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**DEVELOPING THE ETHNOCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BY CAPITALIZING ON  
FOLKLORE CREATION**

**Speciality 531.01 - General Theory of Education**

**Summary of the doctoral thesis in educational sciences**

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### List of abbreviations:

DEX	– Explanatory Dictionary
UN	– United Nations
UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
LLR	– Romanian Language and Literature
CF	– Folk creation
EE	– Ethnocultural education
CG	– Control group
GE	– Experimental group
PFCC	– Ethnocultural Competence Training Programme
CIE	– International Commission for Education in the 21st Century
CE	– Ethnocultural Competence
MPFCE	–The Pedagogical Model for Developing Ethnocultural Competence

## CONCEPTUAL LANDMARKS OF THE RESEARCH

**The relevance and importance of the research topic** derives and results from analysing the educational process in the Republic of Moldova and Romania, which currently aims not only to ensure moral and cultural values, but also to change behaviours and mentalities. In the context of today's societies, young people are prepared to become independent and flexible personalities, capable of adapting to social changes. Thus, according to the Education Code, the purpose of secondary education is to form a free and creative society by developing students' skills and counselling them to choose an optimal educational path, whether it be high school, secondary technical vocational education or post-secondary education. Europe, Education [47, art. 28].

Social, political and economic reforms update the ethnic and national self-determination of citizens, which proves *the need for corrective measures regarding the revival of popular pedagogy, the education of value orientations through popular ideals, through national values that determine the basis of ethnic culture*. These directives stem from the educational ideals of both the Republic of Moldova and Romania, as well as from the Republic of Moldova's "Education 2030" [47], development strategy [48], which directs educational activities towards "the most current approaches, concepts and trends in curriculum development..." [48, p. 15], and from Romania's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030, in which education means "a process that prepares young generations for the challenges of the future and continues throughout life..." [48, p. 37]. In the context of these clarifications, international bodies such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the OECD, the World Bank, the Bologna Declaration - European Union, which have identified on their agenda the priority of quality education based on inclusion, tolerance, excellence, success, respect, collaboration, diversity, integrity and opportunities or lifelong learning opportunities, i.e. immersion learning. The principle of immersion learning also highlights the field of ethnopedagogy, which represents the wisdom/teachings of folklore, which, in certain harmful contexts deliberately assumed by educational institutions, has been abandoned or omitted from disciplinary curricula.

In the current context of student skills training/development, content is increasingly focused on canonical texts and areas of modern and contemporary Romanian or European/world literature. *Texts from folklore are less valued and are almost absent from some levels of education. For these reasons, we believe that it is very important to operationalise and study the value potential of folklore humanely and rationally* [8].

Cultural diversity and national and international values call for changes that will make it more efficient to involve young people in cultural and spiritual life, not only within their own cultural communities but also beyond their cultural borders. In this perspective, *folklore creation signifies the origin of the enrichment of modern society and the formation of ethnocultural competence*.

### **Description of the situation in the field of research and identification of the research problem.**

The research topic has sparked theoretical, scientific, and psycho-pedagogical discussions and debates among authors from the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and abroad. Studies related to the research topic were carried out in fields such as: *philosophy of culture and civilisation* (P. Andrei [2], R. Benedict [14], M. Aiftinică [1], G. Antonescu [4], T. Vianu [49]); *sociology of knowledge and value* (P. Andrei [2], P. Bourdou [18], N. Culea [25], Ș. Bârsănescu [12], R. Benedict [14], L. Antonesei [5], M. Bocoș [16]); *sociology of politics and culture* (P. Andrei [2], L. Antonesei [5]; L. Blaga [15]); *sociology of education* (C. Cuciș [22, 23], G. Ionescu [34]; M.G.Ciot [20]); *social psychology* (P. Iluș [32], I. Jude [34], Ș.T. Boncu [17], A. Niculau [40], I. Radu [43]); *epistemology of educational sciences* (S. Băciu [6], S. Marcus [38], C. Bârzea [13], M. Zlate [53], I. Gagim [28], Vl. Pâslaru [41, 42]); *axiological education* (Cuciș C. [22], V. Mândăcanu [39], Vl. Pâslaru [42], N. Silistraru [44, 45], S. Băciu [7], D. Antoci [3], M. Hădîrcă [31], Nelu Vicol [50, 51]); *ethnopedagogy* (N. Silistraru [44]; T. Панько [54]); *artistic and*

*aesthetic education* (Vl. Pâslaru [41] I. Gagim [28], C. Cucos [22, 23]); *linguistic and literary education* (Vl. Pâslaru [42], T. Callo [19], M. Hadîrcă [31], Nelu Vicol [52]).

In the context of these areas, the works of Immanuel Kant are also relevant, particularly in the study of moral personality, moral law, moral duties, moral coercion, etc. [36].

In an open secondary education system, the issue of preserving/conserving the cultural diversity of countries and educational systems becomes relevant. Thus, **we relate the development of the ethno-cultural competence of secondary school students through the valorisation of folklore to:**

- a) ***theoretical aspects:*** the bibliographic sources examined do not include the property of the concept or scientific interpretations related to it. Therefore, the concept remains confusing for the scientific and educational community in the absence of a homogeneous interpretation to account for current theories, especially since they lend themselves to different fields of scientific knowledge;
- b) ***methodological aspects:*** secondary education focuses on certain academic skills, some of which relate to cultural expression in general. However, the lack of content in the field of ethnopädagogy in the respective curriculum also leads to the absence of ethnocultural competence developed by students through the valorisation of folklore. It is clear that there is a need to modify the content of education in university programmes/curricula that are particularly relevant to the ethnopädagogical training of teachers.

In this sense, modern society needs teachers who can flexibly and tactfully apply *the principle of ethnocultural orientation in education*. This approach involves *the ethnocultural training of teachers in the spirit of national culture*, taking into account the ethnic characteristics of national minorities living in the Republic of Moldova and Romania [10]. This approach will contribute to national and cultural integration, achieved within the framework of European democratic principles.

During the preliminary analysis and based on these objectives, we identified the following **contradictions:**

- between Romanian folklore, as educational heritage, and the lack of mechanisms for promoting national culture, as support for secondary school teachers;
- between the acute demands of modern society for the formation of *national culture* among secondary school students and the lack of a *methodological system* for shaping *their cultural awareness*;
- between the importance of valuing children's personalities and *the approach to folklore creation* as a priority element *in the formation of the ethnocultural competence* of secondary school students.
- between the dissociation of the importance of recognising the value of children's personalities and the way in which folklore is approached as an essential element in the development of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students.

The contradictions identified and the solutions envisaged in the bibliographic literature do not exhaust the problematic contexts and correlations of the research. Thus, in our view, these contexts have led to the formulation of **the research question:** what are the theoretical landmarks and practical methods for developing ethnocultural competence in secondary school students through the promotion of folklore?

**The object of the research** was the process of developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore.

**The purpose of the research** lies in theoretical and methodological substantiation of the formation of *ethnocultural competence* of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation.

**The objectives of the research** are focused on:

1. the scientific and historical interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of *cultural research, folklore/folkloristics, ethnoculture, ethno-artistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, and ethnocultural competence*;
2. highlighting and configuring the determining factors of *contextual values* in national folklore creation and the principles, conditions, factors and practices of ethnocultural competence formation;
3. conceptualising *the pedagogical model and methodology for developing* students' *ethnocultural competence* in terms of criteria, indicators, descriptors and values;
4. diagnosing the levels of training in ethnocultural competence and determining the theoretical approach to the concept of students' *ethnocultural competence* by capitalising on folklore;
5. developing, implementing and experimentally validating the *Optional school syllabus for developing* students' *ethnocultural competence* in secondary school by capitalising on folklore;
6. formulating scientific conclusions and recommendations regarding the development of ethnocultural competence in secondary school students by capitalising on folklore.

**Research hypothesis:** The formation of ethnocultural competence of middle school students will be effective if educational activities based on the valorization of folklore creation will be designed according to coherent theoretical and methodological guidelines, ensuring the development of ethnocultural and ethnoartistic acquisitions for the implementation of extracurricular activities, which will lead to the resolution of didactic tasks oriented towards the development of this competence

**Methodological synthesis and justification of the methods selected for conducting the research**

- *theoretical methods:* scientific documentation/bibliographic study; theoretical modelling through analysis and synthesis; generalisation and systematisation; induction and deduction; mathematical modelling;
- *empirical methods:* scientific observation; conversation; student surveys; teacher and parent questionnaires; pedagogical experiments;
- *statistical methods:* qualitative and quantitative analysis of experimental data.

**The novelty and scientific originality** result from: establishing conceptual benchmarks regarding the formation of ethnocultural competence in the perspective of national and international normative provisions; the scientific interpretation of the evolution of operational concepts of *culture, folk creation/folklore/folkloristics, ethnoculture, ethno-artistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; conceptualising the Pedagogical model for developing ethnocultural competence: developing an assessment grid* for ethnocultural competence based on the criteria, descriptors and values of ethnocultural competence; developing principles for developing ethnocultural competence by capitalising on folklore creation in the process of implementing *the Optional school syllabus* and the curriculum for its implementation.

**The results obtained that contribute to solving the important scientific problem in research** are related to: the scientific interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of the investigation: *culture, folk creation/folklore/folkloristics, ethnoculture, ethno-artistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; The pedagogical model for training ethnocultural competence: the assessment grid* for ethnocultural competence based on the criteria, descriptors and values of ethnocultural competence; *the principles of training ethnocultural competence, the Optional school syllabus* for training the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore creation.

**The theoretical significance** of the research lies in establishing national regulatory provisions involving continuing professional development and the promotion of folklore. the scientific interpretation of the evolution of operational research concepts: *culture, folk creation/folklore/folkloristics, ethnoculture, ethno-artistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural*

*congruence, ethnocultural competence; conceptualising the pedagogical model for training in ethnocultural competence: developing an assessment grid for ethnocultural competence based on the criteria, descriptors and values of ethnocultural competence; elucidating the principles of training in ethnocultural competence; describing the factors that determine the use of folklore in training in ethnocultural competence; theoretical synthesis on the specifics of developing ethnocultural competence through the use of folklore and the formulation of new scientific conclusions on the development of ethnocultural competence in secondary school students through the use of folklore.*

**The practical value of the research** lies in identifying and interpreting/describing pedagogical experiences in teaching students and training teachers through the use of folklore; conceptualising tools for (self-)assessment of the level of development of ethnocultural competence in secondary school students (questionnaire, assessment scale); the development, implementation and validation of *the Optional school syllabus* for training students' ethnocultural competence by capitalising on folklore; capitalising on the principles of developing ethnocultural competence in secondary school education and formulating scientific conclusions and significant recommendations for updating the management of general education processes in Romania and the Republic of Moldova with a view to capitalising on folklore.

