

## Research Article

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## Role of Characters as Teachers in The Book of Dede Korkut: AI-Assisted Content Analysis

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### Abstract

**Background/purpose.** This study examines the role of characters as teachers in The Book of Dede Korkut, a foundational work of Turkic oral literature. The analysis focuses on twelve legends, identifying how characters embody teaching roles and impart moral, ethical, and cultural lessons through their actions and relationships.

**Materials/methods.** This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the pedagogical roles of characters in The Book of Dede Korkut. The primary source is the English translation of The Book of Dede Korkut. Each legend is treated as an independent unit of analysis. Key characters and their actions were identified and coded for their pedagogical roles. A directed content analysis approach was used to examine the teaching roles associated with characters.

**Results.** Using qualitative content analysis with AI, the study reveals several key findings. Characters such as Dede Korkut, Bugach Khan, and Salur Kazan serve as pedagogical figures, teaching values like bravery, loyalty, leadership, resilience, and the importance of justice. These lessons are conveyed through their interactions, decisions, and sacrifices, offering timeless lessons on human behavior and societal values.

**Conclusion.** The analysis implies the potential of traditional narratives as tools for teaching universal moral and ethical lessons, indicating that integrating such stories into modern curricula can improve critical thinking, cultural awareness, and moral reasoning among students.

## 1. Introduction

This study explores the role of characters as teachers in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, a seminal work of Turkic oral literature. This collection of epic narratives, revered for its cultural and historical significance, presents characters whose actions and relationships convey profound moral and educational lessons. By examining these roles, this research seeks to understand how narratives serve as a medium for teaching values and how these teaching roles align with or diverge from modern pedagogical practices.

The importance of this study lies in its ability to bridge the traditional and the contemporary. In a world increasingly focused on promoting moral reasoning, resilience, and cultural awareness in education, understanding the teaching strategies embedded in historical texts provides unique results. *The Book of Dede Korkut* encapsulates the ethical, social, and leadership values of the Oghuz Turks, illustrating how oral narratives have historically been used to instill these principles across generations. Investigating the role of characters as teachers in this context emphasizes the enduring relevance of traditional storytelling as a pedagogical tool and contributes to the preservation and appreciation of Turkic heritage.

*The Book of Dede Korkut's* pedagogical potential, specifically, the role of characters as implicit teachers, remains underexplored. While previous studies have examined the values and moral lessons embedded in the text (Firat, 2014; Duran & Bitir, 2019; Özbay & Karakuş, 2011; Erbek & Eskimen, 2023; Yilmaz, 2022), there has been limited systematic analysis of how characters within these narratives function as educators, shaping ethical and cultural frameworks through their actions and relationships.

The central research question guiding this study is:

How do the characters in *The Book of Dede Korkut* fulfill the role of teachers, and what lessons do they impart through their actions and relationships?

This question aims to explore the pedagogical significance of the characters within the narratives, focusing on the values, ethics, and cultural principles they convey through their roles as teachers.

## 2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have been carried out to demonstrate the relationship between student test performance and attendance in class. Generally, it is viewed that exam scores increase with higher class attendance. It was shown that attendance and grades were positively correlated. Students' grades are scaled in proportion to the number of days they attended class (Diab-Bahman et al., 2021)

The integration of innovative technologies in teaching ancient literary heritage represents a transformative approach in higher education, bridging the gap between classical texts and contemporary educational practices. This pedagogical evolution not only facilitates the preservation of historical and cultural texts but also fosters dynamic engagement with these works. The use of technology, combined with innovative teaching strategies, has been increasingly recognized as a means to make ancient texts accessible, relevant, and meaningful to modern learners.

### 2.1. Ancient Literary Heritage Education

Ancient literary heritage holds a significant place in university education, serving as a bridge to the cultural, intellectual, and artistic achievements of past civilizations. These works, encompassing poetry, prose, philosophical texts, and epics, offer profound insights into human nature, societal values, and historical contexts. They not only improve critical thinking and cultural appreciation but also provide a foundation for understanding the evolution of literature and its impact on modern thought (Yi & Wang, 2023; Proietti, 2014).

Despite its importance, teaching ancient literary heritage in universities presents numerous challenges. One of the primary difficulties lies in making these texts accessible and engaging for modern students. Issues such as archaic language, complex structures, and cultural disconnect often result in reduced student interest and comprehension (Kasemsarn & Sawadsri, 2024; Özdemir et al., 2019). These challenges are further exacerbated by a lack of effective teaching strategies and resources tailored to the unique needs of ancient literature education (Galimullina et al., 2018).

Traditionally, ancient literature was taught through lectures, textual analysis, and rote memorization. However, this approach often failed to capture the richness and depth of these texts, limiting students' ability to relate them to contemporary contexts (Uccellini, 2018). As a result, there has been a growing need for innovative pedagogical methods that integrate modern technologies and interactive teaching strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

The integration of ancient literary works into the curriculum also underscores their role in preserving cultural identity and fostering global citizenship. By studying ancient texts, students can develop a deeper appreciation for their own cultural heritage while also exploring universal themes and values shared across different civilizations (Kaur & Rai, 2024). This dual focus helps cultivate a sense of cultural awareness and respect for diversity, making ancient literature education a cornerstone of humanities studies.

## ***2.2. Integration of Innovative Technologies in Teaching***

The integration of innovative technologies into the teaching of ancient literary heritage has significantly transformed educational methodologies, enhancing engagement and comprehension among university students. These technologies bridge the gap between antiquated texts and contemporary learners, making ancient literature more accessible and stimulating.

