



## Storytelling as a Teaching Method: Developing a Curriculum for Effective Implementation

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**Abstract:** The current study aimed to explore the use of storytelling as an instructional method and develop an effective curriculum for its implementation. The research followed a qualitative grounded theory method. The study encompassed all 578 preschool teachers who had experience using storytelling to teach textbooks. A purposive sampling method was employed, and data was collected through in-depth, unstructured interviews. The findings revealed that the causal conditions contributing to the effectiveness of the Persian book curriculum, with a storytelling focus, included eight core factors (emotional stimulation, enhancement of perceptual abilities, fostering critical thinking, academic diligence, seamless learning, moral development, semantic comprehension, identity reinforcement). Additionally, contextual conditions encompassed five key factors (teacher empowerment, parental involvement, provision of information technology, sharing of experiences, structural decentralization), while strategic conditions involved five critical factors (visualizing content using diverse storytelling mechanisms, adding an element of enjoyment to the content, enhancing communication with students, diversifying storytelling settings, striving for content comprehension). Furthermore, intervention conditions highlighted four selective factors (rigidity in storytelling, lack of engagement in storytelling, insufficient storytelling skills, limited resources), and outcome conditions encompassed two selective factors (emotional engagement and cognitive engagement). In conclusion, this research sheds light on the significance of storytelling as an instructional approach and offers insights into curriculum development for preschool education.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, teaching method, curriculum development, preschool education

## Introduction

Storytelling involves the art of conveying a narrative to one or more listeners using both voice and gestures. It differs from merely reading a story aloud or reciting a literary piece from memory, and it isn't akin to a theatrical performance. Instead, the storyteller actively engages the audience, collaboratively crafting the narrative with them (Schmoelz, 2018). Storytelling, deeply rooted in human history, finds its basis in evolutionary psychology, where it serves as a captivating window into our ancestral past. Our distant ancestors relied on storytelling as a crucial tool for survival and social cohesion. By sharing narratives of their experiences and encounters with the natural world, they not only passed down vital knowledge but also forged stronger bonds within their communities. The act of storytelling allowed early humans to convey essential information about the environment, the behavior of predators and prey, and the nuances of social interactions. This sharing of stories contributed to the

transmission of valuable skills and survival strategies across generations, giving those who mastered this art a significant advantage in the struggle for existence. Thus, the ability to create and engage with stories became ingrained in our cognitive architecture over millennia, shaping our psychology and connecting us to our evolutionary heritage ([Boyd, 2009](#); [Dunbar, 2014](#)).

The storyteller begins by conjuring mental images and, through vocal expressions and movements, recreates a sequence of these images. In its traditional form, storytelling establishes a direct and unmediated connection between the storyteller and the audience. Once this enchanting connection is established, the power of imagination comes into play, and the listener, guided by the storyteller's vivid imagery, embarks on a journey into another realm ([Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018](#)). On one hand, one of the oldest methods of linguistic communication is through storytelling and reading stories. This method can be used as an educational tool in developing language skills, especially in second language acquisition and for language learners of all ages. Studies have shown that in language education, storytelling is more effective than traditional teaching methods. One reason for this is the allure of stories and their entertaining nature for language learners ([Allan et al., 2018](#)). Additionally, as language and culture are intertwined, familiarity with a culture reflected in stories and tales can motivate learners not only to acquire the language but also to delve deeper into the culture and literature of that nation. Storytelling holds a prominent and valuable place in Islamic art ([Susman-Stillman et al., 2018](#)).

"Story" in the sense of news, event, narrative, and affair, is used in various contexts, and some believe it to be synonymous with "tale." There is no distinction between them. The Holy Quran, as a comprehensive and versatile work of art, has not neglected the mention of stories to attract and educate the audience. In addition to imparting moral lessons, other features of Quranic stories and narratives include refraining from frivolity and playfulness in narration, truthfulness and reality, and avoiding imagination and fantasies in storytelling. The choice of appropriate techniques and methods, such as illustrative methods, has made these features, techniques, and criteria present in Quranic stories ([Azadbar, 2015](#)). Storytelling is an oral narrative art in which the storyteller engages one or more listeners in their craft. For the development of children's language, literary skills, listening skills, and communication skills, stories are useful. With the advent of television and computers, many of us have stopped using our imaginations, while storytelling fuels the imagination ([Gulec & Durmus, 2015](#)).

On the other hand, one of the most ancient methods of linguistic communication is through storytelling and reading stories. This method can be used as an educational tool in developing language skills, especially in second language learning, and can be used for language learners of all ages. Studies show that in language education, storytelling is more effective than traditional teaching methods. One reason for this is the allure of stories and their entertaining nature for language learners ([Allan et al., 2018](#)).