The scientific problem solved in the investigation lies in the configuration, the theoretical basis and validation in pedagogical practice of the Optional school syllabus for the development of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore on an extended sample of experimental subjects, which contributed to raising teachers' awareness of the gaps and discrepancies identified in secondary education and to increasing and raising their interest in implementing and capitalising on folklore in the educational process; design and technology transfer in educational practice; self-assessment through the use of criteria, indicators and descriptors of the curriculum by teachers and their orientation towards innovation, creativity, efficiency and originality in the student environment. The social impact of the research lies in the creation and establishment of a community of educators focused on research and innovation in educational practice, with effects and relevance for the development of students' investigative skills in accordance with the provisions of policy documents in the field of teacher professionalisation.

**The scientific results** were implemented by disseminating them in the context of national scientific and scientific-methodological events, national events with international participation and international events, and validated experimentally at Secondary School No. 29 in Galați, Romania, with 102 students from grades 5A, B, C, D and 26 teachers taking part.

**Publications on the thesis topic:** the investigative course of the topic, in its integrity, materialized through the development of 17 scientific papers: 3 scientific articles published in specialized scientific journals from the National Register of specialized journals included in the List of databases accepted by ANACEC of the Republic of Moldova, 2 scientific journals from Romania, 1 in an international journal, 6 scientific-didactic materials published in Romania (pdf DVD format), and 5 articles presented and published in volumes with materials from national and international conferences.

**Thesis structure:** introduction, 3 chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliographic sources and appendices.

**Key concepts:** culture, ethnocultural education, ethnoartistic culture, pedagogical model, folklore creation, ethnocultural competence, preadolescent/student, teacher, optional school curriculum.

## CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

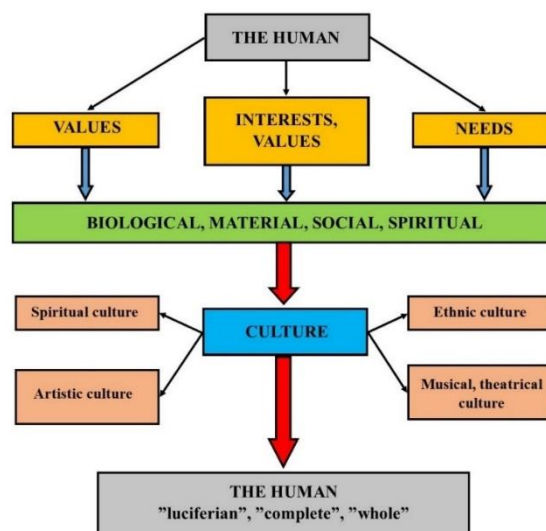
**The Introduction** presents a synthesis of scientific and historical ideas with reference to the relevance and importance of the research topic, a description of the situation in the field in question and an argumentation of the research problem; the purpose and objectives of the research, the hypothesis, the research methodology, the scientific novelty and originality, the theoretical significance and practical value of the investigation, the scientific problem solved in the investigation, the implementation and approval of the research results, the volume, structure and summary of the thesis sections are formulated.

**Chapter 1 "Education through culture: foundation of ethnocultural competence building in high school students"** outlines and analyses the main theoretical directions of culture as a factor regulating and stimulating human behaviour. In this context, culture, as a system of values, is the product of the activity of a people, a nation, or a being. Therefore, it is natural and logical that the human personality can develop and activate only in *the context of its national culture*, to which it is genetically and spiritually linked, through education and learning. Society in general, and man in particular, build their existence by operationalising certain elements of intangible culture, including *cognitive, axiological, normative and symbolic components of ethno-artistic culture*, which present themselves as a synthetic, syncretic concept, as a philosophical, anthropological, psychological and artistic achievement of personality. *Ethno-artistic culture*, situated between *the totality of artistic values* created by the people throughout history and the capacity for aesthetic and artistic *receptivity* of the personality, represents the *attitudinal and aptitudinal* aspect of the people (of the personality). The presence of the ethno-artistic culture of personality can be observed through *the capacity* for reflection on *folk art* and its appreciation in terms of value, which can therefore ensure the existence of personality, the people, the nation [40]. These desiderata have led to the highlighting and establishment of *the functions of ethno-artistic and ethno-cultural education*. Education is conceived as an investment in people and is a concern for the whole of society through the optimal use of its material and human resources. The family, the social environment, the school, the Church, cultural institutions, the media and associative structures all contribute to education. In the constellation of these factors in the education of the younger generation, the school plays a central role, being "the main social institution specialised in preparing people for work and life" [11]. The International Commission on Education for the 21st Century plays an essential role in shaping the vision of a future dominated by globalisation. Its president, Jacques Delors, in his report to UNESCO [32], systematises the perspectives in three important directions:

1. from the local *community* to a *global society*;
2. from *social cohesion* to *democratic participation*;
3. from *economic growth* to *human development*.

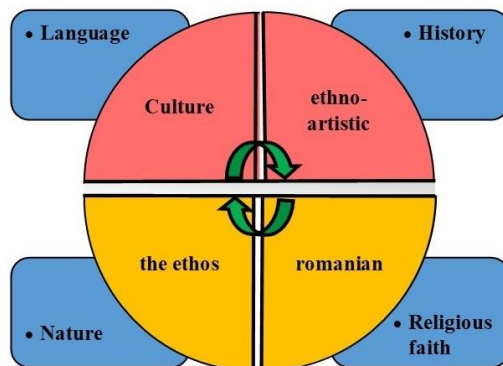
Promoting knowledge and understanding of folklore as an integral part of intercultural education involves not only active and creative participation, but also a continuous process of cultivating curiosity and respect for one's own cultural values, as well as those of other peoples. Essentially, this form of education promotes an open, thoughtful and sensitive attitude that fosters a genuine interest in the common spiritual heritage of humanity.

We believe that T. Vianu's main contribution to the history and theory of culture is his conception of *the meaning of culture*. T. Vianu was open to the integration of sociology into the approach to culture, concluding that "the cultural ideal, before being general and valid for all humanity, is specific to certain societies and certain eras" [49, p. 291]. The anthropological relationship between man and culture: the complete man, according to previous research, is schematically demonstrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The anthropological relationship between "man and culture: *the complete man*" (L. Blaga)**

This figure shows a dialectical relationship between the existential and the axiological, arguing that people are not always the same, but change, and their needs change over time. In contrast, value remains constant, representing the ideal expression of harmony between the individual and the world, by analysing the ethnic factor both as a result of social differences and as an element that determines the structure of social reality. Currently, some ethnologists are revisiting and developing the ideas of the aforementioned sociologist, viewing ethnicity as a social group formed alongside the evolution of the historical community, whose members are united in an ethno-artistic cultural contiguity through objective features such as language, customs, religion and others, as shown in the figure below:

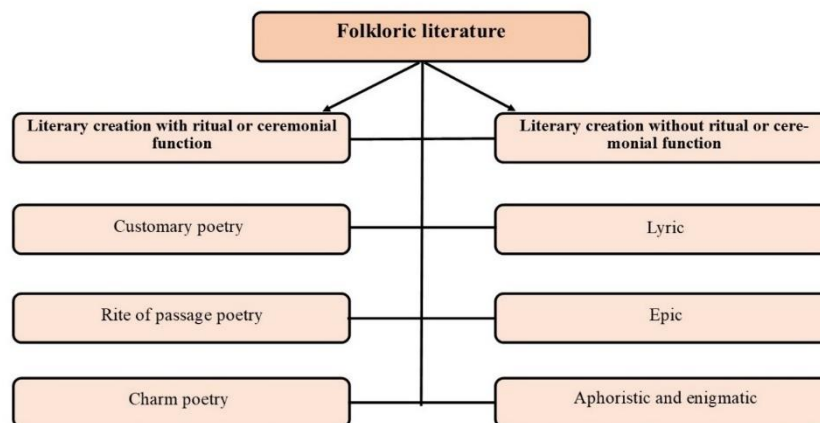


**Figure 2. Ethno-artistic cultural contiguity (Romanian ethos)**

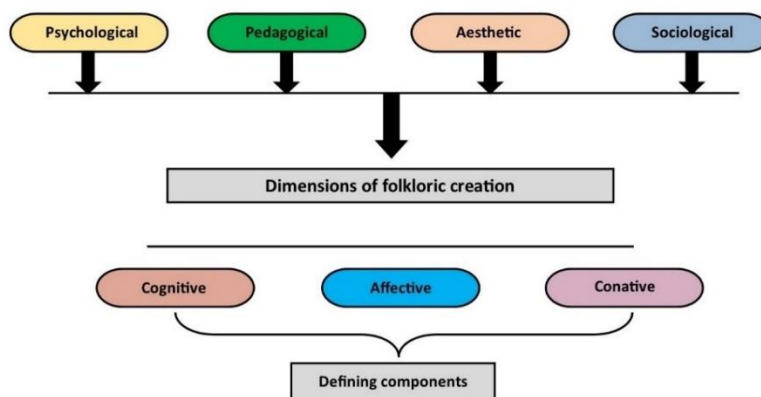
Through folklore, ethno-artistic culture and ethnopedagogy, the educational process opens up to interculturality, a concept that reflects communication and cooperation between cultures, as several researchers have pointed out. T. Cozma identifies the main dimensions of intercultural education aimed at preserving cultural diversity, openness to new things and to difference, developing the ability to understand and accept otherness, eliminating fear of the other and prejudice, developing the ability to manage conflicts, recognising ethno-social landmarks, building relationships between peoples, promoting mutual respect and understanding between cultures [22].

These converge towards *literary and artistic education*, meaning a type and field of education that involves training readers during their school years to become cultured readers of literary works, capable of adequately receiving, commenting on and interpreting a wide variety of literary and artistic texts,

understanding literary and interpretative texts, and possibly producing such texts themselves. Ovid Densușianu [26, p. 45] directed folklore research towards a broader vision, with the aim of capturing, in essence, "*the entire spiritual icon of a people*", that is, the totality of elements that define collective spirituality – the emotions, thoughts, beliefs and life experiences of ordinary people. These are reflected in the figures below:



**Figure 3. Types of folklore literature**



**Figure 4. Functions, dimensions and components of folkloric creation**

Folk creation also incorporates various concepts and theories about the origin of folklore, among which the following stand out: *the traditionalist concept, the ritualistic and mythological concept, the mystical theory and the theory of fallen goods* [44, p. 53].

**Folklore creation** refers to all forms of artistic expression through which the community manifests its collective way of knowing and interpreting reality; folklore represents the ensemble of *artistic and spiritual productions* of popular culture.

