

Research Article

Learning Individual Knowledge of the Southern Khmers in Vietnam and Applying to Teaching of Folk Literature

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Abstract: Indigenous knowledge is a cultural element of the ethnic group in general and the Khmer ethnic group in particular, contributing to the diversity of ethnic culture. Although it no longer plays an important role as in traditional society, the indigenous knowledge of the Khmer people is still latent as cultural elements, still holding an important position in the present life of the Khmer in Vietnam, such as in social stability, community cohesion, educational development, etc. In this article, the author summarizes the characteristics of Khmer folklore; Indigenous knowledge theory, applied to build a system of indigenous knowledge characteristics of Khmer people. From there, the article proposes the process and some forms of teaching Khmer folklore based on the exploitation of indigenous knowledge of the Khmer in the context of profoundly renewing education in Vietnam today.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge, Khmer people, Khmer folklore, teaching.

INTRODUCTION

- (1) The Khmer have a long presence in Vietnam and live mainly in the South. Although the economic, cultural and social development achievements of the Khmer people in recent years are remarkable, the Khmer people also face challenges in terms of economy, society, culture and identity, environmental resources. schools and policies of ethnic communities. These challenges are more acutely realized when the Khmer people's living areas are mainly in remote areas, socio-economic development conditions are still difficult, production life depends on agriculture. profession, most of them have low educational level, etc.
- (2) The Khmer have a comprehensive, rich and diverse culture. In the Khmer culture, festivals, religions, beliefs, etc. strongly influence the worldview, human outlook, customs, rituals and lifestyle of the Khmer people, especially involved in management traditional society. With a vibrant and profound cultural life, it is imperative that in the groups of solutions proposed to intervene to help the Khmer ethnic people develop more and more in all aspects, including education, special attention must be paid. specific characteristics of culture and community psychology of the Khmer people.
- (3) According to the analysis of the World Bank, about 47.0% of ethnic minority people say that their ethnicity is backward (compared to 16% of Kinh people), 12.0% of ethnic minorities think that their ethnicity is backward. ethnic minorities are lazy (this rate is 0% for Kinh people), and 74.0% of ethnic minorities consider their educational attainment to be low (this rate is 52.0% for Kinh people) (Hoang Cam - Pham Quynh Phuong. 2012, p.79). This self-prejudice has lost the strength and confidence of ethnic minorities, including the Khmer. The question is what has affected the confidence, participation and voice of the Khmer from within the perception of the Khmer. Properly recognizing the source of indigenous knowledge and promoting its positive values in the current situation will be one of the effective solutions for the stability and development of the Khmer people's life.
- (4) According to (Ha, N. T. T. 2008), starting from the 60s-70s of the 20th century, the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and the role of indigenous peoples were reconsidered. Interest and sympathy for local knowledge and traditional knowledge is increasing. Indigenous knowledge and the application of this theory to the conservation and development of resources, especially among ethnic minorities, have been interested and studied by many researchers and tested by many agencies. Experience.

(5) Teaching Khmer folklore from indigenous knowledge is the actual use of the surrounding environment, and the application of knowledge systems accumulated, maintained and developed through generations in the interaction with the natural environment in organizing activities to teach Khmer folklore. In this article, the author proposes to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the design of teaching activities of Khmer folklore. This comes from cultural characteristics, from learners' need to understand and practice with the Khmer tradition. This is considered a new approach, associated with local practices and characteristics of world folklore.

We realize the application of this research theory to contribute to describing the indigenous knowledge of the Khmer people in Vietnam and identify the role and propose solutions to apply it in the training of human resources Khmer is needed.

OBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS:

❖ Research Subjects:

The object of the research is a treasure of indigenous knowledge related to the management of society, education, natural resource behavior and traditional culture of the Khmer people in Vietnam to apply to teaching literature. folklore of the Khmer people.

❖ Research Methods:

Retrospective interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions for target groups: knowledgeable representatives of households (over 60 years old, 30 samples); managers and teachers of Khmer folklore (10 samples) to collect information about indigenous knowledge, its values and changes during the development of the Khmer community in Vietnam and current situation, proposed teaching Khmer folklore.

Participatory observation method was implemented in the study sites: Tri Ton district, An Giang province; Tra Cu district, Tra Vinh province; Vinh Chau town, Soc Trang province.