Digital humanities have introduced visualization tools that enable interactive representations of ancient texts. These tools facilitate a deeper understanding of complex literary structures and historical contexts. Yi and Wang (2023) discuss the implementation of visualization in teaching ancient literary history, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing challenges such as "obscure content" and "time-space separation" in traditional teaching methods.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been employed to develop open-access methodologies for teaching classical antiquity. These AI-driven approaches offer new virtual resources that enhance the learning experience in both high school and university settings. For instance, AI can assist in creating interactive activities that strengthen historical, archaeological, and philological knowledge of classical antiquity (Use of Open Access AI, 2023).

Digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool in conveying ancient literary narratives. By integrating multimedia elements, educators can create engaging stories that resonate with modern students. Research indicates that while many educators may feel initially unprepared to implement digital storytelling, there is a strong willingness to adopt this method due to its potential benefits, such as facilitating content interpretation and providing an interactive learning environment (Kdyraliyeva et al., 2022).

Hierarchical teaching methods have been applied to ancient literature education to cater to diverse student needs. These methods involve structuring content delivery in a way that aligns with students' varying levels of understanding, thereby enhancing overall learning outcomes. Research indicates that such hierarchical approaches, supported by intelligent systems, can effectively improve the teaching of ancient literature (Application of Intelligent Multi-level Teaching, 2023).

Online educational blogs enriched with multimedia technologies facilitate the presentation of ancient poetry and literature. By interpreting classical poems through contemporary music and visual

aids, educators can make ancient texts more relatable to today's students. This approach not only attracts a wider audience but also fosters creativity and a deeper appreciation of linguistic and cultural nuances (An Analysis of Strategies, 2020).

### **2.3. Future Directions in Ancient Literary Heritage Education**

The field of ancient literary heritage education is poised for significant transformation, driven by technological advancements and evolving pedagogical approaches. Future directions include the adoption of augmented reality (AR) and AI, interdisciplinary approaches integrating literature with history and philosophy, and the development of digital humanities platforms to expand accessibility (Web of Proceedings, 2018; Academia, 2021). Additionally, educators must adapt to changing student behaviors, incorporating shorter, more engaging materials to maintain attention and foster cultural appreciation (The Times, 2024).

### **2.4. The Book of Dede Korkut**

The Book of Dede Korkut has been a cornerstone of Turkish literature and oral tradition, reflecting the values, norms, and cultural heritage of the Oghuz Turks. Its narratives, woven through twelve epic stories, offer insights into the historical, educational, and societal aspects of the Turkic world. The stories have been extensively studied to explore themes ranging from values education and cultural transmission to linguistic and pedagogical elements.

The Dede Korkut Ethic emphasizes the work as a mythic charter for Turkish nationalist ideology, evolving from oral traditions of the Oghuz Turks in Central Asia. These stories encapsulate conflicts between ancient Oghuz tribes and their rivals, later infused with Islamic cultural and religious influences as the Oghuz settled in Anatolia and adopted urbanized lifestyles (Meeker, 1992). This transition demonstrates how the narratives retained their cultural essence while adapting to new socio-religious contexts. Findings indicate that the narratives are reflective of the integration of nomadic traditions with the settled life of Islamicized Turkic societies, symbolizing the cultural shifts over centuries.

Educationally, the stories of Dede Korkut have been effective in promoting values such as bravery, loyalty, and respect for elders. Studies on the educational function of the tales highlight the pivotal role of family, especially fathers, in inculcating bravery and moral integrity through experiential learning (Firat, 2014). For instance, the principle of "learning through practicing and experiencing" emerges as a significant educational method in the tales. Similarly, thematic teaching methods have proven successful in introducing the stories to younger audiences, fostering a connection to their cultural roots and creating a sense of living in the narrative period (Duran & Bitir, 2019). The study revealed that thematic teaching leads to more profound engagement and a lasting understanding of cultural values. The tales' adaptability for elementary education underscores their potential as rich sources for values education, emphasizing virtues such as courage, generosity, and fidelity (Karasu, 2018; Özbay & Karakuş, 2011). The application of problem-solving methods from the tales also highlights the Oghuz society's worldview and its relevance for contemporary education (Gültekin, 2015).

Linguistically, the Book of Dede Korkut serves as a critical repository for studying the evolution of Turkic languages and cultural symbols. Comparative studies reveal the continuity of linguistic elements like lexemes and idiomatic expressions that link the medieval Turkic worldview to modern Kazakh and Turkish identities (Eberdes & Demirdag, 2024; Ozdemir, 2018; Serdalina, 2024). The tales' role in sustaining linguistic identity through rare and culturally significant words has been emphasized in studies on hapax legomena (Aydemir, 2017). Findings suggest that the tales serve as linguistic milestones, preserving words and idiomatic expressions that bridge historical and contemporary

Turkic languages. Additionally, specific analyses of words like "qil:ic" (sword) illustrate the lexicon's historical significance and its preservation in modern Turkic languages.

In terms of cultural transmission, the tales embody both universal themes and culturally specific motifs. For example, sacrificial motifs in stories like Dirse Han's Son Boğaç Han and Kazan Bey's Son Uruz highlight the interplay between pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions (Yilmaz, 2022). The narratives also explore gender roles, showcasing the heroism and agency of female characters, which provide a nuanced perspective on gender discourse in Oghuz society (Ünsal Ocak, 2023). Findings from these studies reveal that the tales address both male and female contributions to society, underscoring equality in their respective cultural roles. Applied folklore studies further underscore the importance of these tales in transmitting cultural values through formal education, enhancing their relevance in the modern classroom (Aral, 2015).

