

Solutions to Preserve Ethnic Cultural Identity for Khmer Students in Ethnic Boarding Schools in An Giang Province At Present

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SUMMARY

Along with quality, the issue of preserving ethnic cultural identity in educational activities plays an important role in raising awareness for Khmer ethnic students in An Giang province in preserving and promoting their ethnic cultural identity. Based on the above meaning, the article analyzes the current situation of education on preserving ethnic cultural identity for Khmer ethnic students in ethnic boarding schools in An Giang province. On that basis, the author proposes a number of solutions to improve the effectiveness of education on preserving and promoting the value of ethnic cultural identity in ethnic boarding schools, contributing to perfecting the personality of students as well as preserving and promoting the precious traditional cultural capital of the Vietnamese people in general and the Khmer people in particular in An Giang province.

Keywords: solution; preserving cultural identity; Khmer ethnic students; ethnic boarding school; An Giang province.

INTRODUCTION

Preserving culture for ethnic minorities is a key task that the Party and State are concerned with. Cultural preservation not only contributes to the revival and promotion, but also creates unique characteristics of each ethnic group. This is a regular and urgent issue that has been raised.

In order to limit the decline and contribute to preserving the fine traditional cultural capital of ethnic minorities, over the past many years, the Party and State have directed localities - where ethnic minorities live - to study the current situation and implement many methods to preserve and develop the cultural identity of ethnic minorities.

The culture of ethnic minorities in general and the Khmer people in particular is a component part, creating the richness, diversity and rich identity of Vietnamese culture. The culture of ethnic minorities is closely linked to the natural conditions of the region, living customs, farming methods, and social development. The Khmer people live mainly in the Mekong Delta, concentrated in the provinces of An Giang, Vinh Long, and Can Tho. Currently, the traditional culture of the Khmer people is strongly impacted and influenced from the outside, so there is a need for synchronous solutions to preserve and develop it.

With a consistent viewpoint, the Party and the State always affirm that culture in general, and ethnic minority culture in particular, is an important part and a driving force for development because: "Culture... is the soul of the nation, expressing the identity of the nation. As long as culture exists, the nation exists" (Trong, N.P, 2021). Resolution of the 5th Central Conference, Session VIII "On building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity" identifies culture as the spiritual foundation of society, both the goal and the driving force for socio-economic development; Vietnamese culture is a unified and diverse culture in the community of Vietnamese ethnic groups. Resolution of the 9th Central Conference, Session XI "On building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development" continues to affirm the viewpoint of building culture to truly become a solid spiritual foundation of society, an important endogenous strength to ensure sustainable development and firmly protect the Fatherland for the goal of a rich people, a strong country, democracy, equality and civilization; building an advanced Vietnamese

culture, imbued with national identity, unified in the diversity of the Vietnamese ethnic community, with national, humanistic, democratic and scientific characteristics. The Resolution also emphasizes the task of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, especially their languages, writings, costumes and traditional festivals; proactively seizing development opportunities, overcoming challenges to preserve and perfect the national cultural identity.

The documents of the 13th National Party Congress emphasize the development viewpoint: “Arouse the aspiration to develop a prosperous and happy country, the will to be self-reliant and promote the strength of the great national unity bloc... taking the cultural values and Vietnamese people as the foundation, the important endogenous strength to ensure sustainable development” (Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi, 2021, vol. I, pp. 215 - 216), “Overcome the gap in development level and cultural life between regions, areas, and social strata, paying special attention to remote areas, areas of ethnic minorities... Pay attention to and create conditions for the development of culture and arts of ethnic minorities” (Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi, 2021, vol. 1, p. 144-145).

In order to thoroughly grasp the above spirit, previously, the Education and Training sector of Kien Giang and An Giang provinces had many solutions to preserve the national cultural identity for Khmer students in the boarding school system (schools exclusively for ethnic minority students, mainly Khmer). Currently, on the basis of merging Kien Giang and An Giang provinces into An Giang province (The National Assembly has voted to pass the Resolution on the arrangement of provincial-level administrative units in 2025, effective from June 12, 2025. Accordingly, Vietnam officially has 34 provincial-level administrative units, including 28 provinces and 6 cities. The Resolution also resolved that local authorities formed after the arrangement will operate from July 1, 2025), the Education and Training sector continues to pay close attention to preserving the national cultural identity for Khmer students in the boarding school system.