Documentary method: We study relevant cultural, literary, pedagogical, and sociological documents to serve as a theoretical basis for the research. At the same time, the author also uses Khmer cultural and literary documents to compare and supplement data for research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Indigenous Knowledge Theory:

The term "Indigenous Knowledge" was first used in a publication by Robert Chambers in 1979. It was later used by Brokensha & D. M. Warren in 1980 and continues to evolve to this day. A number of research

works by foreign scholars have mentioned indigenous knowledge and its role in development in contemporary society. D. M. Warren defines: "Indigenous knowledge is knowledge and empirical systems developed over generations in a particular field to a specific culture". According to Charles F. Keyes, the traditional knowledge system is considered as empirical ideas, the way people develop ideas, concepts and attitudes to perform daily activities (Recited by (Tien, N. D. 2014), p.101).

As defined by the International Committee of Scientific Societies, local knowledge is: "A cumulative body of knowledge, understanding, practices and expressions maintained and developed by Humans have a long history of interacting with the natural environment. These subtle interpretations, interpretations, and meanings are part of a cultural complex that includes language, names and classification systems, resource usage habits, rituals, beliefs, and practices. Traditional knowledge forms the basis of local decision-making about many fundamental aspects of daily life: hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture and animal husbandry, standards obtaining food, conserving and distributing food, locating, collecting and storing water, combating disease and casualties, dealing with weather and meteorological phenomena, producing agricultural tools and clothing, building and maintaining housing, navigating and navigating land and sea, managing the ecological relationships of society and nature, adapting to environments and societies, and more." (quoted from (McElwee, P. 2007), p.2). From this definition, it can be seen that local knowledge for ethnic minority groups plays a particularly important role.

In the program "Indigenous knowledge for development" in Africa in 1998, the World Bank officially defined indigenous knowledge as local knowledge, which is the basic foundation for the establishment of locally relevant decisions across all areas of contemporary life including the management of natural resources, nutrition, food, health, education and in social activities and community. Indigenous knowledge also provides strategies for solving problems facing local communities (World Bank. 1998).

In the study Indigenous environmental knowledge and its transformations, two anthropologists (Ellen, R & Harris, H. 2003) listed 10 most important and common characteristics of indigenous knowledge. These characteristics are of particular interest to us to identify the indigenous knowledge system and its specific manifestations in the Khmer's life.

In Vietnam, ethnic cultural diversity is a prominent feature, expressed not only at the level of ethnic groups but also at the level of local ethnic groups. The socio-cultural system of each ethnic group in general and the Khmer ethnic group in Vietnam in particular has been

formed and developed appropriately in the context of social, economic, political history and special natural conditions enemy.

Indigenous knowledge research is inseparable from understanding ethnic folklore: "Indigenous knowledge research cannot be separated from understanding ethnic folklore. Folklore represents the adaptation of people to the natural environment, society and the people themselves. The study of culture in general and folklore in particular in order to understand and study behavior and lifestyle in order to contribute to creating appropriate behavior and behavior" (Institute of Folklore. 1989).

(Ty, H. X. & Cuc, L. T. 1989) in Indigenous knowledge of upland people in agriculture and natural resource management relied on Warren's concept of indigenous technical knowledge to limit the scope of the discussion. including: knowledge on cultivation and animal husbandry; knowledge of forest management and community resources; knowledge of nutrition and human health; knowledge about community organization and pass on experience to children...

Along with the approach of ecological anthropology and intercultural exchange theory to study the local knowledge of ethnic minorities in the use and protection of natural resources, there are the following studies: Local knowledge in using and protecting natural resources of the San Diu people in Tuyen Quang province (2016) by (Ha, N. T. T. 2008), Folk knowledge in forest exploitation and protection of the Black Ha Nhi people in Bat Xat district , Lao Cai province (2017) by Duong Tuan Nghia, Indigenous knowledge of the Mnong people in Lak district in the management and use of natural resources (2019) by Le Thi Thanh Xuan,...

In the lecture, Indigenous knowledge of ethnic minorities - viewed from development resources (The case of the Southeast region) (2015), Ngo Van Le examines the theory of indigenous knowledge to affirm the role of indigenous knowledge. it in social management, in the economic life of ethnic minorities in the Southeast. Indigenous knowledge along with social resources contribute to the strength for the development of ethnic groups. Indigenous knowledge has changed, but it is necessary to consider which elements are still relevant and which are not suitable for planning conservation policies, considering it as a resource for social development of ethnic minorities. numbers in the current context.