The Book of Dede Korkut has also been examined through theoretical frameworks, such as Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital, offering new ways to understand its literary and cultural significance (Aydoğan, 2023). Findings suggest that the narratives reflect the dynamic interplay of individual agency and societal expectations, reinforcing communal and individual values. Sentiment analysis using fuzzy logic has further unveiled the emotional and linguistic nuances of the text, reflecting its complex narrative style and affective resonance (Sarfraz & Fazal, 2024). This study highlighted how the subtle emotional layers of the stories contribute to their universal appeal.

Translation studies have revealed the challenges and successes in transferring the cultural essence of Dede Korkut to non-Turkic audiences. Early translations into English adeptly preserved cultural-specific items like color symbolism and religious motifs, ensuring the stories' cultural integrity in a global context (Hamarat, 2019). Findings highlight the translators' success in adapting cultural nuances while maintaining accessibility for foreign readers. This has facilitated cross-cultural understanding while maintaining the tales' originality.

Comparative studies between The Book of Dede Korkut and Western epics like Beowulf reveal shared features in their oral origins and symbolic elements, such as the transition from polytheistic to monotheistic belief systems. These comparisons enrich our understanding of the universal aspects of epic traditions while situating Dede Korkut within a global literary framework (Tafli, 2006). Findings emphasize the adaptability of these epics in reflecting their respective cultural transformations.

Overall, the Book of Dede Korkut remains a vital cultural and educational artifact, offering profound lessons in values education, cultural identity, and linguistic evolution. Its adaptability for modern pedagogical purposes and its rich narrative tradition ensure its continued relevance in both academic and cultural contexts.

### **3. Methods**

#### ***3.1. Study Design***

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the pedagogical roles of characters in The Book of Dede Korkut. The analysis focuses on twelve legends, identifying the central characters and their roles in conveying moral and pedagogical lessons.

The primary source material is the English translation of The Book of Dede Korkut, edited and translated by Faruk Sümer, Ahmet E. Uysal, and Warren S. Walker, published by the University of Texas Press -Austin. Each legend was treated as an independent unit of analysis, with characters and their actions analyzed for their contributions to the narrative's moral and pedagogical framework.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

Data were collected from textual excerpts of the translated legends. Passages involving key characters were identified and analyzed to determine their pedagogical roles. Coding focused on character actions, relationships, and the moral lessons conveyed through their interactions.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

A directed content analysis approach was used to explore the "Role of Characters as Teachers" in each story. Specific attention was given to how characters' actions and interactions conveyed moral and pedagogical lessons such as bravery, loyalty, resilience, leadership, and sacrifice.

GPT-4, a state-of-the-art language model, was employed to assist in identifying and analyzing the pedagogical roles of characters. GPT-4's analysis included examining the text for explicit and implicit teaching roles associated with characters. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the AI-assisted content analysis, we implemented a structured approach to data processing and verification. To minimize errors and enhance precision, we provided detailed instructions and prompts to guide the AI in processing the text systematically. The AI-generated results were then rigorously reviewed by human experts with expertise in literature, pedagogy, and Turkic studies to ensure consistency with the study's objectives. During this verification process, any inconsistencies, misinterpretations, or fabricated outputs (hallucinations) were identified and corrected. In cases where discrepancies were noted, manual cross-referencing with the original text was conducted to validate findings. By integrating AI as a supportive tool rather than a sole analytical authority, we ensured that the final results aligned with established qualitative research standards and accurately reflected the pedagogical themes present in the narratives.

### **3.4. Ethical Considerations**

The study relied on publicly available historical texts, and no human subjects were involved. Ethical guidelines for literary analysis were followed to ensure respect for the cultural and historical significance of the source material. The use of GPT-4 was limited to assisting with textual analysis and adhered to ethical standards for AI-assisted research.

## **4. Results**

In *The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan*, the narrative conveys profound lessons on leadership, loyalty, and resilience, particularly in the face of devastating adversity.

Salur Kazan, the protagonist, exemplifies the qualities of a leader who shoulders both personal and communal responsibilities. Initially, his decision to leave his camp unguarded during a hunting expedition results in a catastrophic attack by the infidels. This mistake, while a moment of vulnerability, emphasizes the importance of vigilance and foresight for leaders. However, his subsequent actions—pursuing the infidels, reclaiming his family, and rallying his warriors—demonstrate his relentless determination and ability to rectify his mistakes. Kazan's leadership underlines the themes of accountability, courage, and the power of unity in overcoming challenges. Karajuk the Shepherd represents an unexpected hero, embodying resilience, loyalty, and resourcefulness. Despite being a humble figure, Karajuk singlehandedly defends Kazan's flock from six hundred infidels using only his sling. His actions illustrate the profound impact of individual courage and determination, regardless of social status. Karajuk's loyalty and ingenuity make him a pivotal figure in the story, teaching the value of persistence and ingenuity in protecting one's community. Burla Hatun, Kazan's wife, demonstrates intelligence and emotional strength. Her quick thinking, instructing the forty women to claim they are all Kazan's wife, confuses the infidels and delays their plans. Her steadfastness and resilience in the face of captivity highlight the importance of composure and cleverness in dire situations. Uruz, Kazan's son, symbolizes youthful bravery and

the importance of familial bonds. Despite being captured, Uruz maintains his dignity, demonstrating the values of strength and perseverance. His interaction with his mother, urging her to protect their family's honor even at the cost of his life, underscores the weight of individual sacrifice for collective integrity. The Oghuz warriors collectively represent the strength of unity and communal action. Their eventual arrival to support Kazan and their decisive victory over the infidels reinforce the themes of solidarity and mutual support.