Additionally, since the language and culture of each nation are interrelated, familiarity with the culture of a nation reflected in its stories and tales can motivate language learners not only to learn the language but also to become more acquainted with the culture and literature of that nation. Storytelling is one of the essential and effective Islamic arts ([Susman-Stillman et al., 2018](#)).

Nevertheless, there is some disagreement about the definition of this most universal human experience. Some define storytelling as the art of orally or textually transmitting a story by one person to one or more listeners, while others consider it as a broader art that includes elements of voice, movement, music, pictures, and more. Most modern cultures define storytelling as a person who tells or writes a story and then performs it as someone who weaves a tale. Until the 19th century, this term was primarily used in the first sense to describe storytellers in the East, Eastern Mediterranean countries, or North Africa ([Suki & Suki, 2017](#)).

Story and storytelling are familiar subjects to all humans across all ages and societies. Throughout their journeys, in times of sorrow and joy, in solitude and company, and even amidst the chaos of wars and life's crises, humans have been accompanied by stories. This is why stories are considered an integral part of human existence, dating back to the earliest days of life on Earth. Stories are not just conquerors of children's worlds; they also captivate adults when they listen to or read stories, just like children. During the moments of storytelling, adults find themselves immersed in the narrative, experiencing the simplicity and purity of childhood ([Javdan & Morovati, 2020](#); [Sarica & Usluel, 2016](#)).

In stories, the element of imagination holds significant power and influence. Many stories prominently feature imaginative elements. A child's imagination is nurtured through listening to and reading stories. It is sometimes observed that when a child recounts a story they have heard, they may add their twist or continue the narrative based on their own creativity. If this imagination is directed and encouraged, it can serve as a pathway for discovering a child's talents. Furthermore, when children listen to stories, they create and immerse themselves in the elements, settings, and events of the story, often casting themselves as the story's heroes. Thus, at the very least until the conclusion of the story, they are immersed in their imagination ([Soozandehfar, 2019](#); [Thang et al., 2014](#)).

By posing questions at the end of a story, the scope and depth of this imaginative and creative space can be expanded. Accompanied by a suitable melody, it further broadens the horizons and depths of imagination ([Ohler, 2013](#)).

To document this space, which serves as the foundation for nurturing children's talents and creativity, activities such as drawing for the story, creating suitable handicrafts related to the story, and performing the story can all be incorporated as artistic endeavors following the storytelling session ([Catala et al., 2017](#)).

Furthermore, as far as we know, no comprehensive research has been done on the causal conditions of the Persian curriculum model centered on storytelling, and only relatively close topics have been done in this field, and the majority of these studies emphasized that the story and storytelling curriculum can has a significant role in the curriculum and makes students more motivated and arouses in them the desire to study in formal and higher courses ([Alavi Langroody & Rajaei, 2017](#); [Bagheryan et al., 2020](#); [Dietz et al., 2021](#); [Doost mohammadi et al., 2017](#); [Goodarzy et al., 2014](#); [Lisenbee & Ford, 2018](#); [Roointan et al., 2022](#); [Soheili et al., 2019](#); [Soleimani & Akbari, 2013](#); [Stewart & Gachago, 2016](#)).

In the discourse concerning the significance and necessity of this study, it is crucial to acknowledge that family economics education has consistently been marginalized and relegated to a secondary position within the educational system, primarily due to its significant potential being overlooked. As a result, the primary objective of this research is to rectify this situation by shedding light on, validation, and enriching the status of family economics education within the national educational framework. The key focus is on the development of an optimal curriculum for family economics education at the intermediate level. This endeavor involves a comprehensive exploration of essential concepts and foundational insights related to curriculum definition and various models of curriculum design. The information presented thus far underscores the existence of both theoretical and practical challenges and limitations facing family economics education in our educational system. Consequently, this research sets out to address the question of how storytelling can serve as a potent pedagogical approach and how to craft a curriculum that ensures its effective implementation.

## Material and Methods

The research method used was qualitative, specifically a grounded theory approach. The research environment included all preschool teachers, totaling 578 individuals, who have attempted to teach textbooks using storytelling methods. Purposeful sampling was employed, assisted by the snowball sampling method (targeted sampling). The process began by identifying the first teacher with experience in teaching through storytelling. After interviewing the first participant, they introduced another teacher who used storytelling as their teaching method, and this process continued after each interview with a new teacher, until the data reached saturation and sufficiency. In this study, interviews were conducted with a total of 21 elementary school teachers before concluding.