Characteristics of Indigenous Knowledge of the Khmer People:

From the above indigenous knowledge research theories, the author applies to identify the characteristics of indigenous knowledge of the Khmer

people and its specific manifestations in the life of the Khmer people in Vietnam. Specific features:

- Indigenous knowledge is transmitted orally or passed on through imitation and expression.
- Indigenous knowledge is the result of practical engagement in daily life and is regularly reinforced by empirical, "trial and error" and careful experiments.
- "Tradition" is a soft concept and transitions with no end point; and "negotiation" is a central concept.
- Although indigenous knowledge is focused on specific individuals and may have some degree of coherence in ritual or other symbolic structure, its distribution is always unsystematic; it does not exist completely in a certain place and in a certain individual. In fact, it comes not from an individual but from practices and interactions in which people are involved.
- Indigenous knowledge is holistic, an integral part of broader cultural traditions.

Reflecting on this feature with the formation and development of the Khmer people will give us specific generalizations about the indigenous knowledge of the Khmer people in all aspects, opening up the possibility of researching new issues about the Khmer people. in Vietnam. Specifically:

▪ ***Indigenous knowledge of the Khmer on land use:***

The Khmer attach great importance to land. In their attitude to the land, the Khmer consider land as a place to live, a means of production, a homeland and have sacred feelings for the land. The Khmer have a habit of settling down stably on their land, are less willing to move and expand to exploit the land. With the tradition of relying on, making use of rather than dealing with nature, the Khmer choose land to build houses and produce in a respectful attitude. In the mind, the Khmer believe that the land always has hidden supernatural forces underneath. These forces will be the gods who will patronize and protect people if people respect and trust them; On the other hand, if people have an irreverent attitude towards the earth, those supernatural forces will no longer patronize but will cause harm to people. Therefore, whenever there are actions related to the land, the Khmer people always have to beg and pray to be protected and protected by these forces.

▪ ***Indigenous knowledge of Khmer people about water use:***

To the Khmer, water not only brings benefits, but water is also the source of all life in the world. Water has the meaning of purity, has the function of purifying, praying for blessings, appearing in many folk and religious ceremonies of the Khmer. Khmer people are inclined to make use of and

adapt to water and at the same time respond flexibly to water in the conditions of their residence. It can be said that folk knowledge about water conservation partly reflects the process of finding water sources which are saved by folk stories; to step up in-field irrigation, dredging canals, pumping water into fields and digging wells; with excess water, the Khmer will pump water out of the fields, clear the flood (do not build dams to prevent water); carefully cover the edges of the fields to retain water; ...

▪ ***Indigenous knowledge of Khmer people about livestock:***

Livestock in indigenous ethnic groups in general and Khmer in particular is not the main economic activity. The Khmer have a closed livestock industry in the area of Phum Soc and have not been properly invested since the beginning. The Khmer are somewhat passive to nature, mainly taking advantage of the available natural environment, raising small families or fishing in the field in canals, ponds or riverbanks. In particular, the Khmer people raise and grow crops mainly to take advantage of traction, transport objects and people, food sources in eating and drinking, etc. to serve the family's life and agricultural production. Squirrel.

Overview of Khmer Folklore Characteristics and the Application of Indigenous Knowledge in Teaching Khmer Folklore:

• ***Overview of Khmer folklore:***

For Khmer folklore, because life is associated with Theravada Buddhism, the human values of this religion are always present, creating the unique values of folklore. As the role of Khmer folk artists is "specialized" in Khmer monks as in smot performance, or as a "living archive" of the nation's folklore treasures; who has an important voice in transmitting and advising people to preserve and promote the national cultural capital.

Besides religious elements, Khmer folklore also paints a vivid and colorful picture of Khmer land and people. In particular, with artistic characteristics and crystallization of folklore values, folklore works have reproduced the natural scenery of the typical tropical region, bearing the imprint of wet rice civilization. The natural images in Khmer folklore have helped us have a more general view of the living situation of the people here. At the time when the southern land was still wild, people had to struggle constantly to be able to adapt to

all natural conditions. Therefore, the image of the vast fields of water, the wild flowers growing around,... have left an unforgettable impression in their memory. Therefore, the presence of natural elements in Khmer folklore reflects the process of human adaptation and integration, and also reveals man's love for nature. In other words, nature is both an object for humans to conquer but also a companion, helping to bond community feelings.

When being taught in schools, folklore in general and Khmer folklore in particular encountered many obstacles because of the psychology of reception; generation gap, conception; program duration;... Now, in the context of comprehensive reform of education, the challenges and difficulties in applying teaching methods to develop learners' capacity for this subject are increasingly recognized. poses more urgency. Currently, Khmer folklore is taught in programs such as: Khmer language textbooks are currently deployed from books 1 to 7 in boarding schools for ethnic minorities that teach Khmer language; Local Literature Programs at the lower and upper secondary levels in the Southwestern provinces; Undergraduate Khmer Literature Pedagogical Training Program at Tra Vinh University.

