



REVIEW

by **Prof. Julia Georgieva Doncheva, DSc**

„Angel Kanchev“ University of Ruse

regarding the materials of doctoral student Zhana Plamenova Koleva, for awarding the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“, in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, by professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program „Theory of education and didactics“ at the department of „Pedagogical and social sciences“ at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Trakia University with topic of the dissertation: „Formation of social competence through Bulgarian folklore 1.-4. class“.

1. General biographical presentation of the candidate (education, qualifications, professional experience, etc.).

In summary, it is clear from the presented resume that the educational qualification, academic growth and upgrading of the doctoral student is very active and dynamic. Here I will present only a part of them, namely *Education and qualification*:

2002 - 2014 – studied and graduated from „Exarch Anthim I“ Secondary School - Kazanlak.

2014 - 2018 – at the Trakia University, Stara Zagora, she completed Bachelor’s degree in „Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy“.

2018 – 2019 – Master's degree at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, again in „Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy“.

2020 - until now she is a full-time doctoral student again at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, doctoral program „Theory of Education and Didactics“. With the present procedure, educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ will be acquired.



03. 09. 2018 - until now she is a teacher of the primary stage of education in N. Y. Vaptsarov Middle School, city of Kazanlak.

She has many acquired and certified qualifications, trainings and competencies.

She speaks English at a good level.

From the presented autobiography, it is clear that Zhana Koleva is an ambitious, motivated, responsible, systematic, searching, creative and goal-oriented person, multiplying her knowledge, skills and experience among young people - her trainees.

2. Data, constataion and assessment of the competition procedure, the doctoral studies, the dissertation, the autoreferat and the publications for the competition.

2.1. Compliance of the procedure with the current regulations. Data on the competition and doctoral studies - On the basis of Art. 4, para. 1 and 2 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 2, para. 1 and para. 2, Art. 30, para. 3, Art. 31, para. 1 from the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), and on the basis of Order No. 1117 of 21.03.2024. (Art. 31 of LDAS in Trakia University and decision of Faculty Council of The Faculty of Pedagogy) doctoral student Zhana Plamenova Koleva was expelled with the right to defense with a positive decision of the primary unit. She has completed her learning activities, successfully passed the exams of the individual study plan and completed the minimum number of credits. A move has been made to defend the dissertation. All preliminary legal and regulatory rules stipulated for this open procedure have been complied with. The present procedure has been opened for its readiness.



2.2. Dissertation data - The content of the scientific development, built in a logical sequence, includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and implications, contributions of the dissertation, references and appendices. The appendices included in the dissertation (15 in number) contain the research toolkit. The note has a total volume of 366 pages of active text, of which 169 are main, and the rest are literature and appendices. The obtained results are presented in 14 tables and 32 graphs. The literature – modern, up-to-date titles on the topic in the theoretical analysis of the research problem, is exposed with a total of 117 sources, in Cyrillic, in Latin, as well as the Internet, WEB-based electronic trajectories concerning scientific research. In the introduction, the author's thesis is presented, and the relevance and significance of the issues chosen for research are substantiated. The specificity of the research is presented in the standard components: subject, object, goal, hypotheses, tasks and organization and methodology of scientific research. Conclusions and Contributions of the dissertation work are derived. The raised hypothesis is confirmed.

Getting acquainted with the development of the scientific work, one can clearly conclude that the doctoral student's knowledge of the issues is prominent. Research work is based on discovery, application and verification, which makes it not only dissertable, but also developable, with an eye forward to the future. Zhana Koleva traces these searches throughout the scientific note. Quantitative and qualitative data were reflected and analyzed absolutely punctually and comprehensively according to all criteria, indicators, and approved groups, participants in the assessment.

I am pleased to state that no violations have been committed regarding the compliance of the dissertation and the originality of the work with the requirements of the LDASRB, the Rules for it, the Rules for the Acquisition of



Scientific Degrees of Trakia University - Stara Zagora and the internal rules of the institution (LDAS in Trakia University).

2.3. Data for the abstract - The abstract, with a total volume of 26 + 1 page of contributions, as well as 2 pages of literature, meets all the standard requirements for a synthesized and adequate, analytical and systematic development of the primary document, the scientific text, as well as the objective reflection of the content of the dissertation research. Some of the studies are selected in it, keeping their numbering as in the dissertation work. The structure, conclusions, recommendations and scientific contributions are followed. The academic and technical requirements for the design and presentation of it have been met in the paper version and in the digital form as an online publication. The correctness is visible, the scientific value of the scientific work has been analyzed, as well as the quantitative data according to the normative requirements in the national and internal-institutional laws and regulations.