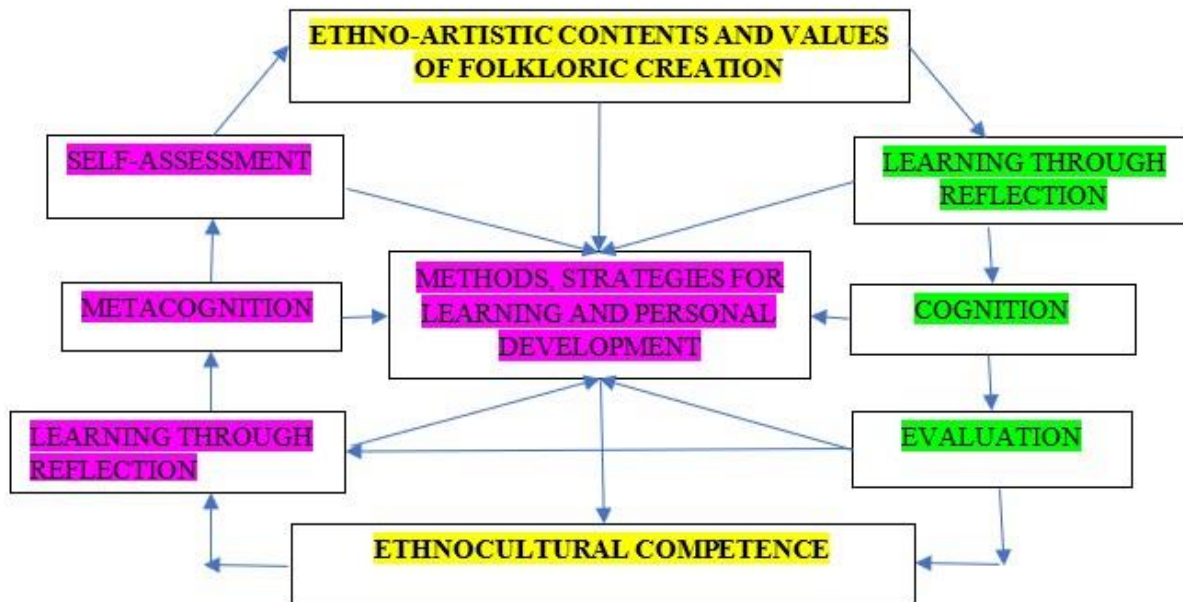
Thus, through epic, lyrical and dramatic folkloric texts, children develop axiological orientations [3] regarding *moral values* (goodness, honesty, duty, humanity, dignity, responsibility, fairness), *artistic values* (beauty, tragedy, sublimity, comedy), *religious values* (divinity, sacredness), *economic values* (well-being, work, wealth, prosperity), *fundamental values of humanity* that are the foundations of life. There has always been a close relationship between folklore and formal pedagogy. By analysing the

works of authors and oral folk creations through the lens of modern educational theories, we can outline an updated pedagogical vision of folklore, namely the concept of *pedagogical paideuma*. This is based on the term introduced by the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius [27]. Starting from this concept, we can talk about the pedagogical paideuma of a space, resulting from ethno-artistic culture [7] (table below):

**Table 1. Aspectual specifications of ethno-artistic culture**

ETHNO-ARTISTIC CULTURE	
Anthropological (axiological) aspects:	Psycho-pedagogical (educational) aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The totality of artistic values created by the people throughout history</li> <li>• The result of an 'ontological mutation' (L. Blaga)</li> <li>• The congruence of the people's <i>attitudes and aptitudes</i></li> <li>• State of self-awareness</li> <li>• Ensuring existence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aesthetic and artistic receptivity</li> <li>• Interest in and love for folk traditions</li> <li>• The need for communication within the framework of national values</li> <li>• Knowledge of folk art</li> <li>• The ability to reflect on folk art and appreciate its value</li> </ul>

These clarifications lead to the valorisation of folk creation in the educational process, which confirms the purpose and object of our research regarding the imminent need to develop students' ethnocultural competence, which incorporates certain mental/cognitive processes (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values) contiguous in its functionality, signifying a continuous and actionable circuit in the process of assimilating folklore creation by middle school students (figure below):



**Figure 5. Congruent mental/cognitive processes of ethnocultural competence functionality**

Therefore, from the above, we can deduce that the success in building ethnocultural competence plays an important role in the typology of logical relationships between concepts, which is identified as the conceptual map of this process. Such typology sums up causal relationships, subordination relationships and similarity or differentiation relationships, these representing *the anchoring of reflection and cognition, of reflexion and metacognition in the learning process through the integration and*

*mobilization of the system of knowledge, skills and cultural and ethno-artistic values of folklore creation at the level of secondary education.*

Thus, each generation educates the next by passing on its accumulated experiences, and *the relationship of mutual influence* is present with maximum intensity due to ethno-cultural communication between individuals and between generations or due to subtle phenomena of *social perception, non-verbal communication, contagion or psychosocial influence* through which they can intuit or anticipate what is expected of them. Basically, the individual manifests a series of *repeatable behaviours and conduct* both in their own existence and in the existence of others within their generation. In this context, David Kolb's *experiential learning* [36, p. 125] is identified through the convergence of both reflection-cognition, i.e. through *concrete knowledge* of the learning cycle, and reflection-metacognition, in which concrete experiences are followed by *abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation*. This congruence establishes and consolidates the transfer of learning and the application of new knowledge by students in various life situations, which signifies their ethnocultural competence through the valorisation of folkloric creation.

This congruence of learning through cognition and metacognition promotes students' ethnocultural competence based on several *mechanisms*, similar to an investigative 'drone':

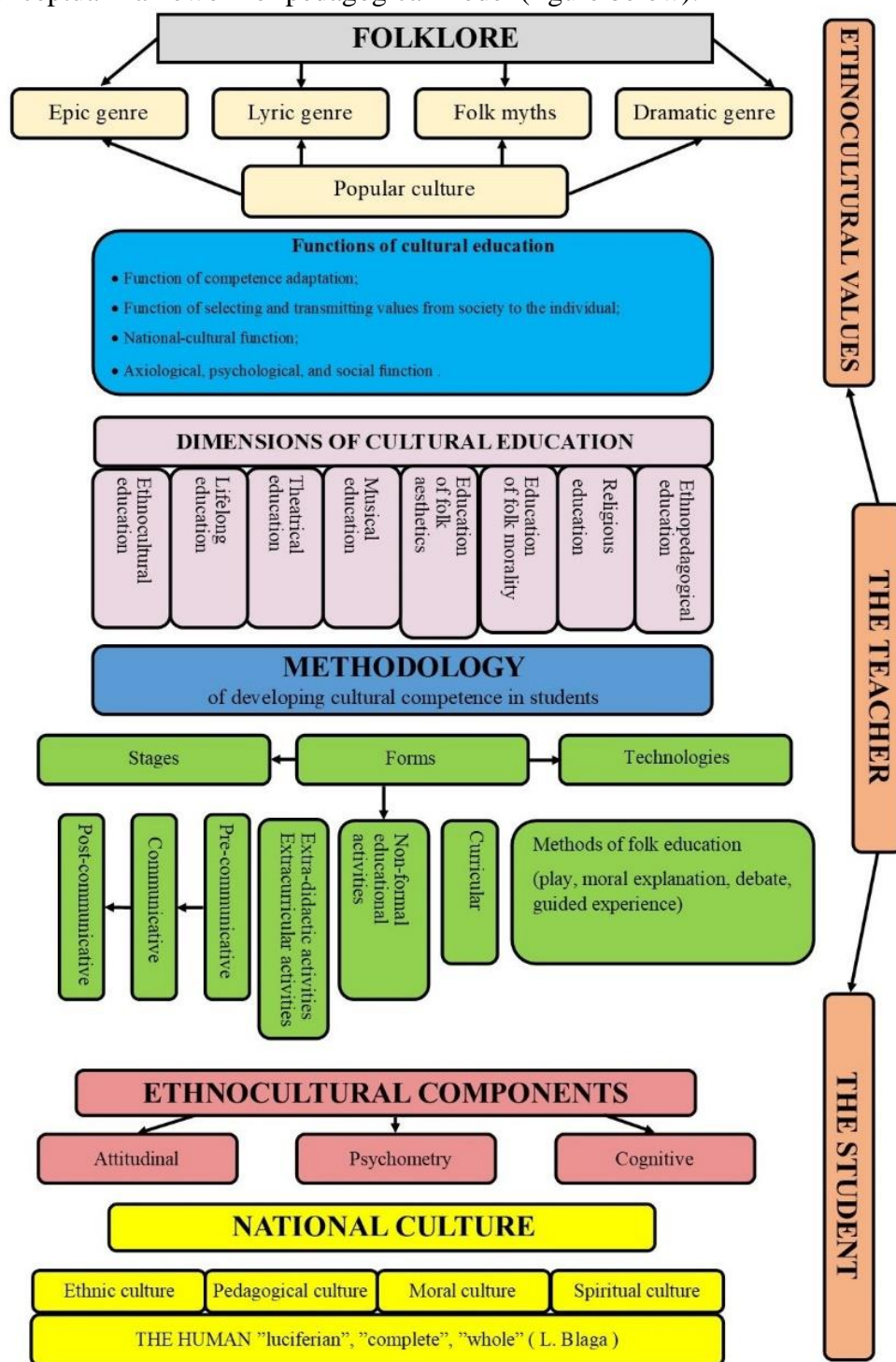
- *the integration of visual, auditory and tactile senses* that promotes connections between various types of information;
- *conceptualisation* through reflection, which promotes understanding by aligning new knowledge with previous experiences;
- *interdisciplinary connections and projects* that promote learning and exploration in diverse and broad perspectives of fields of knowledge through the integration and transfer of knowledge, skills and values;
- *practical orientation and applicability* that facilitates the congruence of multidimensional knowledge.

Therefore, the structural components underpin the processes of reflection-cognition and reflection-metacognition on the acquisition of *knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes/values* of the student in the learning of integrated content and mobilised in the development of valid and applicable products appropriate to the socio-cultural context "to perform consistently and successfully in a specified field" [33, p. 125].

**Chapter 2. "The Model and Methodology for developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students by capitalising on folklore creation"** The content of this chapter includes and describes the original elements of the research. This chapter addresses both *the defining elements and mechanisms* of folklore creation – psychological, pedagogical, aesthetic, sociological – and *the functions* of folklore creation – cognitive, affective, conative – as well as *teaching strategies and tools for studying folklore creation in secondary school*. In this context, in order to achieve high-quality education, it is necessary to continuously develop the components of educational standards, as directed by pedagogical experience. These modernisations are imposed by the influence of several *conditions in the formation of ethnocultural competence*: it can be influenced by *economic, social, pedagogical and psychological conditions* and by *inadequate teaching strategies*, which we visualise as "value myopia" or "value crisis" [9]. Folklore creation is the cultural process that is transmitted from one generation to another through different forms and contents, encompassing various values, beliefs, norms, requirements, etc.