Boarding schools for ethnic minorities are specialized schools of general nature. The mission of the school is to educate students about the ethnic policies of the Party and State of Vietnam, the cultural identity and fine traditions of the ethnic groups of Vietnam and the awareness of participating in serving the socio-economic development in disadvantaged areas after graduation.

Research Overview

There have been many research works on preserving ethnic cultural identity for ethnic minority students in the boarding school system, such as: Ha Dung, “Many solutions to preserve and promote ethnic identity in schools”, baolaichau.vn on October 31, 2013; Ngo Xuan, “Preserving cultural identity for ethnic minority students”, dantoctongiao.vn on April 19, 2024; Gia An, Lu Phu, “Ethnic minority students join hands to preserve traditional cultural identity”, congly.vn on May 17, 2024; Duong Lieu, “Preserving and promoting ethnic cultural identity in schools”, baohoabinh.com.vn on October 24, 2024; Linh Trang, “Preserving cultural identity in schools”, baosonla.vn on February 26, 2025...

In general, the above research works directly or indirectly refer to the work of education to preserve and promote the cultural identity values of ethnic minorities in many different aspects, but have not comprehensively researched the education to preserve and promote the cultural identity values of ethnic minorities for Khmer students in ethnic boarding schools. Specifically, these works mainly refer to the general issue of education to preserve and promote the cultural identity values of ethnic minorities for ethnic minority students living in mountainous areas, and at the same time state the Party's policy on education in general and education for ethnic minorities in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in particular. However, there are currently very few works and articles discussing solutions to preserve the ethnic cultural identity for Khmer students in the ethnic boarding school system in the Mekong Delta provinces in general, and An Giang province in particular. Therefore, studying this issue systematically and comprehensively is meaningful and necessary in the current context of international integration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To conduct this article, the author uses qualitative research methods combined with quantitative research methods. In which, the research inherits secondary documents from the works of authors interested in Khmer ethnic education; uses statistical data on ethnic education through each school year of the Ministry of Education and Training, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province (old), Kien Giang province (old)... At the same time, implements the ethnographic field method, directly observing the work of education to preserve Khmer traditional culture at boarding schools in the area.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Ethnic boarding schools with ethnic cultural identity for Khmer students.

Currently, according to the school year summary report of the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province, by the end of the 2024 - 2025 school year, "An Giang province has 02 boarding high schools, 07 boarding middle schools with a scale of 3,286 students". Thanks to the system of ethnic boarding schools, the rate of mobilizing Khmer students of school age to attend class has increased, the number of students dropping out of school has decreased. The quality of education of schools is increasingly improved, moral education, life skills education, ethnic culture, organization of care for material and spiritual life and health care for Khmer students... are promoted. Boarding schools for ethnic minorities organize the implementation of the school year program and education plan seriously, actively innovate teaching methods, and conduct appropriate assessment and evaluation. The quality of education is increasingly guaranteed, the results of good and fair moral classification are over 90% every year; the rate of good and excellent students increases, the number of weak students and dropouts gradually decreases. With a "multicultural" environment, with the majority of students being Khmer (along with Chinese, Cham, etc. students), educating them about cultural traditions and cultural values is extremely favorable and this is an important path to help form and develop their personalities.

Education to preserve and preserve Khmer traditional culture at boarding schools for ethnic minorities in An Giang province is not only about imparting knowledge but also about nurturing love, pride, and awareness of cultural preservation in each student. Faced with the rapid changes of the technological age, bringing national culture into teaching helps the young generation deeply understand their roots, develop their personality, but still maintain their national identity.

Khmer ethnic cultural values are preserved in schools

Under the direction and guidance of the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province, and the attention and support of parents, in recent years, ethnic cultural education activities have been regularly organized by ethnic boarding schools in many diverse forms, aiming to preserve, maintain and promote the Khmer ethnic cultural identity in the area, creating a useful playground for students. Ethnic cultural education is implemented by schools in an open direction, harmoniously combining with information technology; taking advantage of and turning devices such as smartphones - an indispensable item of modern society, along with communication tools - into a bridge to bring cultural values closer to students, helping them confidently step into the future without forgetting their roots. Some initiatives and topics, such as: "Measures to improve the effectiveness of educating students to preserve and promote ethnic cultural identity at Kien Giang ethnic boarding high school" by author Chau Quynh Giao; thematic report: "Studying the characteristics of students at Kien Giang ethnic boarding high school to interact and educate them effectively to improve the quality of comprehensive education" by the Party Cell of Kien Giang ethnic boarding high school; thematic report: "Strengthening ethnic identity education at ethnic boarding high school" by the Party Cell of Kien Giang ethnic boarding high school,... have received positive responses from students. In addition, many schools have also built online learning platforms on Khmer ethnic culture. Through this platform, students can easily access documents, videos, and images about their ethnic cultural heritage and customs. Thanks to that, students not only learn but also exchange and discuss, creating a dynamic and creative learning community. In addition, some schools also integrate cultural education into extracurricular activities, organizing cultural creativity