2.4. Assessment of conformity of the scientific production according to the requirements of LDAS: Data on the publications - The doctoral student participated with the following scientific production, related to the Scientometric criteria for the minimum national requirements for the scientific and teaching activity of candidates for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions, District 1. Pedagogical Sciences as follows:

- *Dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree „doctor“, Group A, Indicator 1 → 50 points.*

Publications - a total of **6 issues**, independent, published in the period from 2019 to 2024. Group G 7. *Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes: Total number of points under the Publications indicator = 60 points.*

From here, it can be categorically summarized that the sum of the indicators of the respective groups (110 points) **fully meets** the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of LDASRB and art. 1a, paragraph 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB and respectively to Art. 24, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB (for the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“) for area 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional field 1.2. Pedagogy.

2.5. Actuality of the issues of the dissertation work. Content and evaluation of scientific contributions.

2.5.1. Actuality of the issues of the dissertation work. The topic „Formation of social competence through Bulgarian folklore 1.-4. class“ is extremely relevant and important for modern education for several reasons:

- ✓ **Reconnecting with national identity:** In a rapidly changing world where cultural influences are numerous, it is essential that children/students get to know their roots and develop a sense of belonging to Bulgarian culture. Folklore offers a unique way to achieve this, passing down values, traditions and customs from generation to generation.
- ✓ **Development of key competences:** Through the study of Bulgarian folklore, children/students develop a number of important skills such as:
 - **Communication skills:** Telling stories, songs, riddles.
 - **Creativity:** Creating your own folklore works.
 - **Critical thinking:** Analyzing texts and symbols.
 - **Emotional intelligence:** Understanding human emotions and relationships.
 - **Cultural sensitivity:** Respect for differences and diversity.



- ✓ **Enrichment of the learning process:** Folklore can be integrated into various learning subjects such as Bulgarian language, literature, music, fine arts, history and even mathematics. This makes learning more interesting, fun and memorable.
- ✓ **Preservation of the intangible cultural heritage:** By involving the children in the world of folklore, one contributes to the preservation and popularization of the Bulgarian cultural heritage.
- ✓ **Response to modern challenges:** In the age of digital technologies and fast pace of life, folklore offers children an opportunity to connect with something deeper and more authentic. It helps them develop a sense of balance and harmony in a fast-paced world.

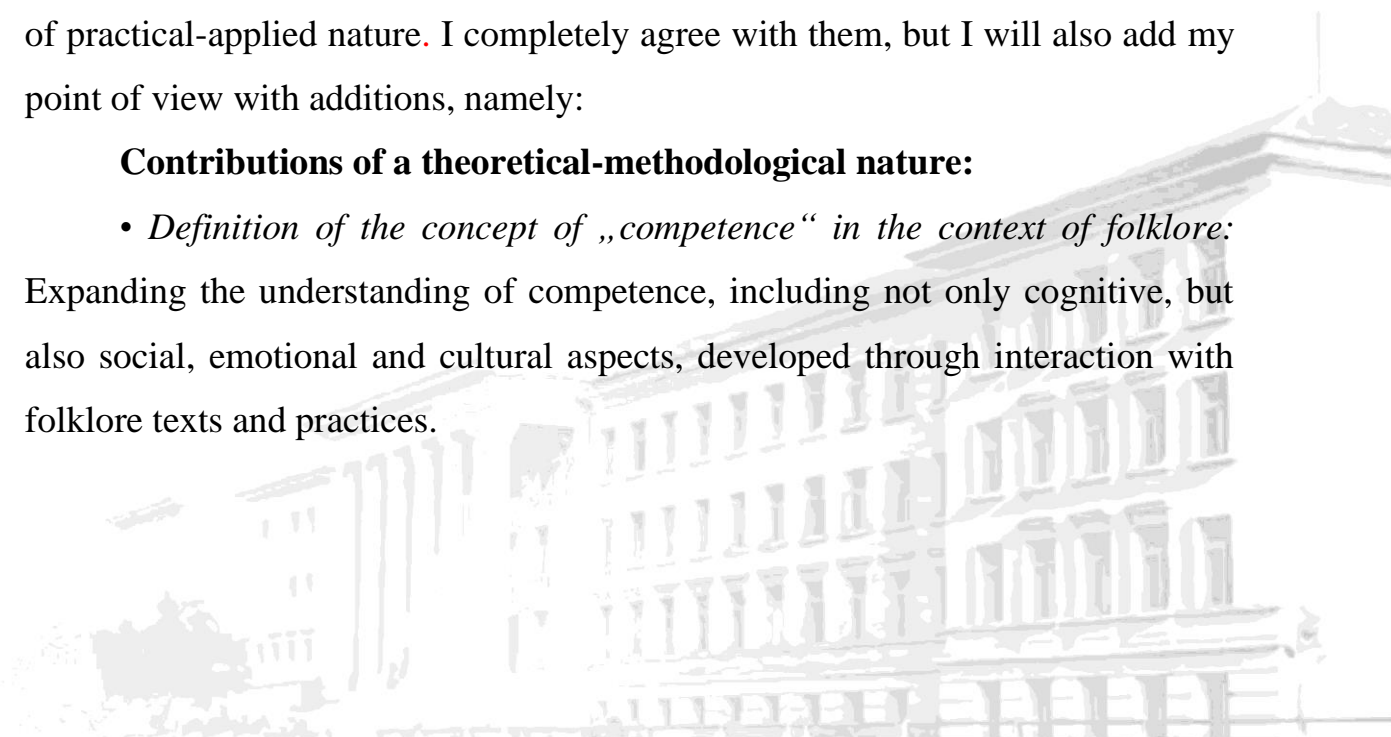
The formation of competence through Bulgarian folklore is an investment in the future of our children and students. It gives them a solid foundation for personal development and prepares them for a successful life in the modern world.