To minimise or even exclude such "value myopia" in the design and implementation of the curricular content of the educational process, is it necessary to amplify and substantiate the approach and reality of *the value and formative complex of folkloric creation* for students to discover the "natural", ingenuous cultural set through the deliberate study of folkloric creation, transforming it into a rare and privileged opportunity for corrective education, noticeable in various desirable actions [50, p. 109-155].

Our investigation aims specifically at discovering and opening up this “natural cultural set”, through analyses, syntheses and theoretical, methodological, praxiological and axiological relevances which, in the specialized literature, are not highlighted even today. Based on the scientific interpretation, the determination of classifications, the functions of folkloric creation and the formulated principles, we developed the conceptual framework or pedagogical model (figure below):

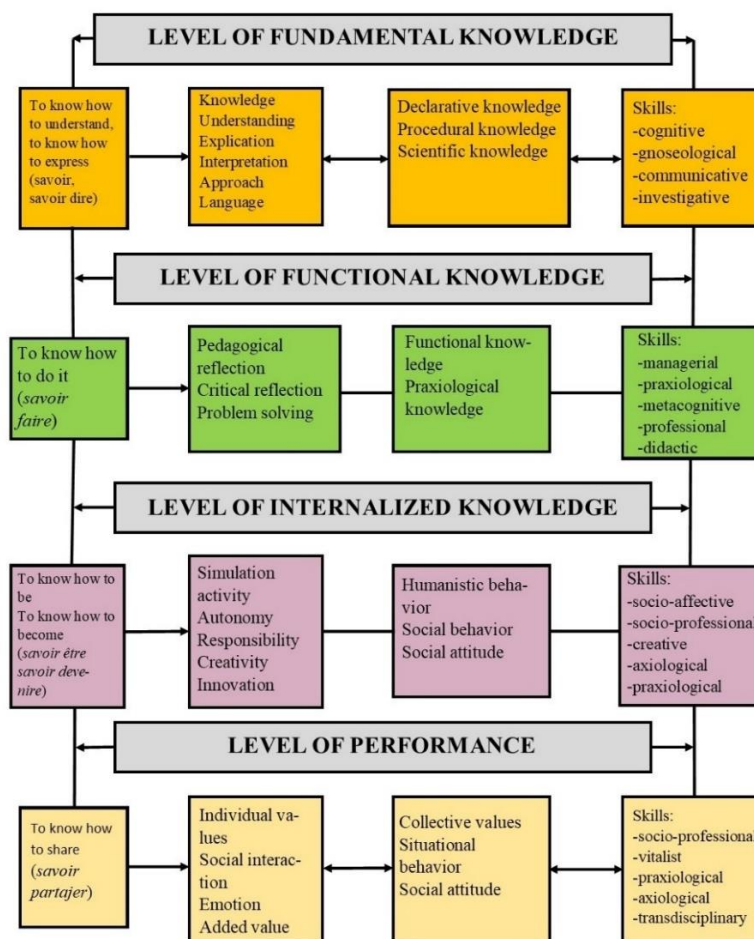


**Figure 6. Pedagogical model for developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore**

In the model we developed, we consider national folklore as a source of training students' ethnocultural competence, with one of the main specific methodologies, which is achieved through the following functions: anthropological-cultural, of selecting and transmitting values from society to the individual, national-cultural, axiological, psychological, social.

Now, Romanian popular culture is composed of a set of knowledge and a way of thinking, situated in the mental and attitudinal plane, and of a variety of forms of expression – verbal, musical, gestural, choreographic, etc. This set of knowledge comes from direct observation, from unrestricted contact with nature and from the empirical practical experience of each person, adult or child, being different from scientific experiments based on measurements and calculations. These accumulations have shaped or even structured the way of thinking and acting, dominated by what ethnologists have called the "logic of the sensible" or the "logic of the concrete", specific to primitive thinking, but also to the popular mentality, ordering the world into binary oppositions such as "up" and "down", "forward" and "back", "wet" and "dry", "beginning" and "end", "sweet" and "bitter", "moon" and "sun", etc. Thus, in shaping the Romanian ethos, the geo-cosmic, history, language, religious belief, sapientiality or philosophy, art and what we could call archetypal structures, represented by the "Romanian peasant" and the "Romanian village", mainly influence. As Immanuel Kant mentioned, "children should not be raised only according to the present state of the human race, but according to a better state, possible in the future, that is, according to the idea of humanity and its entire destiny" [35, p. 22].

However, students must be involved in the "call to action", in positive and formative action in their lives, and therefore in skills development, which corresponds to certain levels illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure 7. Configuration of skills development, according to the curriculum**

Thus, through epic, lyrical and dramatic folkloric texts, children develop axiological orientations [3] regarding *moral values* (goodness, honesty, duty, humanity, dignity, responsibility, fairness), *artistic values* (beauty, tragedy, sublimity, comedy), *religious values* (divinity, sacredness), *economic values* (well-being, work, wealth, prosperity), *fundamental values of humanity* that are the foundations of life, giving meaning to them. Thus, *the chronological axis* is established and created, "breaking the existential monotony" and "enthroning significant, auroral times," and "adding a new value to human temporality and rhythm" [24, p. 40-41] at the level of several behavioural hypostases in the context of relational beauty, of communal beauty, of culture.

From the philosophical landmarks of culturology, we deduce an essential characteristic of human beings: to live in an environment that they themselves have created. Here, the role and place of folkloric creation, based on which the conceptual pillar of the pedagogical model was developed, are also evident.

Folklore is distinguished by several specific features, which are interdependent and mutually determining. Within the system of principles aimed at the formation of students' ethno-artistic culture, a special role is played by axiological principles [41], which orient the educational process towards the value dimension of human existence.

Among these are:

- the principle of education through and for values;
- the principle of transposing values into acts of civilization;
- the principle of affective sensitivity;
- the principle of the dominance of perennial national values.

Folklore creation is characterized by fundamental features that reflect its complex character and profound implications for the educational and cultural process. The most important of these are:

- collectivism – it is the fruit of collective creation, of the anonymous contribution of countless wise men and educators from the people, whose ideas have been transmitted, enriched and refined over generations;
- empiricism and pragmatism – folklore creation is distinguished by the force of example and practical efficiency, not by abstract theories, but by concrete achievements, inspired by life experience;
- continuity and consecutiveness – folklore creation ensures the transmission of educational values from generation to generation, contributing to the maintenance of identity and social balance. This feature is based on the principle of historical continuity, indispensable for any authentic form of development, including pedagogical development;
- syncretism – folklore creation does not take place in isolation, but in close connection with other areas of social life, being intertwined with the customs, traditions, customs and rituals specific to popular culture [45, p. 13-14].

The development of students' *ethno-artistic competence* through the promotion of folklore requires teachers to follow a *concrete and finite teleological system*: goals, a system of principles, strategies, technologies, and clearly hierarchical methodologies. The development of *ethno-cultural competence* is part of a "complete" personality (according to L. Blaga [15]).

These arguments and interpretations have led to the approach of *folkloric competence*, which is a more specific component of ethnocultural competence, through the knowledge, understanding and exploitation of folklore, through the ability to interpret, reproduce and transmit folkloric creations through an attitude of appreciation and protection of folk traditions as an expression of national identity. In practice, *folkloric competence* develops *the student's direct connection with living tradition*, contributing to the formation of a sense of belonging and the preservation of cultural memory.

On the other hand, in the specialised literature, we have not identified any debate, reference or conceptual interpretation regarding ethnocultural competence, and, based on these gaps, we have attempted to define it, tailoring it to secondary school students: ***Ethnocultural competence represents***

*the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values acquired by students through the valorisation of folklore, based on which the student internalises and respects the cultural, linguistic, religious and traditional characteristics of their own community and other communities, relates tolerantly and openly to cultural diversity, and actively participates in preserving and promoting national identity and intercultural dialogue.*

We believe that the methodology for developing *ethnocultural competence* will be effective if the following **principles** are observed: the principle of humanistic orientation; the principle of creativity; the principle of internalising folklore; the principle of unity between education, training and cultural development; the principle of correlation between the sensory and the rational, between the concrete and the abstract; the principle of affective sensitivity; the principle of intuition; the principle of passion; the principle of the total action of folklore on humans; the principle of motivating activity; the principle of education through and for values; the principle of transposing values into acts of civilisation; the principle of the dominance of perennial national values.

***The interpretation of the Pedagogical model for developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students in the context of folklore*** is based on specialist literature and aims to integrate different pedagogical approaches to support the development of a system of moral and cultural values in pre-adolescents. The model includes the following values structured into the following components: folklore component; cultural education component; methodological component; ethnocultural components, which are framed within the triad of ethnocultural values, teacher and student. The proposed model is a pedagogical subsystem that includes both theoretical and praxiological dimensions within didactic communication, applicable in secondary education. It is based on the normative benchmarks for the development of the model, which are determined by the levels of qualification based on learning outcomes and the professionalisation of teachers, on the methodological benchmarks used in the development of the model, which are built on theories and concepts regarding innovative and creative education, the creative and free activity of students, the status, role, functions and competences of teachers in education through culture and the use of folk art in educational activities.

The methodology for developing ethnocultural competence is based on the following **criteria** (*systemic, formative, axiological, curricular and psychopedagogical*):

- ***The systemic criterion*** provides for the development of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students with a view to educational communication within the integrated paradigm of continuing education at the *formal, non-formal and informal* levels.
- ***The formative criterion*** involves influences on the student's personality, adequately correlating the *cognitive, affective and behavioural* domains in the context of folklore education.
- ***The axiological and epistemological criterion*** involves the student's assimilation of a system of enduring moral values.
- ***The curricular criterion*** is a structural and functional approach that includes: *the system of objectives, educational content, and educational and assessment strategies*.
- ***The psycho-pedagogical criterion*** is represented by the particularities of the development of secondary school students in relation to the values of folk creation.

These criteria also determine a system of principles for developing a pedagogical model for training the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students with a view to communicating popular pedagogy.

The objectives of developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students in terms of educational communication are expressions of components of the educational system involved in developing this competence (see table below).

**Table 2. Components of ethnocultural competence**

<b>Biological components</b>	<b>Intellectual components</b>	<b>Regulatory components</b>	<b>Psychosocial and relational</b>
activity rhythm; moral balance; resistance to fatigue; psychomotor coordination, etc.	general intelligence; learning ability; creative and critical thinking; ability to compare and classify methodically; ability to synthesise; inductive reasoning; abstraction.	ability to adapt; ability to pay attention and concentrate; interest in one's work; willpower; emotionality in the study of folk art; sensitivity; self-control; objectivity.	tendency towards dependence; communication skills; leadership behaviour; team spirit; interest in group research; social efficiency; effective cooperation skills.