In *The Story of Bugach Khan, Son of Dirse Khan*, the narrative highlights themes of loyalty, resilience, familial bonds, and the ultimate triumph of justice and honor.

Dirse Khan, the father, represents both strength and vulnerability. Initially portrayed as a respected figure among the Oghuz, his lack of a child brings him social humiliation. After his prayers are answered and he is blessed with a son, Dirse Khan's misplaced trust in his forty warriors leads him to nearly kill his own son, Bugach Khan, based on unfounded accusations. His actions serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of hasty judgment and the influence of deceitful individuals. His eventual realization and reconciliation with his son underscore the themes of redemption and familial unity. Bugach Khan, the son, embodies youthful bravery and resilience. From a young age, he demonstrates remarkable courage, defeating a bull and earning recognition among the Oghuz. His survival after being gravely injured by his father's arrow and his subsequent recovery highlights his strength and determination. Bugach Khan's heroic rescue of his father from the forty treacherous warriors showcases his unwavering loyalty and commitment to family, even in the face of betrayal. The mother of Bugach Khan exemplifies maternal devotion and resourcefulness. Her tireless efforts to save her son, including preparing a balm from mountain flowers and her own milk, demonstrate the depth of a mother's love and determination. Her role in urging Bugach Khan to rescue his father highlights the importance of family bonds and mutual support. The forty treacherous warriors serve as antagonists, embodying the consequences of envy and betrayal. Their deceit and eventual downfall underscore the narrative's moral lessons about loyalty and justice.

In *The Story of Bamsi Beyrek*, the characters serve as pedagogical figures, teaching lessons of loyalty, courage, resourcefulness, and honor through their actions and relationships.

Bamsi Beyrek, the central figure, exemplifies the virtues of heroism and loyalty. From his youth, his actions—rescuing merchants, defeating enemies, and earning his name through bravery—illustrate the importance of courage and self-reliance. His engagement with Banu Chichek highlights his integrity and commitment, even in the face of prolonged separation. When he escapes captivity and reclaims his place among the Oghuz, his journey teaches resilience and the enduring power of love and honor. Banu Chichek, Beyrek's betrothed, represents loyalty, intelligence, and emotional strength. Despite pressure to marry another, she remains steadfast in her devotion to Beyrek. Her clever interactions with those around her and her ability to recognize Beyrek through his actions and symbols reinforce the themes of fidelity and emotional intelligence. Bay Biire, Beyrek's father, serves as a model of wisdom and communal leadership. His concern for his son's marriage and his readiness to consult the Oghuz princes demonstrate the importance of collective decision-making and familial responsibility. The antagonists, such as Delii Karchar and Yaltajuk, serve as cautionary figures. Their treachery and selfishness contrast sharply with the virtues of the protagonists, teaching the consequences of dishonor and betrayal. However, their eventual defeats and repentance convey the themes of justice and redemption.

In *The Story of the Capture of Uruz Bey*, the characters play significant roles as teachers and moral exemplars, conveying lessons on leadership, loyalty, courage, and familial bonds.

Kazan Bey, the father, embodies the qualities of a seasoned leader and protector. His actions, from leading the Oghuz beys to rescuing his son, demonstrate the importance of responsibility and sacrifice. When faced with Uruz's captivity, Kazan shows relentless determination, teaching the value

of perseverance in the face of adversity. His acknowledgment of his son's need for experience and his willingness to correct his earlier oversight highlights the importance of learning through action and mentorship. Uruz Bey, the son, represents the journey from inexperience to heroism. His initial conversation with his father, where he challenges Kazan's doubts about his capabilities, illustrates his desire for growth and recognition. Uruz's willingness to fight alongside his father and his eventual capture by the infidels teach the audience about the complexities of courage and the risks inherent in leadership. Burla Hatun, Uruz's mother, exemplifies resilience and the emotional strength of a mother. Her lamentations and accusations against Kazan highlight the depth of a parent's love and concern, while her eventual role in rallying support underscores the active contribution of women in the Oghuz society. Her actions convey the importance of familial bonds and the shared responsibility in overcoming challenges. The Oghuz warriors serve as collective teachers of unity and bravery. Their solidarity in supporting Kazan's rescue mission and their sacrifices in the battle against the infidels reflect the communal values of the Oghuz people. Their actions emphasize the importance of loyalty to both leader and cause.

In *The Story of Delii Dumrul, Son of Duha Koja*, the narrative delivers profound lessons about faith, humility, love, and sacrifice through its characters.