2.5.2. Content and evaluation of scientific contributions.

The doctoral student has summarized the Contributions of the topic „Formation of social competence through Bulgarian folklore 1.-4. class“ in two categories - Contributions of theoretical-methodological nature and Contributions of practical-applied nature. I completely agree with them, but I will also add my point of view with additions, namely:

Contributions of a theoretical-methodological nature:

- *Definition of the concept of „competence“ in the context of folklore:* Expanding the understanding of competence, including not only cognitive, but also social, emotional and cultural aspects, developed through interaction with folklore texts and practices.





- *Theoretical framework for integrating folklore into the learning process:* Development of models and strategies for effective inclusion of folklore elements in various educational subjects and activities.

- *Analysis of existing curricula and teaching materials:* Identification of opportunities and limitations for the use of folklore in the modern educational environment.

- *Development of methods for teaching folklore:* Creation of various methods and techniques stimulating the interest and active participation of students.

- *Exploring the relationship between folklore and the development of key competencies:* Identifying the specific ways in which folklore contributes to the formation of skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, etc.

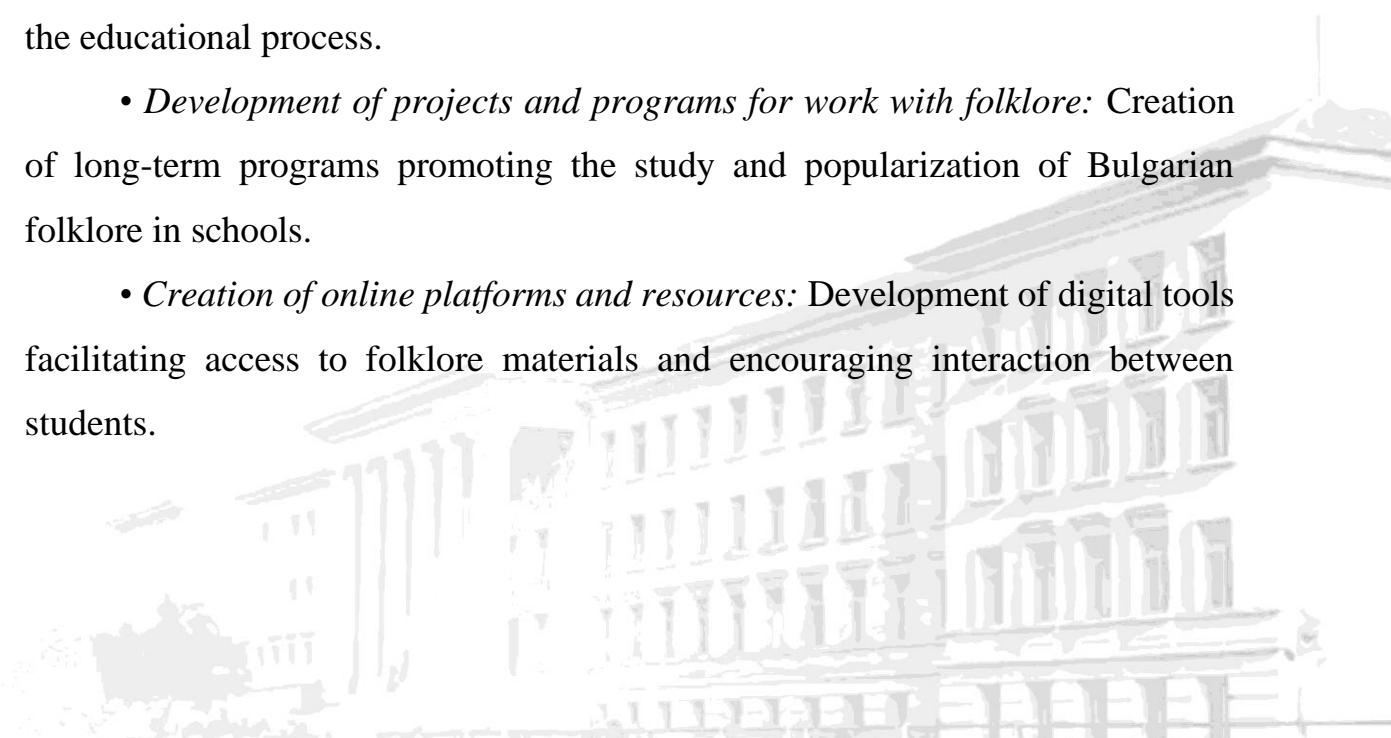
Contributions of a practical nature:

- *Creation of teaching materials:* Development of textbooks, worksheets, presentations and other didactic materials supporting teachers in their work with folklore texts and practices.

- *Organizing seminars and trainings for teachers:* Providing opportunities for teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills for effective use of folklore in the educational process.

- *Development of projects and programs for work with folklore:* Creation of long-term programs promoting the study and popularization of Bulgarian folklore in schools.

- *Creation of online platforms and resources:* Development of digital tools facilitating access to folklore materials and encouraging interaction between students.





- *Organizing folklore events and festivals:* Creating opportunities for students to present their knowledge and skills related to folklore and to learn about the achievements of other children and students.

Research in the field of competence formation through Bulgarian folklore contributes to enriching the theoretical basis of education and offers many practical tools for teachers. By integrating folklore into the educational process, we not only preserve and promote the Bulgarian cultural heritage, but also develop key competences in the children/students that will be useful to them throughout their lives.

- Doctoral student Zhana Koleva brings out the main contributions, as well as conclusions and recommendations, which correspond and correlate with the dissertation research. They are presented clearly, correctly and above all, which is extremely important, with a focus on application in real practice. They cover the whole process from the seed to its successful finalization, with accompanying arguments, creating and leaving an impression of a researcher responsible and committed to the current research, development and enhancement of teachers' competencies.

Summarizing the mandatory part of the review about the contributing moments of the scientific work, I will note that developments of this kind should find a place in the scientific literature, not only at the national, but also at the international level, so that pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists and experts interested in the problem can find their answers.

Here is the place to congratulate its scientific supervisor, Prof. Dr. Romyana Neminska, DSc, as well as the scientific consultant Prof. Dr. Milen Dimitrov, for the extremely professional and competent management and finalization of the scientific work, the subject of which is particularly significant, current and, I would say, ahead of its time. The dissertation is an example of writing, structuring,



analyzing and presenting theoretical, scientific and scientific-applied research. An example in every single nature, as they say „like a textbook“! Congratulations!

The scientific production - dissertation, abstract and publications submitted for participation in the competition does not contain any weaknesses that would detract from its merits.

3. Personal impressions.

I don't know the doctoral student personally, but judging by her scientific work, I can definitely summarize that the colleague has a potential that must be developed and upgraded, which I believe will be the case, because individuals like her do not stay at one level, but continue forward and up.

4. Testimonials. Critical notes. Questions for the PhD student. Critical remarks, suggestions and recommendations.

As a recommendation, I can point out the following: it is good for Zhana Koleva to expand her participation in national and international educational projects. In other words, to have an aspiration for and to popularize the results of the research activity in publications in English, German, Russian and other languages. Research such as the one presented here should be „heard“ and „visible“ to the national and global scientific community. I also strongly recommend, I would even say insist, that the note be issued in paper or electronic form.

Questions:

- In what ways can Bulgarian folklore contribute to the development of key competences among students in this age period?
- What are the advantages and challenges of integrating folklore elements into the learning process?
- What are the current trends in the use of folklore in education?



- What are the role and responsibilities of the teacher in introducing folklore elements into the learning process?
- How is interest in Bulgarian folklore changing among modern children/students?
- What are the expectations of parents and society regarding the use of folklore in education?

5. Conclusion - Doctoral student Zhana Plamenova Koleva has fulfilled her obligations arising from the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB, the Regulations of the Trakia University, Stara Zagora, as well as the obligations under the relevant individual study plan of the doctoral student, that is to say, meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of LDASRB and art. 1a, paragraph 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB. The form and content of the dissertation meet the requirements of Art. 27 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB. All administrative procedures have been followed.

Bearing in mind the above, I confidently give **my positive assessment** of the conducted research, presented in the dissertation work, the abstract, the achieved results and contributions.

I declare **my positive vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ to Zhana Plamenova Koleva** in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program „Theory of Education and Didactics“, at the Department of Pedagogical and Social Sciences, Faculty of Pedagogy of Trakia University - Stara Zagora.

Prepared the review, as a member of the scientific jury:

(Prof. Julia Doncheva, DSc)

29.07.2024