To enrich the data, published articles from the past 20 years (2002-2022) regarding the advantages of storytelling in education and learning were also utilized. The data collection tool was in-depth, unstructured interviews. To assess content validity, the research findings were presented to three curriculum specialists, and their confirmation was obtained.

Regarding ethical considerations, the teachers were assured that this article has purely research purposes and that a brief summary of the results would be made available to them as a token of appreciation for their participation. Data analysis was performed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, which categorized and structured the data.

## Results

In the table 1, the codes extracted from interviews regarding Persian curriculum with storytelling emphasis are provided.

**Table 1.** Codes extracted from interviews regarding Persian curriculum with storytelling emphasis

No	Open codes	No	Open codes
1	Draw students' attention to the lesson	51	The development of religious ethics
2	Students' responses to lessons through stories	52	Development of social ethics
3	Activating students in learning processes through storytelling	53	The development of individual ethics
4	Authorship content. A lesson for students	54	Development of psychological ethics
5	Clear expression of lesson objectives with storytelling	55	The development of epistemological ethics
6	Facilitating the understanding of concepts for students	56	Development of learning ethics
7	Easier explanation of course material for students	57	The development of cultural ethics
8	Providing the conditions to master the concepts as possible	58	The development of scientific ethics
9	Smoother and easier analysis of lesson content for students	59	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of social culture.
10	Attracting students to the storyteller teacher	60	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of technological culture
11	Attracting students to the story class	61	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of Quranic culture
12	Encouraging students in the process of storytelling	62	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of moral culture
13	Criticism of learning objectives	63	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of scientific culture
14	Criticizing the implications of learning course material through storytelling	64	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of value culture
15	Criticism of learning conditions through storytelling	65	Semantic perception of concepts to be learned in the context of economic culture
16	Criticism of learning tools through storytelling	66	Understanding the heritage of handicraft achievements,
17	Criticizing the values of learning through storytelling	67	Perception of cultural heritage
18	Reviewing the elements of learning through storytelling	68	Perception of social heritage
19	Criticism of learning methods through storytelling	69	Perception of linguistic heritage
20	Auditory engagement of concepts	70	Perception of climatic-geographical heritage
21	Verbal conflict of concepts	71	Perception of ethnic-national heritage
22	Emotional involvement concepts	72	Perception of epistemic heritage
23	Skillful engagement of concepts	73	Perception of scientific heritage
24	Mental conflict of concepts	74	Perception of cultural heritage
25	Attempt to activate	75	Understanding the heritage of visual arts achievements
26	Efforts to develop accountability	76	Strengthening individual identity
27	Trying to stimulate students' cognitive response	77	Strengthening social identity
28	Trying to evoke an emotional response from students	78	Strengthening political identity
29	Trying to arouse the psycho-motor reaction of students	79	Strengthening moral identity
30	Trying to integrate students cognitively	80	Strengthening religious identity
31	Stating the horizontal relationship of learning elements	81	Strengthening historical identity
32	Expressing the vertical relationship of learning content elements	82	strengthening scientific identity,
33	Efforts to remove the effective prohibition in the past	83	Strengthening cultural identity
34	Efforts to remove the effective prohibition in the future	84	Story strategy - child

35	Development of cognitive construction	85	Story-music strategy
36	The development of the understanding of scientific philosophy, the emergence of concepts,	86	Story-book strategy
37	Development of understanding of social philosophy, the emergence of concepts	87	Story-picture strategy
38	Development of understanding of the psychological philosophy of the emergence of concepts	88	Story-show strategy
39	Development of the understanding of the educational philosophy of the emergence of concepts	89	Story-word strategy
40	Development of understanding of the cultural philosophy of the emergence of concepts	90	Story-craft strategy
41	Development of the understanding of the historical philosophy of the emergence of concepts	91	Help from clerics to tell stories
42	Perception of religious philosophy, the emergence of concepts	92	Help from students' mothers to tell stories
43	The development of the understanding of the educational philosophy of the emergence of concepts	93	Using grandfathers to tell stories
44	Development of the aesthetic sense of the universe	94	Using trainers with more taste for storytelling
45	Development of the aesthetic feeling of animals,	95	Using grandmothers to tell stories
46	Development of aesthetic sense of plants	96	Using engaging students to tell stories
47	Development of an aesthetic sense of values	97	Storytelling for students in the library,
48	Development of scientific aesthetic sense	98	Storytelling for students in the museum
49	Development of social aesthetic sense	99	Storytelling for students in storytelling class.
50	Development of human aesthetic sense	100	Storytelling for students in the school amphitheater.
101	Storytelling for students in the mosque		