competitions such as painting, speaking competitions, etc. to arouse creativity and passion for national culture in each student. These competitions are not only a playground for students to show their talents but also an opportunity to explore cultural values in their own way.

Solution

Creativity in ethnic cultural education

For Khmer students, ethnic cultural education is not only through books but also through integration and experience in the unique cultural space of the homeland through study clubs, ethnic cultural and art clubs, such as: “Khmer language club”, “folk dance club”, etc. Some schools are constantly creating and innovating methods of ethnic cultural education, turning traditional values into a source of inspiration and motivation for the younger generation. Specifically, extracurricular activities, flag-raising ceremonies at the beginning of the week are designed according to themes and topics, with a focus on the topic of cultural preservation. Through these activities, students will be introduced by teachers to the unique traditional cultural features of the Khmer people such as festivals, customs, costumes, cuisine, traditional occupations, etc. In addition, some schools also organize activities to experience traditional culture. From bamboo materials in “phum” and “soc”, students are guided to make daily household items such as tables, chairs, etc.

The Khmer people have many types of art, some of which are common and easy to perform, such as: community dance; “lullaby” and “a-day singing”, “five-tone music”... and there are many festivals every year such as: Chol Chnam Thmay (New Year celebration), Sene Dolta (ancestor worship ceremony), Ok Om Bok (flattened rice feeding ceremony), Um tuk festival (ngo boat racing), Bon kâm san srok festival (pray for peace)... However, there are still many students who do not fully understand the meaning of the festivals. Therefore, folk songs, folk tales, dances... are also chosen as the core activities in art exchange programs, competitions, and performances on festival days at schools. This is an opportunity for teachers and students to freely experience, cook traditional dishes themselves, display booths with rich products such as agricultural products, costumes ... of the Khmer people.

In addition to directing teaching according to the main curriculum, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province also noted that many schools integrate local education programs into each subject. For tangible culture, students are taught about the architecture of houses, traditional costumes of their ethnic groups; intangible culture is taught folk songs, folk games, ... Thanks to regular contact with cultural activities and through cultural activities, students understand and preserve the cultural identity of their ethnic groups. Therefore, students of ethnic boarding schools are comprehensively developed, becoming knowledgeable and cultured citizens.

Ethnic cultural education in ethnic boarding schools has made an important contribution to preserving and developing Khmer ethnic culture. At the same time, some schools also collect pictures of sculptures and patterns for students to understand, then coordinate with the abbots of Khmer pagodas in the area to organize for students to practice and experience the images in the pagoda such as statues of Buddha Shakyamuni, angels, dancers, dragons, snakes...

“Harmonious, friendly” cultural education

Some ethnic boarding schools have studied the characteristics of the Khmer people’s cultural life, selecting appropriate content to include in educating students about preserving their ethnic cultural identity. Through this, students will realize that the material and spiritual life of the Khmer people is that they are agricultural residents, with a lot of experience in the fields of rice cultivation, growing crops, raising livestock and poultry, and fishing with tools such as “fishing rods” and “nets”; “weaving mats”, “knitting”, making handicraft products from water hyacinth...

In the spirit of the Ministry of Education and Training’s directive “every day at school is a joy” in the educational environment, children are able to study and live together, so educating them on this cultural behavior will help them develop their personality comprehensively, at the same time this is also a method of

great significance in the collective environment, which is to create for them a spirit of autonomy, self-management, mutual love and affection for each other.

Bringing culture into schools.

One of the solutions to preserve and promote the cultural identity of ethnic groups that has been effectively implemented by ethnic boarding schools in recent times (the provincial high school for ethnic boarding, the Giong Rieng and Chau Thanh middle school for ethnic boarding, etc.) is to bring folk games, dances, folk songs, cultural customs, and traditional occupations into schools, through extracurricular activities to maintain and pass them on to the younger generation.

