

## REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Tsveta Apostolova Delcheva, Ph.D.

The Trakia University - Stara Zagora, Faculty of Education,

Department of Pedagogical and Social Sciences

about a dissertation on the topic "Formation of social competence through  
Bulgarian folklore 1st - 4th grade"

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree Ph.D.

in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2.  
Pedagogy

Author of the dissertation: Zhana Plamenova Koleva

Research supervisor: Prof. Rumyana Ilcheva Neminska, Doctor of Science

Scientific consultant: Assoc. Prof. Milen Valchev Dimitrov, Ph.D.

The review was assigned by decision of the Scientific Jury, determined by order No. 3039 of 12.07.2024 of the Rector of the Trakia University- Stara Zagora. The documents required by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at the Trakia University have been submitted within the specified period. All the requirements of the procedure have been met.

### **General presentation of the PhD student**

Zhana Plamenova Koleva was born in 1995. She received her secondary education at "Exarch Antim I" Secondary School - Kazanlak, profile "Arts - Music". She graduated from The Trakia University - Stara Zagora, majoring in "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy" - BA "Bachelor" in 2018, and in 2019 - BA "Master". Since September 3, 2018, she has been a teacher of the primary stage of primary education at the "N. Y. Vaptsarov", city of Kazanlak. In 2019, she received the award "Teacher of the Year - 2019", "Basic Education", category "Young and successful staff". In 2021, she acquired the Fifth professional-qualification degree at DIITT - The Trakia University, St. Zagora. Even as a student, and later as a doctoral student, she actively participated in faculty research projects. She is involved with reports in international student forums in Turkey, and in 2017 she presented her scientific interests at the XII International Balkan Educational and Scientific Congress "Education for Life, Professional

Realization and Well-Being", hosted by the Faculty of Education. During her studies, she was awarded certificates several times - for contribution to scientific research (2018 and 2017), active artistic self-activity, volunteer work, excellent performance at national folklore competitions.

Zhana Plamenova Koleva is a full-time doctoral student in the doctoral program "Theory of Education and Didactics" at the Faculty of Education of The Trakia University - Stara Zagora, from 2020. She was awarded the right to defense by the decision of the Faculty Council on March 14, 2024. The dissertation is discussed and referred for defense by the Department of Pedagogical and Social Sciences of the Faculty of Education. The results of the research are already available to the Bulgarian academic community through reports at forums for young researchers, participation in projects and numerous publications.

### **Relevance and significance of the work developed in the dissertation a problem**

The current dissertation was written at a time of increasing importance of the problem of forming social competence in accordance with the personal development of the student as a priority of modern education. In this context, delineating and making sense of integrative connections of Bulgarian folklore with primary school subjects is essential for the formation of social skills in students.

### **Structure and content of the dissertation**

In terms of structure, the dissertation fully meets the formal requirements for awarding a PhD: it consists of an introduction (introduction), three chapters, conclusion and conclusions, contributions, literature and appendices. In full, it counts 366 standard pages, of which 168 are main text, illustrated with 32 graphics and 14 tables. The bibliography covers 117 titles in Bulgarian, English and Russian languages. In 15 appendices, the research toolkit and primary data are presented (from 181 to 366 pages)

In the introduction, Zhana Koleva substantiates the relevance of the researched issues and makes a request for the presentation of a scientific study of an applied nature "in relation to society's expectations and needs for confident and responsible citizens" (p. 5).

The first chapter (7-72 pages) is devoted to the theoretical justification of the problem. In it, a specific conceptual apparatus is structured, the main working concepts of "folklore" and "social competence" are derived. The essence and specifics of forming social competence through the integration of Bulgarian folklore in the initial stage of the basic educational degree in Bulgarian language

and literature, physical education and sports, man and society and man and nature, visual arts, and music are presented.

In order to bring out the possibilities for realizing the process of forming social competence through Bulgarian folklore, the doctoral student makes a thorough analysis of its provision in the curricula and the educational content in the education of 4th grade students. Special attention is paid to the social game as a leading socio-pedagogical method, which Zhana Koleva adopts and uses for the purposes of the research. 7 games are described with integrative links included in them, and it is emphasized that they can be used in the conditions of competence-oriented learning at the initial stage of the basic educational level in each part of the lesson in each of the educational subjects. It is not inferred, but it is implied that, based on the goals set in the described games, the doctoral student develops a primary protocol for one of the methods used in the research - the expert evaluation. The logical coherence of the text in the first chapter suggests a more reasonable and comprehensive conclusion about which of the presented possibilities are used in the model.