• ***Proposing to organize activities to teach Khmer folklore based on indigenous knowledge:***

To organize the teaching of Khmer folklore on the basis of exploiting the indigenous knowledge of the ethnic group, we identify and analyze the actual local situation; Research and propose a group of problems of exploiting indigenous knowledge in accordance with the characteristics of learners and the environment and educational conditions in schools.

Local problem groups often include:

- 1) Natural environment;
- 2) Customs - practices, beliefs - religion, festivals and cultural exchange;
- 3) Economic activities, social issues, education,...;
- 4) Poverty, climate change, etc

These groups of problems are expressed in states: history, status quo, desire and effort to achieve better in the future. However, they are only relative; when used in specific local conditions, in different groups of learners and at different times, appropriate adjustments will be made. Here, the author encourages lecturers to use teaching methods such as research projects, interviews, field visits, etc. with guided self-study activities and unguided self-study. Specifically:

Problem groups	Specific problems	Local problem status	Status in Khmer folklore works	Issues of interest to research/learn
1. Natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depletion of natural resources and water security issues • Soil quality deterioration and threat to agriculture • <i>Increased drought, saltwater intrusion and the impact of natural disasters</i> • <i>Increasing waste, environmental pollution and livestock and farming problems</i> • <i>Forest quality continues to decline and the protection function is lost</i> 		
2. Group of issues about customs - practices, beliefs - religion, festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional values and changes in customs - practices, beliefs - religions, festivals of the Khmer people • The role of customs - practices, beliefs - religions, festivals of the Khmer in tourism development • Consciousness of implementing a civilized lifestyle at monuments and landscapes • Environmental pollution in monuments, landscapes and festivals • <i>Acts of violation, falsification or destruction and loss of antiques and artifacts at the monument</i> 		
3. Group of cross-cultural exchange issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian cultural exchange • Western culture exchange • Southeast Asian cultural exchange 		
4. Economic activities, social issues, education, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural production, tradition and transformation • The educational role of temple schools (Khmer Theravada Buddhism) • The role of Khmer Theravada Buddhism, monks in solving social problems 		

In addition, when organizing, teachers can be flexible, asking learners to solve each content before synthesizing it into the above table. As when guiding learners to learn and discuss to identify states in Khmer folklore works on the basis of comparison with specific local problem states, teachers can organize Learners present in the form of quizzes, mind maps, etc.

Regarding the process of teaching Khmer folklore towards indigenous knowledge, we propose the following:

➤ **Step 1. Identify the problem:**

- ✓ The teacher/student proposes the problem;

- ✓ Teachers/students develop key research questions and reference sources.
- **Step 2. Solve the problem:**
 - ✓ Organize classes to study the problem: divide into groups/or identify individual learners, assign problems, agree on time regulations, assign, present, evaluate;
 - ✓ Groups/individuals study documents; discuss and agree on the content, layout and form of presentation, report,...; field trips, meeting/interviewing artisans, experts, local people;...
- **Step 3. Organize the report and assessment:**
 - ✓ Groups/individuals present research results (in class by means of direct reports, pre-recorded videos,...);
 - ✓ Discuss and give suggestions to the whole class;
 - ✓ Student groups/individuals present, receive and respond to information;
 - ✓ Teachers comment and evaluate

The concretization of the above steps depends a lot on the capacity and positivity of both learners and teachers; existing learning and teaching conditions (documents, equipment, ...). In specific activities, teachers can flexibly add and remove some steps, and at the same time have impacts and timely support for students to complete tasks.

CONCLUSION:

Indigenous knowledge of ethnic minorities in general and the Khmer in particular is what they have accumulated in the process of productive work and stable life in specific cultural spaces. In particular, the appropriate elements still promote its role and strength in the stability and development of the Khmer ethnic group in the current context.

Applying ethnic indigenous knowledge in teaching folklore, a cultural element of the ethnic group, is a new approach that is very suitable for the current Vietnamese educational environment and views. It is the use of contexts, documents, sources of traditional cultural values, vivid real-life contacts in the locality, etc. to create classroom situations or extra-curricular activities, projects, student research. Through these activities, learners have the opportunity to reinforce classroom lessons, learn more practical lessons, and

apply learned knowledge to solve local real-life problems. practice skills of analysis, synthesis, etc., and especially form behaviors and lifestyles for the community and country, towards a noble international spirit.

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