Some ethnic boarding schools (the provincial high school for ethnic boarding, the An Bien middle school for ethnic boarding, etc.) have mobilized and established clubs to preserve and promote the cultural identity of ethnic groups such as: performing arts, folk games, etc. In these cultural spaces, students are divided into groups to introduce their ethnic costumes and musical instruments. Through such lessons, students are prouder of traditional cultural values, more knowledgeable, and aware of preserving and promoting the good cultural values of the nation. It can be seen that the preservation of Khmer ethnic cultural identity in ethnic boarding schools in An Giang province has been promoted and integrated into educational activities for students. Up to now, many ethnic boarding schools (provincial ethnic boarding high schools, Go Quao ethnic boarding middle schools, etc.) have established clubs to preserve and promote ethnic cultural identity with more than 1,500 students participating. The remaining schools integrate cultural spaces in the “Community Corner” of the Library or in the classroom. On average, schools organize at least once a week of cultural and folk-art activities during flag-raising ceremonies at the beginning of the week, break-time activities, major holidays, and after-school educational activities. Managers, teachers, staff and 100% of students are Khmer ethnic people wearing their ethnic costumes on holidays, Tet, and flag-raising ceremonies at the beginning of the week...

DISCUSSION

The work of educating and preserving ethnic cultural identity in schools has long been of concern to the Party and the State, especially the recognition of the strong imprint in the spirit of the Resolution of the 5th Central Committee, Session VIII, with the goal of building an advanced culture imbued with ethnic cultural identity. To concretize that policy in student education, the Government issued Decree No. 05/2011/ND-CP, dated January 14, 2011 on ethnic work, which affirmed: “The languages, writings and fine cultural traditions of ethnic groups are included in the curriculum of general schools, boarding schools for ethnic minorities, semi-boarding schools for ethnic minorities, continuing education centers, community learning centers, vocational schools, professional secondary schools, colleges and universities in accordance with the ethnic minority areas”.

The political goal and mission of the ethnic boarding school is to “create a source of high-quality ethnic cadre training for the province to serve the cadre work in the homeland”, so in addition to training cultural knowledge, it also educates the national cultural identity, in which arousing pride in the national tradition and local history of the ethnic minority region is an important factor to help students develop love for their homeland.

To thoroughly grasp the above spirit, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province has implemented many solutions, including directing schools to develop annual implementation plans at schools, promoting so that artisans, people, and parents of students who understand the culture of ethnic groups can participate in cultural preservation activities at schools.

In addition, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province also directs schools to organize training for core staff, inviting folk artisans of the province to directly teach. In addition, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province also directed schools to build spaces to preserve ethnic culture to display ethnic cultural products; and as a venue for clubs and organizations to teach good traditional cultural values of the nation to Khmer students.

CONCLUSION

In the process of international integration, the exchange enriches the culture of each ethnic group, therefore, the traditional culture of the Khmer people needs to be preserved and developed. Therefore, some ethnic boarding schools in the province have the responsibility to educate students to be aware of preserving the national cultural identity, contributing to preserving the national cultural identity. Only then can the cultural identity of the Khmer people be preserved and maintained for a long time right from when students are still in school, contributing to creating cultural diversity of the Vietnamese ethnic community.

It can be affirmed that the Education sector of An Giang province has strongly implemented the activity of introducing traditional culture to Khmer students to preserve and promote the unique cultural identity in the localities. This approach has initially brought positive results, contributing to preserving and promoting the unique cultural identity in schools.

To promote and strengthen the movement of building and preserving cultural identity in schools, especially in the context of the innovation of the “2018 General Education Program” in the direction of developing the qualities and capacities of learners, the Department of Education and Training of An Giang province determined that the first necessary thing is to build a safe, healthy, friendly learning environment in an open direction; build a school culture closely linked to local culture; integrate and integrate education in preserving and promoting cultural identity in teaching subjects and educational activities effectively; promote teaching through heritage, effectively organize teaching and learning of local education.

Through education, material and spiritual values, practical experience, behavioral experience, lifestyle, language, customs, habits... of ethnic groups, including the Khmer people, are passed down and operated from generation to generation, contributing to the colorful cultural picture rich in Vietnamese identity.

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