Within the framework of *knowledge-skills-attitudes-values*, all of which are necessary for authentic training, *attitude* takes priority. In their role as trainers, teachers themselves must have certain attitudes – towards the subject they teach and towards their students –to instil in their students the fundamental attitudes necessary for personal development. It is clear that, in addition to scientific competence in their own field of expertise, pedagogical competence [31] becomes a top priority. All the objectives set are developed and achieved through extracurricular and school activities.

**Chapter 3, 'The pedagogical approach to developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students in the context of folklore creation '**, presents data from an experimental study assessing the level of ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folk art.

**The experimental sample** was as representative as possible and consisted of 104 students from grades V: A, B, C, D, divided into two independent groups of equal size: the experimental group (EG) - 52 subjects, and the control group (CG) - 52 subjects, and 26 teachers teaching in secondary school classes.

*At the stage of assessing* the pedagogical experiment, the initial phase in 2023, we **aimed** to determine the level of ethnocultural competence of students in the EG and CG. *The questionnaire* (attached) contained ten open-ended questions so as not to suggest the answer to the student.

The interpretation of the questionnaire results highlighted the students' perceptions of education, ethnoculture and folklore, as well as the differences between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) in the assessment stage, as shown in the table below:

**Table 3. Questionnaire results at the assessment stage.**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Experimental group 52</b>		<b>Control group 52</b>	
		<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
1. How do you understand the concept of education? (explain briefly in 1-2 sentences)	Education is a social phenomenon	12	23.08	12	23.08
	Education refers to the content taught in school	12	23.08	12	23.08
	Education is the formation of personality	7	13.46	6	11.54
	Education begins at home	8	15.38	9	17.31
	Education involves knowledge and skills	5	9.62	4	7.69
	Did not give any answer	8	15.38	9	17
	Folklore represents certain traditions	9	17.31	7	13.46

2. What is folklore in your view?	Folklore consists of stories and fairy tales	14	26.92	14	26.92
	Folklore is visual art and musical art.	7	13.46	7	13.46
	Folklore is the totality of artistic creations	4	7.69	5	9.62
	Folklore is home education	5	9.62	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	6	11.54	8	15.38
	Did not give any answer	7	13.46	5	9.62
3. Name 4-5 folk works ( ) learned in primary school	Folk works are literary, musical, and visual creations	10	19.23	10	19.23
	"The Goat with Three Kids", "The Two-Penny Purse", "Harap Alb"	10	19.23	10	19
	"The Bear Tricked by the Fox"	13	25	12	23.08
	Hora, Sârba, Braşoveanca	8	15.38	7	13.46
	Did not respond	11	21.15	13	25
4. Write a sentence about what culture is	Culture is respect for people	14	26.92	14	26.92
	The totality of language, tradition and religion	8	15.38	6	11.54
	Culture is an art	10	19.23	7	13.46
	Culture is the totality of customs, traditions and history of a nation	7	13.46	6	11.54
	Culture promotes understanding between peoples.	7	13.46	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	4	7.69	4	7.69
	Some of the students did not provide any answers.	2	3.85	9	17.3
5. Why are children educated through stories?	Stories make us better people	10	19.23	10	19.23
	Stories develop imagination and creativity	9	17.31	10	19.23
	For children, stories are a model for education.	13	25	15	28
	Because good triumphs over evil	11	21.15	7	13.46
	The heroes of stories are examples of personality development	4	7.69	3	5.77
	Evasive answers	1	1.92	2	3.85
	Did not give any answer	4	7.69	5	9.62
1. What does the proverb teach?	The proverb gives advice to people who read it.	8	15.38	8	15.38
	Proverbs are life experiences	9	17.31	9	17.31
	Proverbs convey moral values	13	25.00	11	21.15
	Proverbs teach children not to repeat the mistakes of adults.	8	15.38	8	15.38
	Every proverb is a lesson	5	9.62	4	7.69
	Evasive answers	5	9.62	7	13
	Another group of students did not give any answer	4	7.69	5	9
7. Write down 2-3 thoughts about the concepts of "I" and "identity."	To be is to be unique	8	15.38	7	13.46
	"I" is equal to the notion of me	10	19.23	9	17.31
	I am different, I am me, I am not like others	7	13.46	7	13.46

	The concept of "I" represents my thoughts, needs and desires.	10	19.23	9	17.31
	Identity does not change the exterior	8	15.38	8	15.38
	Evasive answers	5	9.62	7	13.4
	A large proportion of students did not give any answer	4	7.69	5	9.62
8. Describe in 2-3 sentences why Romanian folklore is an educationally 1 model.	Folklore is talent in any kind of art	6	11.54	7	13.46
	Romanian folklore is a model of education because it contains symbols of the country	7	13.46	7	13.46
	Folklore transmits the values and wisdom of past generations through stories, proverbs and songs.	11	21.15	10	19.23
	Folklore is the beauty of life on earth.	11	21.15	12	23.08
	Folklore is a model of education even for foreigners	7	13.46	6	11.5
	Evasive answers	5	9.62	6	11.54
	Did not respond	5	9.62	4	7.69
9. What do your grandparents tell you about folklore?	Folklore is an important part of our culture	14	26.92	14	26.92
	Folklore is the treasure of the Romanian soul	7	13.46	7	13.46
	Folklore is traditions and national dress	7	13.46	7	13
	Grandparents mainly talk about Christmas and Easter	14	26.92	13	25
	Folklore is based on old traditions	2	3.85	2	3.85
	Evasive answers	4	7.69	7	13.4
	Did not give any answer	4	7.69	2	3.85
10. Do you see any connection between "folklore" and "culture"?	Folklore represents traditions, and culture represents the interpretation of folklore.	16	30.77	14	26.9
	I see no connection between folklore and culture.	4	7.69	3	5.7
	Both are related to Romania	8	15.38	7	13.46
	Folklore and culture have common elements related to our history	16	30.77	12	23
	Folklore is culture	6	11.54	5	9.62
	Evasive answers	0	0	6	11.54
	Did not give any answer	2	3.85	5	9.6

After analysing the results, I found that the students in the experimental group (EG) have a deeper understanding of education, culture and folklore compared to the control group (CG). The percentage of evasive or missing answers is higher in the CG, which suggests a positive impact of the educational intervention on the EG. The understanding of fundamental concepts (education, culture, folklore, identity) is relatively well defined, but there is room for improvement, especially in terms of defining folklore and its role in education.

At the current stage, there is a noticeable decline in teachers' interest in preserving and promoting national folklore, which is reflected in students' poor knowledge of folkloric creation. We assume that this is because teachers themselves have a limited knowledge of our nation's traditions and customs [10].

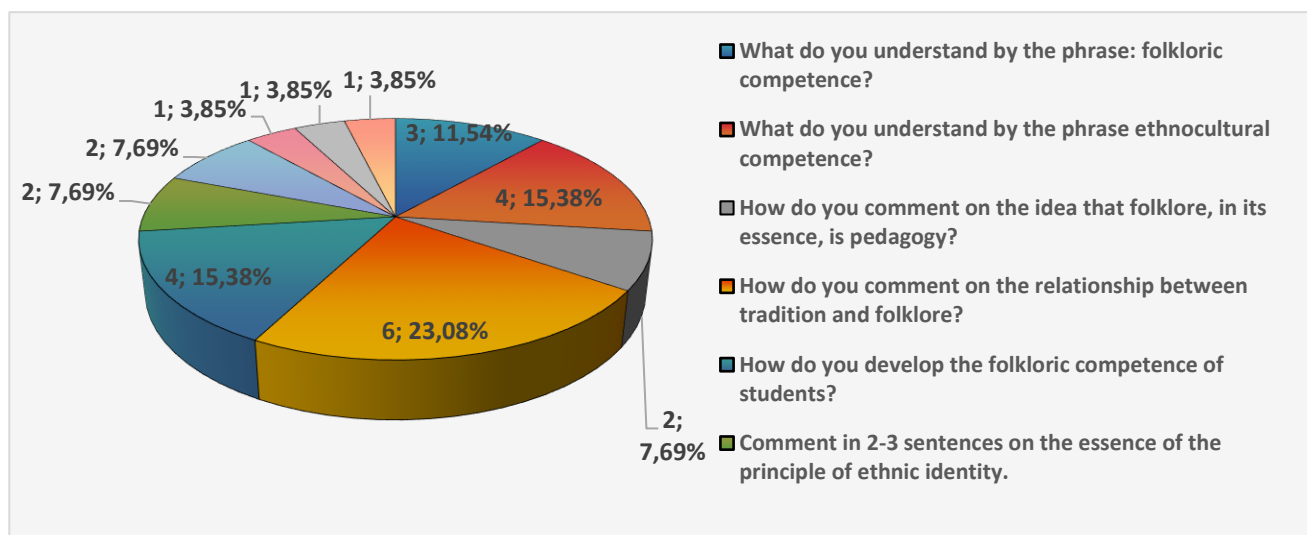
Twenty-six school teachers were also involved in the assessment experiment and were given a knowledge *questionnaire* consisting of ten questions, such as " ". The figure below shows the level of ethnocultural competence training:

In the context of streamlining and strengthening the development of ethnocultural competence, 26 teachers also participated in the experiment, with the aim of identifying their insufficient training (Chapter 3, 3.1.p. 112-114, Figure 3): **Interpretation of the data in the table shows the following:**

Questions and distribution of answers:

- "What do you understand by the term 'folklore competence'?" – **3 responses (11.53%)**
- "What do you understand by the term 'ethnocultural competence'?" – **4 responses (15.38%)**
- "How would you comment on the fact that folklore, in its essence, is pedagogy?" – **2 responses (7.69%)**
- "How would you comment on the relationship between tradition and folklore?" – **6 responses (23.07%)**
- "How do you develop students' folklore competence?" – **4 responses (15.38%)**
- "Comment on ethnic identity" – **2 responses (7.69%)**
- "The significance of Romanian folklore" – **2 responses (7.69%)**
- "What is missing from the secondary school curriculum regarding folklore?" – **1 response (3.84%)**
- "The structure of students' ethnocultural competence" – **1 response (3.84%)**
- "Characterisation of 4-5 components of ethnocultural competence" – **1 response (3.84%)**

Thus, the question with the highest percentage of responses is related to the relationship between *tradition and folklore (23.07%)*, followed by ethnocultural competence and the formation of this competence (**15.38% each**). The fewest responses were recorded for questions about *the secondary school curriculum and the structure of ethnocultural competence (3.84% each)*.