It should be emphasized that in this chapter the doctoral student Zhana Koleva shows a very good knowledge of both the regulatory framework and the practical educational process and the opportunities it offers.

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in the second chapter (pages 73-105). The goal and tasks are outlined. The object and subject are described. The hypothesis is formulated. The author's precise approach to the research contingent deserves attention. For the presentation of the student classes, the doctoral student starts from the position that the "Eysenck Questionnaire" (adapted version for adolescents) provides a broad overview for the study of various social competences and outlines the profile of the classes participating in the experiment, based on temperament. In a certain aspect, this input experiment can be defined as excessive, but, on the other hand, it sets another, more precise approach in the selection of researched individuals and groups. Guided by the principle that absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed when using only one method of pedagogical research, the doctoral student uses a system of such to compensate for the shortcomings of one method with another. The specificity of the research, which refers to the formation of social competence through the integration of Bulgarian folklore in the primary school, necessitates the use of a system of criteria, indicators and measurements, which Zhana Koleva illustrates in a table. She presents the structure of an integrative lesson and describes her integrative three-aspect, two-way-transpositional, five-line technology for presenting Bulgarian folklore and forming social competence.

The third chapter (106 – 164 pages) is about presenting and analyzing the results. Zhana Koleva has provided and has a rich set of data - well illustrated, within the framework of descriptive statistics. The results by classes are presented in the appendices, and the main part is the comparison between the two groups. For greater overview and clarity, it would be good if the results of the observation were comparable to those of the expert assessment, respectively - to be presented as those.

The conclusions are logically based and are derived from the overall concept.

### **Scientific contributions and achievements in the dissertation**

I share the contributions formulated by the doctoral student and I believe that the main merits of the doctoral dissertation developed by Zhana Plamenova Koleva are indisputable and can be outlined as follows:

- An innovative research approach, adequate to the needs of the Bulgarian school, was applied to the educational content of the primary education level - in the aspect of Bulgarian folklore and its role in the formation of social competence in students.
- The empirical research was carried out precisely and at a very good methodological level. Doctoral student Zhana Koleva has demonstrated research skills and knowledge of the basic requirements for conducting empirical research by using a very well-grounded diagnostic toolkit developed by her for the formation of social competence, combining questionnaire research and expert assessment.

The most significant moment in the dissertation, developed by Zhana Koleva, is the integrative technology described by her for the presentation of Bulgarian folklore in the process of learning specific subjects at the initial stage of the basic educational level. It is not only of indisputable practical significance, but is based on a serious theoretical analysis combined with a good knowledge of the problems of practice.

### **Evaluation of the abstract and publications**

The abstract for the dissertation work is designed according to the requirements of the regulatory framework and correctly reflects the content and structure of the dissertation research.

The author has a sufficiently large number - 6 in full - of publications on the subject of the dissertation, which speaks of a lasting interest in the issue. One of the publications is in "Pedagogika" magazine, 4 - in magazines from the

National Reference List. One publication was published in a journal in a foreign language (English).

### **Questions and recommendations**

In the future publication of the dissertation work in a book, I recommend the author to strengthen the emphasis on the specifics of the organized learning environment.

Question for the PhD student: What are the advantages of the organized learning environment for implementing the integrative technology presented in the dissertation and the traditional learning environment?

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation work and publications on its topic submitted for evaluation by the doctoral student Zhana Plamenova Koleva meet the minimum national requirements for the scientific, teaching and/or artistic or sports activities of candidates for obtaining a scientific degree and for holding the academic positions of "principal assistant", " Associate Professor" and "Professor" in scientific fields and/or professional areas in Scope 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Area 1.2. Pedagogy, referred to in the Appendix to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. With a required minimum of a total of 80 points, the doctoral student submits a scientific production, for which a total of 130 points are awarded - 50 for the dissertation work and 80 - for the publications, one of which is in Web of science.

The doctoral dissertation on the topic "Formation of social competence through Bulgarian folklore 1.-4. class", developed by Zhana Plamenova Koleva, is dedicated to an extremely significant topic in practical and applied terms and is undoubtedly an original work of the author. The fact that this issue is poorly developed in the Bulgarian scientific literature is also not without significance. The entire presentation of the dissertation shows the personal commitment and professional attitude of the doctoral student to the issues being developed. All this gives me the reason to support with **a positive evaluation** the doctoral dissertation developed by Zhana Plamenova Koleva and confidently vote for awarding the scientific and qualification degree Ph.D.

August 28, 2024

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Tsveta Delcheva, Ph.D