Delii Dumrul, the protagonist, begins as a brash and arrogant man, seeking to challenge the divine authority of Allah and Azrail, the angel of death. His initial defiance, building a bridge over a dry river and imposing arbitrary tolls to demonstrate his power, highlights human pride and ignorance. However, his transformation unfolds when he confronts Azrail and experiences the fragility of life. Through his plea to Allah, he learns humility, submission to divine will, and the significance of repentance. Dumrul's eventual willingness to sacrifice his life for his wife's demonstrates a deep evolution in his character, teaching the virtues of love and selflessness. The father and mother of Delii Dumrul represent selfishness and attachment to worldly life. When Dumrul asks them to sacrifice their lives for him, they refuse, prioritizing their own survival. This rejection emphasizes the theme that familial bonds may not always guarantee ultimate selflessness. Their contrasting behavior with Dumrul's wife reinforces the lesson that true love and sacrifice are not limited to blood relations but can be found in chosen relationships. Dumrul's wife exemplifies unwavering loyalty, love, and devotion. Her willingness to sacrifice her life for her husband, despite his plea for her to move on and live, demonstrates the depth of her commitment. Her words convey profound emotional and moral strength, providing a stark contrast to Dumrul's parents. She teaches the value of unconditional love and the power of selflessness in relationships. Azrail, the angel of death, serves as an impartial enforcer of divine will and a catalyst for Dumrul's transformation. His actions highlight the inevitability of death and the futility of resisting divine authority. Through his dialogues, Azrail reinforces the omnipotence of Allah and the transient nature of human pride. Almighty Allah, though not directly personified, plays a central role as the source of justice, mercy, and ultimate authority. Allah's decision to spare Dumrul and his wife after their sincere repentance and commitment to a righteous life demonstrates divine mercy and the possibility of redemption.

In *The Story of Kan Turali, Son of Kanli Koja*, the characters serve as conduits of wisdom, exemplifying virtues such as bravery, loyalty, and the power of resilience and love.

Kan Turali embodies the archetype of a fearless hero. His quest to find an equal partner—a bride as brave and capable as himself—sets the stage for an exploration of values such as honor, determination, and the pursuit of excellence. Through his trials, including defeating three monstrous beasts (a bull, a lion, and a camel) and battling infidels, Kan Turali demonstrates not only physical strength but also intelligence and resolve. His journey reflects the importance of striving for personal and communal goals despite overwhelming challenges. Kanli Koja, Turali's father, acts as a mentor who advises caution but respects his son's aspirations. His initial reluctance to support the perilous mission to win Seljen Hatun reveals the protective instincts of a parent. However, his eventual



support underscores the Oghuz value of honoring individual agency and courage, even when it conflicts with personal fears. Seljen Hatun, the bride-to-be, defies traditional gender roles by showcasing equal, if not superior, bravery and skill. Her willingness to fight alongside Kan Turali and her quick thinking in defending him against an ambush highlight her intelligence, loyalty, and emotional strength. Her character emphasizes the importance of partnership and equality in relationships, making her a powerful role model for both women and men. The infidel king, as an antagonist, represents the obstacles that heroes must overcome to achieve their goals. His challenges to Kan Turali, involving the beasts and the army sent after Seljen Hatun and Turali, symbolize the trials of life that test character and resolve. The forty companions of Kan Turali, while primarily supportive, reflect the collective strength and loyalty of the Oghuz warriors. Their songs and praise provide moral and emotional support, underscoring the communal bonds that sustain individuals during times of hardship.

In *The Story of Yigenek, Son of Kazilik Koja* from *The Book of Dede Korkut*, the narrative conveys significant lessons on bravery, loyalty, and the power of perseverance through its characters and events.

Kazilik Koja, the father, serves as a figure of resilience and fortitude. Imprisoned for sixteen years, he endures his captivity with strength. His eventual rescue and reunion with his son symbolize the enduring power of hope and the importance of familial bonds. His initial inability to overcome the infidel prince highlights the necessity of youth and collective effort in overcoming monumental challenges. Yigenek, the protagonist, embodies youthful heroism and determination. Learning of his father's captivity, he takes immediate action, rallying support from Bayindir Khan and leading a campaign to rescue his father. His victory over the infidel prince demonstrates the triumph of courage, faith, and persistence. Yigenek's ability to succeed where others have failed underscores the importance of self-belief and strategic action in the face of overwhelming odds. Bayindir Khan, as the Oghuz leader, provides guidance and support, representing the value of communal leadership. By assigning twenty-four banner-beys to accompany Yigenek, he illustrates the collective responsibility of the community to assist in personal and familial endeavors, reflecting the Oghuz ethos of unity and mutual support. The infidel prince, Direk Tekür, serves as the primary antagonist, representing the obstacles one must face to achieve justice and liberation. His formidable strength and repeated defeats of Oghuz warriors emphasize the difficulty of the task, making Yigenek's eventual triumph even more significant. The twenty-four banner-beys demonstrate loyalty and the strength of collective effort. Although they fail to defeat the infidel prince, their willingness to support Yigenek highlights the communal values of the Oghuz society.

In *The Story of Basat, Killer of the One-Eyed Giant*, the characters embody and convey lessons of courage, resilience, and the triumph of justice over tyranny through their actions and interactions.

Basat, the protagonist, is a symbol of bravery and determination. Raised by a lioness and later reintegrated into human society, Basat's unique background prepares him for extraordinary challenges. His confrontation with Tepegoz, the one-eyed giant, highlights his strategic thinking and unyielding courage. Despite Tepegoz's supernatural invulnerability, Basat identifies his weakness and ultimately defeats him, demonstrating the triumph of intellect and persistence over brute strength. Tepegoz, the one-eyed giant, serves as the primary antagonist and a representation of unchecked power and chaos. His destructive actions—terrorizing the Oghuz, consuming their people, and disrupting their society—symbolize the dangers of greed and cruelty. His vulnerability, a single eye, becomes the focal point of his downfall, teaching that even the mightiest forces can be overcome with insight and strategy. Uruz Koja, Basat's father, represents resilience and parental devotion. Despite suffering personal losses at the hands of Tepegoz, including the death of his son Kiyen Seljuk, Uruz Koja provides emotional support to Basat, embodying the value of family and community in the face of adversity. The cooks, Yunlu Koja and Yapaghlu Koja, though minor characters, contribute to

the narrative by aiding Basat with critical information about Tepegöz's weakness. Their role highlights the importance of collective effort and shared knowledge in overcoming challenges.