**Figure 8. Teachers' responses to the assessment questionnaire**

The data collected from secondary school teachers shows that the strengths of a school curriculum based on traditions and folklore, and the opportunities that could arise from its implementation, would facilitate the development of the ethno-cultural competence of secondary school students, potentially improving their attitudes and behaviour. From an educational policy perspective, a

school curriculum based on traditions and folklore would constitute a barrier of resistance to global transformations and the invasion of information technologies.

The teachers participating in the experiment highlighted *cultural diversity awareness, empathy, intercultural communication and adaptability* as essential components of ethnocultural competence. These elements correspond to modern educational models based on: *the development of metacognitive skills* – students must learn to critically analyse cultural information; *exposure to diverse cultural contexts* – direct experiences, such as participation in folklore events, help to internalise cultural values; *participatory teaching practices* – students learn more effectively through active methods, such as projects and community collaboration.

Therefore, the development of ethnocultural competence is not limited to the theoretical study of traditions, but requires an interactive approach that stimulates both the cognitive and affective dimensions of students. Thus, *ethnocultural competence is not just an accumulation of knowledge, but a complex set of attitudes and behaviours that enable interaction in a globalised world.*

At the experimental **training stage**, we pursued the goal of developing, implementing and experimentally validating the optional school syllabus '*Folklore – the living treasure of the people*' (see annex).

The optional school syllabus: **"Folklore – the living treasure of the people"**, intended for the fifth grade, is an extracurricular offer, designed for a time budget of 1 hour/week during the 2023–2024 school year. In accordance with the competency-based curriculum design model, it includes: an introduction, general and specific competencies, content, learning activities, methodological suggestions and assessment methods.

The methodological benchmarks of the training programme were derived from the values of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore, identified and described in the arguments in the introduction to the thesis.

The topics of the training sessions on the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore were developed in accordance and in correlation with the research variables.

Thus, during the training and control stage, the results of the respondents, secondary school students, are as follows:

**Table 4. Comparative results at the training stage.**

Items	Responses	Experimental Experimental 52		Control group 52	
		No	%	No	%
1. How do you understand the concept of education? (explain briefly in 1-2 sentences)	Education is a social phenomenon	18	34.6	12	23.08
	Education is the content taught in school	14	26.92	12	23
	Education is the development of personality	6	11.54	5	9.62
	Education begins at home	9	17.31	10	19.23
	Education involves knowledge and skills	5	9.62	4	7.69
	They did not give any answer	0	0	9	17.31
2. What is folklore in your view?	Folklore represents certain traditions	8	15.38	9	17.31
	Folklore consists of stories and fairy tales	16	30.77	15	28.85
	Folklore is visual art and musical art.	8	15	7	13.46
	Folklore is the totality of artistic creations	6	11.54	5	9.62
	Folklore is home education	6	11.54	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	14	26.92	4	7.69
	Did not give any answer	1	1.92	6	11.54
3. Name 4-5 folk works	Folk works are literary, musical, and visual creations	14	26.92	10	19.23

learned in primary school	"The Goat with Three Kids", "The Two-Penny Purse", "Arap Alb"	11	19.23	10	19
	The Bear Tricked by the Fox	14	26.92	12	23.08
	Hora, Sârba. Braşoveanca	13	25	8	15.38
	They did not respond	0	0	12	23.08
4. Write a sentence about what culture is	Culture is respect for people	15	28.85	14	26.92
	The totality of language, tradition and religion	9	17.31	7	13.46
	Culture is an art	11	21.15	9	17.31
	Culture is the totality of customs, traditions and history of a nation	10	19.23	8	15.38
	Culture promotes understanding between peoples.	6	11.54	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	0	0	4	7.69
	Some of the students did not provide any answers.	0	0	4	7.69
5. Why are children educated through stories?	Stories make us better people	11	21.15	10	19.23
	Stories develop imagination and creativity	10	19.23	10	19.23
	For children, stories are a model for education.	15	28.85	16	30
	Because good triumphs over evil	11	21.15	11	21
	The heroes of stories are examples of personality development	4	7.69	4	7.6
	Evasive answers	0	0	0	0
	They didn't give any answer	0	0	0	0
6. What does the proverb teach?	The proverb gives advice to people who read it.	10	19.23	7	13.46
	Proverbs are life experiences	10	19.23	9	17.31
	Proverbs convey moral values	12	23.08	12	23
	Proverbs teach children not to repeat the mistakes of adults.	9	17.31	11	21.15
	Every proverb is a lesson	10	19.23	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	0	0	3	5.77
	Another group of students did not give any answer.	0	0	3	5.77
7. Formulate 2-3 thoughts about the concepts: "I", identity	To be is to be unique	9	17.31	8	15.38
	"I" is equal to the notion of me	14	26.92	8	15.38
	I am different, I am me, I am not like others	8	15	7	13.46
	The concept of "me" represents my thoughts, needs and desires.	10	19.23	9	17.31
	Identity does not change the exterior	9	17.31	9	17.31
	Evasive answers	3	5.77	6	11.5
	A large proportion of students did not give any answer	0	0	5	9.6
8. Describe in 2-3 sentences why Romanian	Folklore is talent in any kind of art	7	13.46	6	11.54
	Romanian folklore is a model of education because it contains symbols of the country	8	15.38	11	21

folklore is a model for education.	Folklore transmits the values and wisdom of past generations through stories, proverbs and songs.	13	25	15	28
	Folklore is the beauty of life on earth.	12	23.08	12	23
	Folklore is a model of education even for foreigners	11	21.15	3	5.7
	Evasive answers	0	0	4	7.69
	Did not respond	0	0	0	0
9. What do your grandparents tell you about folklore?	Folklore is an important part of our culture	16	30.77	14	26.92
	Folklore is the treasure of the Romanian soul	8	15	7	13.46
	Folklore is traditions and national dress	8	15.38	7	13
	Grandparents mainly talk about Christmas and Easter	14	26.92	13	25
	Folklore is based on old traditions	4	7.69	4	7.69
	Evasive answers	1	1.92	4	7.69
	Did not give any answer	0	0	2	3.85
10. Do you see any connection between "folklore" and "culture"?	Folklore represents traditions, and culture represents the interpretation of folklore.	18	34.62	15	28.85
	I see no connection between folklore and culture.	3	5.7	3	5
	Both are related to Romania	8	15.38	7	13.46
	Folklore and culture have common elements related to our history	16	30.77	18	34
	Folklore is culture	6	11.54	6	11.54
	Evasive answers	0	0	3	5.77
	Did not give any answer	0	0	0	0

During training and assessment sessions, students demonstrated their recognition and understanding of ethno-cultural values related to local folklore, such as authenticity, cultural heritage, community values, traditional clothing culture and the significance of national costumes (shirts, belts, cords, etc.), highlighted in the table below:

**Table 5. Correlation between criteria, indicators and performance descriptors – Values of ethnocultural competence**

Criteria	Indicators	Performance descriptors	Values
<b>Expressing self-esteem and esteem for others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of internal cognitive-formative processes</li> <li>Internalisation of actions and establishment of culturally-oriented empowerment approaches focused on introspection and self-discovery through folk genres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acts directly on one's own ethnocultural processes;</li> <li>manages the mechanisms of popular pedagogy by explaining the communication of popular pedagogy to one's own thinking;</li> <li>builds a permanent dialogue with the self in order to satisfy the need for self-improvement.</li> </ul>	Reflexive Active Strategic Introspective Observant

<b>Socio-cultural integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– restructuring the communication system of popular pedagogy;</li> <li>– shaping perspectives for relationships at the class level;</li> <li>– building a collaborative environment that is positive and focused on counselling and mediating popular education factors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– controls the learning environment;</li> <li>– builds and encourages interpersonal relationships in order to ensure the development of elements of cultural competence;</li> <li>– shapes the normative framework for communication by establishing rules and limits of interaction to promote cultural behaviour.</li> </ul>	Sociable Mediator Strategist Involved Facilitator Moderator Communicative Empathetic Tolerant
<b>Participatory reciprocity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Optimisation of reactions in conditions of professional/academic stress;</li> <li>- Decision-making and accepting mistakes as the main means of action aimed at achieving educational goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- controls influences from the ethnic environment;</li> <li>- identifies limitations and builds levers to overcome obstacles in the exercise of cultural formation;</li> <li>- combats the effects of errors through corrective, regulatory, or ameliorative actions.</li> </ul>	Resilient Flexible Assertive Responsible Relaxed
<b>Pedagogical efficiency and the formation of ethnocultural elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- personalisation of teaching actions by constantly referring to changes in the ethnocultural and educational context;</li> <li>- creative use of methodological resources and their customisation according to the specific characteristics of the class of students;</li> <li>- creating multiple directions for investigating the phenomenology of processes and behavioural manifestations by referring to ethnocultural heritage resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reforming the system of teaching activities to ensure the transfer of cultural competence;</li> <li>- establishes connections and interdependencies between information from different fields of knowledge in order to understand the ethnocultural phenomenon; opens up new avenues of investigation focused primarily on popular culture;</li> <li>- innovates at the methodological level by using a diverse register, focused on interactivity and <i>attitudinal self-activation</i>;</li> <li>- simulates various learning contexts to record their effects on the class and content;</li> </ul>	Creative Innovative Original Capable Visionary Introspective
<b>Constructivist and assertive communication of popular pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– managing the time dedicated to a formative action and the corresponding resources outside of external pressures (extending learning time for different content considered difficult; using a greater number of resources and strategies to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– manage resources and time dedicated to certain content efficiently by excluding stress factors from outside the classroom (school inspections, oversized curriculum, periodic evaluations of the</li> </ul>	Confident Focused Flexible Independent Satisfied Efficient

	<p>facilitate understanding and contribute to increasing alternative solutions and identifying solutions in a relatively short time, etc.);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifying obstacles and resolving problematic situations;</li> <li>– assessment of their own attitudes, skills and pedagogical and methodological knowledge necessary for the transfer of information and skills targeted by the public education system;</li> <li>– demonstrate a good knowledge of the students in the classes they coordinate, successfully adapting all teaching methods, procedures and resources to the specific nature of folk creations.</li> </ul>	<p>ethnopedagogical system);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifies their own limits of knowledge and uses teaching strategies to find ways to solve the difficulties encountered in the educational process;</li> <li>– continuously assesses their entire cultural competence system to ensure that their interventions are oriented towards popular pedagogy;</li> <li>– approaches student knowledge based on the individual characteristics of students and adapts strategies to these psycho-individual specifics.</li> </ul>	
<b>Self-improvement and self-development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Formulating objective judgements related to the planned instructional approach;</li> <li>– experimenting with models and micro-models of popular education;</li> <li>– determining the effect of formative educational activities in relation to the development of cultural competences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reflecting on teaching practices;</li> <li>– integrating new technologies into the cultural competence system to more easily manage students' knowledge and understanding;</li> <li>– analyses the results obtained by students based on their own intervention;</li> <li>– modify certain behaviours in order to improve the process of cultural competence formation.</li> </ul>	Self-regulator Focused Achiever Perfectionist
<b>Self-confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cultivating a positive self-image;</li> <li>– the creation of a system of recognition, appreciation and the creation of a favourable, sporting environment based on cultivating positive reactions to national folklore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– objectively appreciates its own achievements;</li> <li>– creates an educational environment centred on relationships of respect and tolerance, acceptance and positive reinforcement of prospective pedagogy.</li> </ul>	Energetic Motivated Stable Positive Balanced Optimistic

The positive dynamics of the experimental data highlight and demonstrate the effectiveness of the optional school syllabus for developing students' ethnocultural competence through the use of folklore, as shown in the table below.