According to the findings of Table 1, the extracted codes from the interviews conducted with the research participants consisted of 101 open codes, categorized as follows: **causal conditions** of the Persian curriculum with storytelling emphasis, comprising 8 selective codes (emotional stimulation, enhancement of perceptual abilities, development of critical thinking, academic effort, fluid learning, moral growth, meaningful perception, identity reinforcement), 5 selective codes for **contextual conditions** (empowering teachers, parental involvement, facilitating information technology, sharing experiences, structural deconcentrating), 5 selective codes for **strategic conditions** (content visualization with various storytelling mechanisms, content enrichment, enhancing communication with students, diversifying storytelling settings, efforts to comprehend the content), 4 selective codes for **intervention conditions** (inflexible storytelling, lack of enthusiasm in storytelling, storytelling skill deficiency, resource limitations), and 2 selective codes for **consequential conditions** (emotional engagement, cognitive engagement).

## Discussion

The current study aimed to craft a curriculum for the effective integration of storytelling as an instructional method. The outcomes revealed that the foundational elements of the Persian curriculum, emphasizing storytelling, encompassed eight specific categories: emotional stimulation, heightened perceptual abilities, the cultivation of critical thinking, academic diligence, seamless learning, ethical maturation, meaningful cognition, and fortification of identity. Additionally, five categories pertained



to contextual factors: empowering educators, fostering parental involvement, facilitating information technology, sharing experiences, and promoting structural flexibility. Furthermore, five categories addressed strategic considerations: visualizing content through diverse storytelling techniques, enriching content, improving communication with students, diversifying storytelling settings, and enhancing content comprehension. Four categories were associated with intervention conditions: addressing inflexible storytelling, invigorating enthusiasm in storytelling, addressing storytelling skill deficits, and overcoming resource limitations. Lastly, two categories related to consequential conditions: emotional engagement and cognitive engagement.

These findings are largely in concordance and alignment with the numerous previous studies ([Bagheryan et al., 2020](#); [Dietz et al., 2021](#); [Soheili et al., 2019](#); [Stewart & Gachago, 2016](#)). In response to the aforementioned query, it is worth noting that the role of storytelling and its profound impact on the psyche and soul of individuals has been well-established. This influence is particularly pronounced during childhood when children possess a natural affinity for storytelling. There exist educators who view the classroom as a haven for joyful learning and hold storytelling in high regard. They effectively employ it, making the educational experience enjoyable for both teachers and students alike. Storytelling transcends mere entertainment; it has the power to reshape experiences and facilitate personal growth and transformation. Skillful utilization of storytelling in education stands as a viable solution for sustaining students' interest and enhancing their learning experiences.

The realm of indirect education, encompassing the refinement or augmentation of desirable traits and the resolution of emotional challenges, as well as the enhancement of the learning process, can all be attributed to the influence of stories and narratives. In this context, the more captivating and engrossing a narrative is, and the better it captures the undivided attention of students, the more profound its impact becomes. The educational and developmental aspects of storytelling have consistently been a focal point of intellectual discourse. Moreover, storytelling has found its place within Islamic culture, emphasizing not only its educational and emotional dimensions but also its value in promoting accelerated learning. The art of storytelling is richly manifest in the Holy Quran, featuring a diverse array of religious, ethical, social, and human themes that captivate readers. These stories broaden students' horizons, ignite their imagination, and equip them for future challenges. Religious teachings often employ allegorical tales to harmonize the potential and limitations of the human intellect. Storytelling, in fact, ranks among the most enduring and cherished forms of literature and art, appealing to individuals of all ages, particularly children and adolescents. The significance of storytelling transcends cultural boundaries, optimizing the teaching process and instilling enthusiasm among students. Moreover, storytelling's value extends beyond its independent worth; it serves as a central theme in various other media such as plays, diverse

narrative-driven movies, and television programs. When the pedagogical potential of storytelling is harnessed skillfully across various subjects, it has the power to captivate students' minds and emotions, imprinting a mental image akin to a memorable clip from a long-watched movie.

Looking back through history, we can readily discern the pivotal role of storytelling in nurturing and educating children. Our forebears leveraged storytelling to impart life lessons and religious teachings to children without generating the slightest aversion. Storytelling not only enhances children's skills but also plays a fundamental role in shaping their personalities (Alavi Langroody & Rajaei, 2017).

One of the research limitations was the reluctance of some teachers to participate in interviews. Based on the research findings, it is advisable to introduce modern technology into preschool centers to implement digital storytelling for children. Additionally, considering the research results, it is recommended to actively involve children in the storytelling process to bolster their enthusiasm for listening to stories.

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