In *The Story of Emren, Son of Begil*, the characters exemplify resilience, loyalty, and the importance of communal and familial bonds, offering rich lessons in leadership and valor.

Begil, the father, represents a seasoned and responsible warrior. His role as the protector of the Oghuz borders underscores the value of duty and vigilance. His decision to mentor and empower his son, Emren, in the face of injury and impending danger teaches the importance of succession planning and instilling courage in the next generation. Emren, the protagonist, epitomizes youthful valor and the transformative power of faith and perseverance. When his father is incapacitated, Emren steps forward, taking up his father's armor and responsibilities. His bravery in confronting the infidel leader and his army demonstrates the strength of character and the readiness to uphold familial and cultural honor. Emren's reliance on his faith during the climactic battle, combined with his eventual victory, reflects the narrative's emphasis on divine support and moral righteousness. The infidel leader serves as the antagonist, embodying opposition to the Oghuz values of unity and justice. His initial confidence and eventual defeat at the hands of Emren illustrate the triumph of faith, resilience, and strategic action over arrogance and material power. Bayindir Khan, as the leader of the Oghuz, symbolizes collective leadership and the importance of supporting and recognizing individual contributions to the community. His acknowledgment of Emren's bravery at the end reinforces the narrative's emphasis on communal respect and unity.

In *The Story of Seghrek, Son of Ushun Koja*, the narrative conveys profound lessons on familial loyalty, bravery, and the pursuit of justice, illustrating the strength of bonds between brothers and the resolve to overcome adversity.

Seghrek, the younger brother and protagonist, epitomizes youthful bravery and devotion. Upon learning about his elder brother Eghrek's captivity, he refuses to live in comfort while his brother remains a prisoner. His journey to rescue Eghrek, despite opposition from his parents and fiancée, showcases his unwavering commitment to family and honor. His actions emphasize the themes of sacrifice, determination, and the strength of familial bonds. Eghrek, the elder brother, represents resilience and the enduring hope of reunion. Imprisoned in Alinja Castle by the infidels, his survival through years of captivity reflects his inner strength. When reunited with Seghrek, Eghrek's embrace of his younger brother symbolizes the deep emotional connection and gratitude for familial loyalty. Ushun Koja, the father, and his wife highlight the protective instincts of parents. Their initial resistance to Seghrek's quest reflects their fear of losing another son. However, their eventual support underscores the importance of trusting one's children to fulfill their destinies. Seghrek's fiancée adds a poignant dimension to the narrative. Her plea for Seghrek to stay reflects her vulnerability, but her eventual commitment to wait for his return demonstrates her loyalty and understanding of his sense of duty.

In *The Story of Salur Kazan's Captivity and His Rescue by His Son Uruz*, the characters exemplify themes of loyalty, bravery, familial bonds, and the triumph of justice over adversity.

Salur Kazan, the central figure, represents leadership and resilience. His captivity by the infidels, after a lapse in caution during a hunting expedition, underscores the vulnerability of even the mightiest leaders. Despite his dire circumstances, Kazan's wit, courage, and steadfast faith allow him to maintain his dignity. His refusal to insult his Oghuz roots or praise the infidels demonstrates his unwavering commitment to his heritage and values. Kazan's eventual rescue and his reunion with his son symbolize the enduring strength of family and the power of unity. Uruz, Kazan's son, embodies youthful valor and the fulfillment of filial duty. Upon learning of his father's captivity, Uruz takes immediate action, assembling an army and leading a mission to rescue Kazan. His willingness to confront the infidels, even in the face of potential danger, highlights his courage and determination.

The moment when Uruz unknowingly wounds his father during combat serves as a poignant lesson about identity, communication, and the bond between parent and child.

In *The Story of the Revolt of the Outer Oghuz Against the Inner Oghuz and the Death of Beyrek*, the narrative delves into themes of loyalty, betrayal, justice, and unity within a fractious society.

Salur Kazan, the leader of the Inner Oghuz, epitomizes strength and leadership. His decision to allow the plundering of his tents while excluding the Outer Oghuz inadvertently sparks the conflict. Despite this misstep, Kazan's resolve to seek justice for Beyrek's blood and to quell the rebellion reflects his commitment to unity and the preservation of Oghuz values. His eventual triumph over Uruz Koja, the leader of the Outer Oghuz, symbolizes the restoration of order and the resolution of internal strife. Uruz Koja, Kazan's uncle and leader of the Outer Oghuz, embodies betrayal and the complexities of familial loyalty. Feeling slighted by Kazan's exclusion of the Outer Oghuz from the tent plunder, Uruz Koja incites rebellion, demonstrating the destructive potential of perceived injustices. His role as both a family member and an antagonist adds depth to the narrative, highlighting the tension between personal grievances and communal responsibilities. Beyrek, a loyal warrior of Kazan, serves as a tragic hero whose steadfastness and refusal to betray his leader cost him his life. His allegiance to Kazan and his unwillingness to join the Outer Oghuz's rebellion emphasize the value of loyalty and the personal sacrifices it entails. Beyrek's death catalyzes Kazan's quest for justice, driving the narrative toward its climactic resolution. The Outer Oghuz beys represent the consequences of fractured unity within a community. Their rebellion underscores the importance of fairness, communication, and inclusion in leadership. Their ultimate submission to Kazan and plea for forgiveness reflect the restoration of harmony and the recognition of the need for unity.