**Table 6. Changes in perception of folklore – Test-retest analysis**

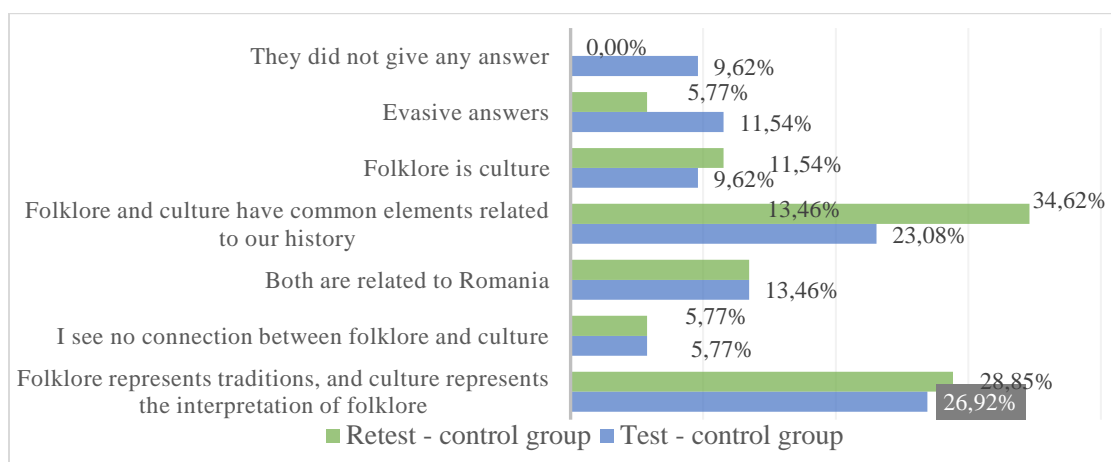
Item	Group	Test (%)	Retest (%)	Difference (%)
Culture is respect for people	Experimental	26.9	28.85	+1.93
Culture is respect for people	Control	26.9	26.92	0.0
Proverbs convey moral values	Experimental	25	26.92	+1.92
Proverbs convey moral values	Control	21.15	23.08	+1.93
Folklore is a model of education even for foreigners	Experimental	13.46	23.08	+9.62
Folklore is a model of education even for foreigners	Control	11.54	11.54	0
Romanian folklore is a model of education because it contains symbols of the country	Experimental	15.38	25.00	+9.62
Romanian folklore is a model of education because it contains symbols of the country.	Control	21.15	28.85	+7.7
Culture is the totality of customs, traditions and history of a nation.	Experimental	13.46	19.23	+5.77
Culture is the totality of customs, traditions and history of a nation	Control	15.38	11.54	-3.8

The results obtained in the research determined the need to update the secondary school curriculum in terms of folklore, but also in terms of methodology, creating and applying new technologies for teaching and learning folkloric values: focused on experience, creativity, activism, correlating scientific knowledge with artistic knowledge, etc.

The results suggest that students better understood the connection between folklore and culture after the retest, realising that folklore is an essential component of cultural identity. The increase in responses recognising this connection indicates a deepening of knowledge and a clearer reflection on the subject, as shown in the table and figure below:

**Table 7. Results showing the differences between the experimental group and the control group**

Response category	Experimental group (%)	Control group (%)	Difference (%)
Did not give any response	0	9.62	-9.62
Evasive answers	5.77	11.54	-5.77
Folklore is culture	11.54	9.62	+1.92
Folklore and culture have common elements related to our history	34.6	23.08	<b>+11.54</b>
Both are related to Romania	13.46	5.77	<b>+7.69</b>
I don't see any connection between folklore and culture.	5.77	5.77	0
Folklore represents traditions, and culture represents the interpretation of folklore.	28.85	26.92	+1.93



**Figure 9. Analysis of the control group's responses**

Thus, analysing the correlation between educational variables, performance indicators, and competence descriptors is essential for optimising the learning process and assessing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students by capitalising on folklore.

In relation to the data obtained in the observation and experimental validation stages, there is a significant increase in the level of ethnocultural competence of secondary school students belonging to the experimental sample compared to those in the control sample. This development can be explained by the effectiveness of the activities carried out within *the Optional school syllabus on the development of ethnocultural competence*, which facilitated the transfer of this competence by consolidating an integrated set of attitudes, abilities and specific knowledge.

The results obtained in the experimental validation stage confirmed the research hypothesis, demonstrating that the process of developing ethnocultural competence in students leads to the acquisition of relevant ethnocultural knowledge. These are reflected in the ability to solve educational tasks aimed at developing ethnocultural competence by capitalising on folklore in secondary education.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The theoretical and applied investigation carried out in the thesis corpus contains arguments regarding the management of the methodological process of developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students by capitalising on folklore and facilitates findings regarding the achievement of the research goals and objectives. The scientific approach designed, carried out and described in the research signifies the theoretical and methodological foundations of the formation of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore, the determination of which was the aim of the research. The application of the pedagogical experiment highlighted the attitude and level of students and teachers regarding ethnocultural competence, the impediments and inconsistencies that represented deficiencies and obstacles in the process of developing ethnocultural competence, but also relevant aspects that favour the consolidation of ethnocultural competence.

2. The epistemic analysis and synthesis and the findings regarding the process of implementing theoretical concepts allowed for the scientific interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of the research (*culture, education through culture, folklore creation, folklore education, ethno-artistic competence, ethnocultural competence*) – chapter 1.1.1., and the description of national regulatory provisions regarding the state of the learning process of students (Chapter 1, 1.2.). The arguments put forward confirm the importance of the scientific approach of the research and justify the need to determine the theoretical and methodological foundations for the development of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students by capitalising on folkloric creation and identifying a system

of coherent pedagogical actions aimed at developing this competence.

3. As a well-known result of the analysis of research in the field, obvious contradictions were identified and the universe of culture was described/interpreted by categories (Chapter 1, 1.1.): *theoretical systems* (science, philosophy, where cognitive functions predominate, i.e. everything related to knowledge, ideas, theories, and the rational exploration of the world); *symbolic systems* (religion, art, mythology, language, languages, focused on symbolic and communication functions, given that here culture is expressed through meanings, rituals, artistic or linguistic expressions); *normative systems* (law, morality, customs, folklore, traditions, with the role of regulating interpersonal relationships, i.e. the set of rules, written or unwritten, that structure social components); *institutional and instrumental systems* (educational institutions, means of communication, economy, technology, politics, with praxiological, actional, practical functions, i.e. the side of culture that manifests itself in organisations, technologies, social structures). This also includes *the anthropological relationship between man and culture* (Lucian Blaga) [117, p. 291] (Figure 1.1., p. 26). These systems, categories and relationships of the cultural universe signify the foundation of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the valorisation of folkloric creation. The results of the pedagogical experiment demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of the pedagogical model for developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students in the context of folklore and the methodology developed and applied (Chapter 3, 3.3).

4. In the context of improving the efficiency and consolidation of the development of ethnocultural competence, 26 teachers also participated in the experiment, with the aim of identifying their insufficient training (Chapter 3, 3.1. p.112-114, Figure 3). Through theoretical and methodological investigation, the research guided the development of *the Pedagogical Model for the Formation of Ethnocultural Competence in Secondary School Students through the Use of Folklore*, criteria, indicators, descriptors, values, and principles for its formation (Chapter 2, 2.2, p. 73).

5. The pedagogical experiment conducted on this sample generated scientific conclusions regarding the issue of personal and professional training of teachers, confirming the absence or defective and inefficient connection between the curriculum content and the extracurricular reality of students regarding the valorisation of folklore, and the reluctance of teachers to adapt new teaching technologies in the school environment. The research identified the importance of collaboration between teachers and managers, between them and trainers of innovative ideas, professionalism, openness to communication, and commitment to personal and professional responsibilities.

In view of the research, a research methodology was developed and applied to facilitate the diagnosis of training levels (Chapter 2, 2.4; Chapter 3, 3.1; 3, 3.2).

6. For the training stage of the experiment, the Programme for the valorisation of popular pedagogy communication in accordance with the secondary school curriculum (Annex 6, Annex 7, Annex 13) and the optional school syllabus **Romanian Folklore – the living treasure of the people** (Annex 1) were developed, implemented and validated. The comparative evaluation of data at the control stage of the pedagogical experiment facilitated the conclusion regarding the confirmation of the hypothesis and certified the effectiveness of activities for developing students' ethnocultural competence through the use of folklore.

4. The scientific problem solved by the investigation lies in the configuration, theoretical foundation and validation in educational practice of the optional school syllabus **Romanian Folklore – the Living Treasure of the People** for the development of the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the valorisation of folkloric creation on a sample of representative subjects, which contributed to raising awareness of education through culture and ethno-artistic education essential in the process of developing the ethnocultural competence of secondary school students, the design and transfer of teaching strategies and tools to increase teachers' interest in implementing them in the teaching process, evaluation and self-evaluation through the use of criteria, indicators and descriptors of ethnocultural competence by both students and teachers, and the guidance of these orientations towards

creativity, efficiency, freedom, originality and innovation in the school environment. The social impact of the investigation lies in the development of the educational community of students, teachers and the community oriented towards research and innovative change in educational practice, with effects of strengthening students' investigative skills, in accordance with the provisions of policy documents in the field of intellectual training in the country.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *For researchers in the field:* investigate the impact of culture and folklore on education in line with national and international policies on the anthropological relationship between "man and culture": the complete man (Lucian Blaga).
- *For designers of personal and professional training programmes for teachers:* the need to update the secondary school curriculum in terms of folklore, but also in terms of methodology, the creation and application of new technologies for teaching and learning folkloric values, focused on experience, creativity, activism, and the correlation of scientific knowledge with ethno-artistic and ethno-cultural knowledge (modular training recoverable with a volume of 5 ECTS/10 ECTS).
- *For managerial staff:* creative involvement in providing methodological support for the implementation of the optional school syllabus *Romanian Folklore – the living treasure of the people* in educational practice; creating and maintaining a cooperative and stimulating environment between teachers and the community, thus ensuring the promotion of innovation in the educational and cultural environment; identifying and promoting individuals with high professional motivation performance; Implementing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the optional school syllabus *Romanian Folklore – the Living Treasure of the People* with regard to developing students' ethnocultural competence by capitalising on folkloric creativity and ensuring the continuity and sustainability of education.
- *For teachers:* analysing, identifying and designing personal and professional development needs in the context of education through culture and folklore education; managing professional development in accordance with professional competence standards; active involvement in pedagogical and educational innovations.

