is based on the observable changes and progress of students, reflected in their awareness, attitudes, behaviors, and how they interact with their mother tongue. Through this, the achievements in educating and preserving the mother tongue for students can be analyzed. Additionally, feedback from various educational stakeholders is also collected to provide an evaluation of the quality of organizing educational experiential activities.

Quantitative evaluation considers factors such as teacher observation records and the amount of time students participate in activities. It takes into account the number of mother tongue preservation educational activities conducted through the organization of experiential activities by the school. This allows for an evaluation of the students' progress in using and communicating in their mother tongue.

Training ethnic minority languages for primary school teachers in ethnic minority areas to meet the requirements of teaching mother tongue to ethnic minority students.

This measure aims to promote and provide opportunities for teachers working in ethnic minority areas to participate in training and development programs for ethnic minority languages. It enables them to proficiently use the ethnic minority languages of the community. This is an important requirement for teachers to help students preserve their mother tongue and easily organize experiential activities that focus on preserving the mother tongue. Proficient use of ethnic minority languages will enhance teachers' confidence and enable them to effectively organize educational activities in general, and experiential education activities specifically, for ethnic minority students in schools.

Training and developing teachers to teach ethnic minority languages is an important task of educational institutions, under the guidance and direction of the Ministry of Education and Training. The quality of teacher training and development directly affects the quality of education. To improve the quality of education, training and development of the teaching staff is a crucial issue and a top priority for educational institutions and teacher training schools. In this measure, we address the issue of training and developing teachers in teaching ethnic minority languages in ethnic minority areas.

Educational practice has shown that many teachers who work in ethnic minority areas have little or no knowledge of the ethnic minority languages, which poses a significant barrier to their teaching and educational work. Not knowing the language of the community creates difficulties for teachers in understanding the culture and communicating with the community members. Understanding the thoughts, situations, family backgrounds, and psychological characteristics of ethnic minority students and their parents is challenging, which greatly affects the quality of teaching and education. Therefore, training and development programs that enable teachers to proficiently use ethnic minority languages should be considered a priority in the plans and strategies for the development of education in ethnic minority areas.

We propose the following process for regular training in ethnic minority languages for primary school teachers:

Step 1: Annually, the Departments of Education and Training collaborate with teacher training and development institutions to develop a plan for training in ethnic minority languages for primary school teachers working in ethnic minority areas. This includes assessing the training needs and reviewing the human resources of primary school teachers in these areas to establish a comprehensive training plan.

Step 2: Collaborate with universities and teacher training institutions to develop a regular training program in ethnic minority languages that is suitable for the specific regions and ethnic minority groups where teachers are working.

Step 3: Organize regular training sessions (during summer or at suitable times during the academic year).

Step 4: Conduct assessments and evaluations of the training in ethnic minority languages for primary school teachers to ensure that it meets the requirements for organizing educational activities.

By implementing this process, we aim to provide continuous training and support for primary school teachers in ethnic minority languages. This will enhance their ability to effectively teach and preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority students, leading to improved educational outcomes in these communities.

V. Conclusion

Preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students through experiential activities in primary schools in the mountainous regions of northern Vietnam depends on various factors such as time, space, location, and means of organization; the psychological characteristics and experience of students; the ability of teachers to organize activities through experiential learning; the collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, the community; instructional materials, etc. Therefore, when organizing these activities, teachers need to clearly define the objectives, content, methods, forms, organizational procedures, and evaluation methods. The proposed measures are interrelated, mutually supportive, and aim to strengthen the support for teachers, providing guidance in the process of preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools, closely tied to local realities, and enhancing opportunities for experiential learning in diverse physical environments with confidence, comfort, and proactivity.

Therefore, to achieve high effectiveness in preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools through experiential activities in the mountainous regions of northern Vietnam, it is necessary to have consistency in curriculum development and implementation; coordination among management levels, schools, and primary school teachers; regular communication with families, parents, and the active participation of the community in education and protection of students, especially ethnic minority students in mountainous areas.

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