Table 1 presents a summary of roles of the characters in the book of Korkut Ata.

**Table 1.** The teacher roles conveyed by characters in the provided stories

Story	Character	Teacher Role / Lesson
<b>The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan</b>	Salur Kazan	Leadership, accountability, courage, and
	Karajuk the Shepherd	Resilience, loyalty, and resourcefulness.
	Burla Hatun	Composure, cleverness, and emotional
	Uruz	Sacrifice for collective integrity.
	Oghuz warriors	Solidarity and mutual support.
<b>The Story of Bugach Khan</b>	Dirse Khan	Redemption and the dangers of hasty
	Bugach Khan	Courage, resilience, and familial loyalty.
	Bugach Khan's	Maternal devotion and resourcefulness.
	Forty treacherous warriors	Consequences of envy and betrayal.
<b>The Story of Bamsi Beyrek</b>	Bamsi Beyrek	Heroism, loyalty, and resilience.
	Banu Chichek	Fidelity, emotional intelligence, and loyalty.
	Bay Biire	Wisdom and communal leadership.
	Delii Karchar & Yaltaiuk	Betrayal, justice, and redemption.
<b>The Story of the Capture of Uruz Bey</b>	Kazan Bey	Responsibility, sacrifice, and mentorship.
	Uruz Bey	Growth from inexperience to heroism.
	Burla Hatun	Emotional strength and rallying support.

	Oghuz warriors	Unity and bravery.
<b>The Story of Delii Dumrul</b>	Delii Dumrul	Humility, repentance, and selflessness.
	Dumrul's wife	Unconditional love and sacrifice.
	Azrail	Divine will and inevitability of death.
	Almighty Allah	Justice, mercy, and redemption.
<b>The Story of Kan Turali</b>	Kan Turali	Honor, determination, and resilience.
	Seljen Hatun	Partnership, bravery, and equality.
	Kanli Koja	Mentorship and parental protection.
	Forty companions	Communal strength and loyalty.
<b>The Story of Yigenek</b>	Yigenek	Courage, faith, and perseverance.
	Kazilik Koja	Resilience and familial bonds.
	Bayindir Khan	Communal leadership and support.
	Twenty-four banner-beys	Loyalty and collective effort.
<b>The Story of Basat</b>	Basat	Strategic thinking and courage.
	Tepegoz	Dangers of unchecked power and chaos.
	Uruz Koja	Parental support and resilience.
	Cooks (minor characters)	Importance of shared knowledge.
<b>The Story of Emren</b>	Emren	Faith, perseverance, and readiness to take responsibility.
	Begil	Mentorship and familial duty.
<b>The Story of Seghrek</b>	Seghrek	Familial loyalty, sacrifice, and determination.
	Eghrek	Resilience and hope.
	Ushun Koja (Parents)	Protective instincts and eventual support.
	Seghrek's fiancée	Loyalty and understanding of duty.
<b>The Story of Salur Kazan's Captivity</b>	Salur Kazan	Leadership, resilience, and dignity.
	Uruz	Valor and filial duty.
<b>The Story of the Revolt of Outer Oghuz</b>	Salur Kazan	Strength, justice, and unity.
	Uruz Koja	Complexities of familial loyalty and rebellion.
	Beyrek	Loyalty and personal sacrifice.
	Outer Oghuz beys	Importance of fairness and inclusion.

The table provides a comprehensive summary of the teacher roles and moral lessons conveyed by characters across a collection of rich and diverse stories. Each character, whether protagonist, antagonist, or supporting figure, embodies distinct virtues, flaws, and values that serve as pedagogical tools for the audience.

## 5. Discussion

This study analyzed the role of characters as teachers in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, revealing their contributions to moral and ethical education. The stories emphasize values such as loyalty, justice, and sacrifice, providing timeless lessons that resonate across generations. These stories remain a rich source of moral guidance, demonstrating the enduring significance of the characters' teacher roles in shaping societal and individual virtues.

Characters like Salur Kazan and Uruz Bey exemplify leadership through their accountability, courage, and unity in overcoming adversity. Salur Kazan, for instance, demonstrates the importance of learning from mistakes and leading with determination, as also noted by Firat (2014) in his exploration of bravery in the tales. Uruz Bey's transformation from inexperience to heroism indicates the significance of mentorship and personal growth within familial and societal structures. Karajuk the Shepherd, a humble yet pivotal figure, highlights the impact of resilience, resourcefulness, and loyalty, showcasing the value of individual courage regardless of social status. These characters collectively demonstrate the significance of unity and persistence in preserving community well-being.

Female characters like Burla Hatun, Seljen Hatun, and Dumrul's wife challenge traditional gender roles by displaying intelligence, emotional strength, and bravery. Burla Hatun's composure and quick thinking in *The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan* illustrate the active role of women in critical moments of crisis. Seljen Hatun, portrayed as an equal partner to Kan Turali in *The Story of Kan Turali*, highlights the value of partnership and mutual respect in relationships, while Dumrul's wife exemplifies unwavering loyalty and selflessness, contrasting with her husband's initial arrogance. The nuanced portrayal of these female characters aligns with Ünsal Ocak's (2023) findings, which emphasize their role in offering alternative narratives to traditional gender norms within the cultural framework of the Oghuz society.