**Openings for new scientific research.** The investigation identifies and designs relevant and reasonable topics and issues for deepening and expanding the training of students' and teachers' skills:

- Studying folklore through educational/psycho-pedagogical and research projects, applying them in products (methodological guidelines, teaching aids, methodological guides, anthologies/teaching materials) at institutional, municipal and regional levels.
- Scientific development and pedagogical application of new technologies for teaching and learning folk values, focused on experience, creativity, activism, correlating scientific knowledge with ethno-artistic knowledge, etc.
- Epistemic study of the congruence of cultural education and ethno-artistic education.
- Application of the methodology for conceptualising the ethno-cultural competence of secondary school students and the pedagogical model for developing the ethno-cultural competence of secondary school students through the use of folklore.
- Investigating the field of cultural communication competence of teachers.
- Identifying the relationships between professional competence and the geography of teacher professionalisation through the paradigmatic design of these relationships/connections.
- Exploring innovative and digital technologies in the development of the competence of transferring education through culture in the formation of students' ethnocultural competence.
- The impact of inter-institutional and community collaboration on the culture of education, education through culture, folklore education, based on multimodular school-family-community programs.

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2. BĂLAN R. Profesorul reflexiv: integrator al conținuturilor folclorice prin noi tehnologii. În: *Acta et commentationes (Științe ale Educației)*, nr. 4 (38), Chișinău: CEP UPSC, 2024, p. 107-112, ISSN 1867-0623, E-ISSN 2587-363, Categoria B. [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/j\\_nr\\_file/SE\\_nr.4%2838%29\\_2024.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/j_nr_file/SE_nr.4%2838%29_2024.pdf)
3. BĂLAN R. Studiul creației folclorice în învățământul gimnazial în perspectiva elementelor matematice regăsite în opere literar - folclorice. În: *Revista Științifică de Pedagogie și Psihologie „Univers Pedagogic”*, Nr. 3 (83), p. 31-38. Chișinău: CEP UPSC, 2024 ISSN: 1811-5470 Categoria B. <https://up.upsc.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/UP-V83-Nr3-2024.pdf>

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1. BĂLAN R., VICOL Nelu. Valorificarea creației folclorice locale din regiunea Covurlui și influența acestuia asupra formării personalității elevilor din gimnaziu. În: *Revista Comunicare interculturală și literatură/ Comunication interculturalle et litterature*, Miscellanea. Galați: Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați, 2024, p. 4-22, ISSN 1844-6965. Categoria B. <https://revistacil.wordpress.com/2016/02/29/arhiva/>
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1. BĂLAN R. Clasificarea și funcțiile culturii. În: *Materialele conferinței științifice studențești cu participare internațională. Ediția a 70-a*. Vol. 2, 28 aprilie 2021, p. 25-30. Chișinău: UST, 2021. ISBN 978-9975-76-337-0. [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/Conf\\_stud\\_UST\\_Vol2\\_28\\_apr\\_2021.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/Conf_stud_UST_Vol2_28_apr_2021.pdf)

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1. **BĂLAN R.** Rolul culturii în formarea personalității elevului. În: *Materialele Conferinței Internaționale „Innovative approaches in teaching activity”*. București: Centrul de Resurse Educaționale, 2020, p. 223-225, ISBN 978-973-0-31799-2. A se accesa: <https://cadredidactice.ro/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/conferinta-internationala-innovative-approaches-in-teaching-activity%e2%80%9c.pdf>

#### Articles in English:

1. **BĂLAN R.** Studying folk creation in general education. In: *Electronic journal of educational resources. Education and e-learning in Canada and around the world*. Number 3 – September 2021, p. 8 -12. Vancouver: Editor Innovation Center LLP, ISSN Canada 2564-1700.  
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#### Other scientific, methodological and didactic works (pdf DVD format):

1. **BĂLAN R.** *Doina, o expresie a folclorului autentic moldovenesc din regiunea de sud-est a României*. În: *Științifica. Studii de specialitate*. Periodic pentru inițiativă și dezvoltare profesională în educație, nr. 15, februarie 2025. Angela Chiroșcă [coord.] etc. Chișinău: Ed. Olimpias, 2025, p. 212-218, ISSN 2501 - 6628, ISSN-L 2501-6628.
2. **BĂLAN R.** Profesorul: creator de conținut folcloric (The teacher as a creator of folkloric content). În: *Educație, artă și cultură*. Articole de specialitate. Periodic pentru inițiativă și dezvoltare profesională în educație, nr. 30, noiembrie 2024: Galați: Ed. Olimpias, 2024, p. 277-281, ISSN 2247 - 6474, ISSN-L2247-6474.
3. **BĂLAN R.** *Profesorul: factor de bază în procesul instructiv-educativ*. În: *Educație, artă și cultură*. Articole de specialitate. Periodic pentru inițiativă și dezvoltare profesională în educație, nr. 25, decembrie 2022. Galați: Editura Olimpias, 2022, ISSN= 2247 - 6474; ISSN-L = 2247-6474, 174-176 p.
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## ANNOTATION

BĂLAN Rodica

### **Forming the ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation** **Doctoral thesis in educational sciences, Chisinau, 2025**

**Structure of the thesis:** annotation (in Romanian and English), list of tables, list of figures, list of abbreviations, introduction, 3 chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography consisting of 249 titles, 18 tables, 31 figures, 14 annexes, a total of 151 pages that make up the main body of the research work.

**Publications on the topic of the thesis:** the investigative course of the topic, in its integrity, materialized through the development of 17 scientific papers: 3 articles in scientific journals from the Republic of Moldova, 2 in scientific journals from Romania, 1 in an international journal, 6 scientific and didactic materials published in Romania (pdf. DVD format), 5 articles presented and published in volumes with materials from national and international conferences.

**Keywords:** culture, ethnocultural education, ethnoartistic culture, pedagogical model, folklore creation, ethnocultural competence, preadolescent/student, optional school curriculum.

**Research field:** 531.01 - General Theory of Education.

**The purpose of the research** lies in the theoretical and methodological foundation of the formation of ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation.

**The research objectives** are focused on: scientific-historical interpretation of the evolution of operational concepts of cultural research, folklore/folklore/folkloristic creation, ethnoculture, ethnoartistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; highlighting and configuring the determinants of contextual values in national folklore creation and the principles, conditions, factors and practices of forming ethnocultural competence; conceptualization of the Pedagogical Model and the methodology for training students' ethnocultural competence in terms of criteria, indicators, descriptors, functionality and values; diagnosis of the levels of training of ethnocultural competence and determination of the theoretical approach of the concept of ethnocultural competence of students through the valorization of folklore creation; development, implementation and experimental validation of the Optional School Program for training ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation; formulation of scientific conclusions and recommendations regarding the training of ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation.

**Scientific novelty and originality result from:** establishing conceptual and functional benchmarks regarding the training of ethnocultural competence in the perspective of national and international normative provisions; scientific interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of culture, folklore/folklore/folkloristic creation, ethnoculture, ethnoartistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; conceptualization of the Pedagogical Model for the formation of ethnocultural competence; development of the ethnocultural competence evaluation grid based on the criteria, descriptors, functionality and values of ethnocultural competence; development of the principles of the formation of ethnocultural competence by capitalizing on folklore creation in the process of applying the Optional School Program and the curriculum for its implementation.

**The results obtained that contribute to solving the important scientific problem in the research** are reported to: scientific interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of the investigation: culture, folklore/folklore/folkloristic creation, ethnoculture, ethnoartistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; The pedagogical model for the formation of ethnocultural competence; the assessment grid for ethnocultural competence based on the criteria, descriptors, functionality and values of ethnocultural competence; the principles of the formation of valorized ethnocultural competence, the functions of ethnocultural education; The optional school program and its curriculum in the formation of ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation.

**The theoretical significance** of the research consists in establishing national normative provisions involving continuous professional training in the valorization of folklore creation; scientific interpretation of the evolution of the operational concepts of the research: culture, folklore/folklore/folkloristic creation, ethnoculture, ethnoartistic culture, ethnopedagogy, structural congruence, ethnocultural competence; conceptualization of the Pedagogical Model for the formation of ethnocultural competence; development of the ethnocultural competence evaluation grid based on the criteria, descriptors, functionality and values of ethnocultural competence; elucidation of the principles of the formation of ethnocultural competence; description of the components of ethnocultural competence; description of the factors that determine the valorization of folklore creation in the formation of ethnocultural competence; theoretical synthesis regarding the specifics of the formation of ethnocultural competence through the valorization of folklore creation and the formulation of new scientific conclusions regarding the formation of ethnocultural competence of middle school students through the valorization of folklore creation.

**The applied value of the research** lies in the identification and interpretation/description of pedagogical experiences of training students and training teachers through the valorization of folklore creation; conceptualization of instruments for (self)evaluation of the level of formation of ethnocultural competence of middle school students (questionnaire, evaluation scale); development, implementation and validation of the Optional School Program and the curriculum for its implementation in the formation of ethnocultural competence of students through the valorization of folklore creation; the use of the principles of ethnocultural competence training in the educational practice of secondary education and the formulation of significant scientific conclusions and recommendations for updating the management of general education processes in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the perspective of valorizing folklore creation.

**The implementation of the results obtained** in the teaching process, in the specific context of secondary education, was achieved by capitalizing on the Pedagogical Model for training ethnocultural competence of secondary school students through the valorization of folklore creation in the context of the curricular design activity of school and extracurricular activities, determined by the Optional School Program and the curriculum for its implementation for secondary education, with special applications at the level of instructional technology in Secondary School No. 29 in the city of Galați, Romania

**BĂLAN Rodica**

**DEVELOPING THE ETHNOCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BY CAPITALIZING ON  
FOLKLORE CREATION**

**Speciality 531.01 - General Theory of Education**

Doctoral thesis summary

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