The tales' teacher roles encapsulate the transmission of cultural and moral values across generations. The integration of pre-Islamic and Islamic motifs in stories like *The Story of Delii Dumrul* reflects the adaptability of Oghuz culture and its capacity to retain core values amid changing socio-religious contexts (Yilmaz, 2022). Dumrul's transformation from defiance to humility and his eventual redemption underline the enduring significance of repentance and divine mercy in Turkic cultural narratives. Characters like Bayindir Khan and the Oghuz warriors embody communal ethos, emphasizing solidarity and mutual support. These elements underscore the collective identity of the Oghuz Turks, aligning with Erbek and Eskimen's (2023) exploration of the tales' emphasis on communal responsibility and unity.

The linguistic richness of *The Book of Dede Korkut* is evident in the characters' dialogues and narratives, which preserve idiomatic expressions and lexemes unique to Turkic languages. These elements bridge the medieval Turkic worldview with modern linguistic identity (Eberdes & Demirdag, 2024). For example, the preservation of rare words and expressions, as noted in the hapax legomena studies by Aydemir (2017), ensures that these tales serve as linguistic milestones in Turkic heritage.

In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, the roles of characters as teachers align with several modern pedagogical practices. While the text is rooted in the cultural context of the Oghuz Turks, its teaching methods and moral lessons resonate with contemporary education in meaningful ways.

Mentorship and guidance are prominent themes in the book, with characters such as Dede Korkut and Kazilik Koja acting as mentors, imparting wisdom and encouragement to the younger generation. Similarly, modern educators serve as mentors, guiding students not only in academic learning but also in their personal development and ethical decision-making. This aligns with research

emphasizing the importance of mentorship in education and its role in fostering personal and professional growth (Rest & Thoma, 1985).

Resilience and problem-solving are core aspects of modern education, mirrored in characters like Bugach Khan and Basat, who overcome challenges through determination and strategic thinking. Contemporary educators emphasize these skills to prepare students for complex real-world challenges, a practice supported by problem-based learning approaches (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

The promotion of equality and collaboration is reflected in the partnership of Seljen Hatun and Kan Turali, where mutual respect and teamwork lead to shared success. Modern pedagogy also values collaborative learning, fostering teamwork and communication among students, as highlighted in cooperative learning frameworks (Johnson et al., 1994).

Inspiring moral and ethical behavior is a central function of Dede Korkut, who reinforces values such as loyalty, bravery, and integrity through his reflections and prayers. Similarly, modern educators are role models who inspire students to uphold ethical behavior, social responsibility, and empathy, aligning with studies on moral development and education (Narvaez, 2002).

The findings also indicate the importance of recognizing individual strengths. Characters like Burla Hatun and Karajuk the Shepherd demonstrate that everyone, regardless of their background or role, has valuable contributions to make. Modern teaching emphasizes this through differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching to individual student strengths and needs (Tomlinson, 2000).

Leadership and accountability are demonstrated by Salur Kazan, who learns from his mistakes and takes responsibility for leading his community through challenges. Similarly, teachers today take responsibility for creating environments where students feel supported and valued, aligning with transformational leadership models in education (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Storytelling is a primary medium in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, used by Dede Korkut to transmit knowledge, values, and cultural heritage. Modern educators continue to use storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool, fostering engagement, creativity, and contextual understanding (Egan, 1992).

## 6. Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Future Research

This study explored the pedagogical roles of characters in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, analyzing their teaching methods and moral lessons and aligning them with modern pedagogical practices. The findings demonstrate that characters such as Dede Korkut, Bugach Khan, Salur Kazan, and others embody timeless educational principles such as mentorship, resilience, collaboration, moral guidance, and the recognition of individual strengths. These roles highlight the universal nature of teaching as a medium for imparting cultural values and preparing individuals to navigate personal and communal challenges.

The analysis implies the potential of traditional narratives as tools for teaching universal moral and ethical lessons, suggesting that integrating such stories into modern curricula can foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and moral reasoning among students. The findings emphasize the importance of preserving and studying ancient texts like *The Book of Dede Korkut* to understand and disseminate cultural and historical values. Additionally, the application of AI in content analysis demonstrates the potential of integrating technology in teaching ancient literary heritage.

This study focused on twelve legends from *The Book of Dede Korkut*. While comprehensive, the analysis may not capture the full pedagogical spectrum present in other Turkic oral traditions or similar literature. The qualitative nature of the study relies on subjective interpretations of text, which may vary among researchers. Although GPT-4 facilitated the analysis, its contributions were

dependent on the quality of input and required human validation to ensure accuracy and context-specific understanding.

Future research could compare the pedagogical roles in *The Book of Dede Korkut* with those in other oral traditions or literary works, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* or *The Iliad*, to identify universal teaching principles. Empirical studies could examine the effectiveness of integrating narratives from *The Book of Dede Korkut* into contemporary educational settings, assessing their influence on students' moral and cognitive development. Expanding the use of AI in the analysis of other historical texts could reveal new understandings into the teaching methods embedded in traditional literature. Future research could also extend beyond *The Book of Dede Korkut* to explore pedagogical themes in other Turkic oral traditions, broadening the understanding of the region's educational heritage.

## Declarations

**Author Contributions.** Zhanday Kdyraliyeva: Supervision, conceptualization, methodology. Naziya Tassilova: Literature review. Zhanagul Turumbetova: data analysis. Nazgul Suranchieva: review-editing and writing. Gauhar Baltabayeva: review-editing and writing. All authors have read and approved the published on the final version of the article.

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