

Curricular Approaches to Value Formation in Preschoolers from a Folkloric Perspective

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Abstract: Objectives: This paper examines the role of folklore as a foundational pedagogical resource for cultivating value orientations, cultural identity, and linguistic competence in preschoolers. It explores how the curricular integration of folkloric elements, a repository of traditions and values, can advance these formative aims and support holistic development in a globalized context. Prior Work: The study synthesizes established pedagogical theories, particularly systemic curriculum models emphasizing axiological dimensions. It also builds upon scholarship in folk pedagogy and ethnopedagogy, which recognize folklore as an essential medium for the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage and identity formation. Approach: A qualitative, analytical methodology is applied, including a detailed content analysis of a national early childhood curriculum. Specific competencies, learning activities, and performance standards are mapped to folkloric categories such as literary, musical, choreographic, and ritualistic forms. A comparative review of international educational models provides additional context. Results: Findings from the content analysis indicate that a structured curriculum effectively integrates folklore across developmental domains. Activities like listening to carols, engaging in traditional dances, and crafting cultural artifacts promote personal and social development, language acquisition, and artistic expression. These activities also foster moral reasoning, cultural respect, and an appreciation for both national culture and diversity. Implications: For curriculum developers and teacher educators, these findings emphasize the necessity of integrating traditional pedagogical approaches into professional preparation. This equips future teachers to design culturally authentic, meaningful learning experiences that bridge heritage and contemporary practice. Value: This paper's primary contribution is the creation of a detailed theoretical framework and practical blueprint for systematically aligning folkloric content with standardized

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curricular objectives. It provides educators with a structured, non-anecdotal strategy for implementing value-laden education grounded in cultural heritage.

Keywords: preschool curriculum; folkloric perspective; preschool education; learning unit; educational standards.

1. Introduction

Folklore constitutes a fundamental component of a nation's cultural heritage, reflecting its collective experience. It serves as a primary repository of traditions and social values, playing a central role in shaping cultural identity. Arguably, no other artistic or scientific form reflects the development and evolution of humanity as clearly and profoundly as folklore. It arises alongside the formation of a people, accompanies them throughout history, and is perpetuated through intergenerational transmission, offering a record as dynamic as the communities that create and sustain it.

In a recent contribution to the field, Silistraru (2019) observes that theoretical inquiry into folk pedagogy becomes increasingly complex as its contemporary relevance grows. This complexity requires both theoretical analysis and the practical cultivation of values. As Silistraru notes, a comprehensive investigation of the subject must address its conceptualization, essential nature, and defining characteristics, as well as the principles that govern education. Such inquiry must also include a thorough examination of its methodology and historical development. Moreover, the relationship between folk pedagogy and modern pedagogical science, religious consciousness, and other relevant domains is a central concern. This integrated approach, according to the author, is indispensable for the effective cultivation of both national and universal values. This principle is especially applicable to children between the ages of six and seven, a developmental stage during which they begin to form the initial, stable structures of their identity and become particularly receptive to the cultural models transmitted through folklore.

The Romanian people possess a longstanding and profound tradition of education, rooted in popular principles and values transmitted across generations. Folklore, rich in wisdom and symbolism, has long been a fundamental source for shaping thought and behavior, exerting a formative influence on both learning processes and personal development. Through this pedagogical culture, education in the Republic of Moldova has developed organically through self-education and community-based instruction, continuing to draw upon traditional teachings within a modern

framework that emphasizes lifelong learning. For children aged six to seven, this process is reflected in the transition from informal modes of learning to the integration of formal curricular structures, with folklore serving as a bridge between school and family.

2. Folklore as a Living Cultural Phenomenon and Its Dimensions

Folklore encompasses traditions, customs, beliefs, songs, stories, proverbs, and other forms of vernacular culture passed down through generations. It constitutes a dynamic and living cultural phenomenon, transmitted from one generation to the next through oral tradition. This transmission extends beyond words, encompassing behaviors, attitudes, and customs acquired within the community. In this way, folklore becomes integral to education and the formation of cultural identity, as it is learned and transmitted through active, collective participation. Moreover, folklore demonstrates remarkable adaptability, enduring through reinterpretations and adaptations of tradition within the context of everyday life (Şerbănescu, 2000, p. 7).

Ștefănucă (1991) emphasizes that the complexity and diversity of folklore can be grasped through a structured taxonomy of distinct categories, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

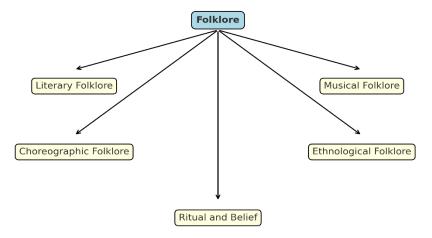


Figure 1. Taxonomy of Folklore Categories According to Stefanuca (1991)

A closer examination of these categories reveals the specific forms and functions through which folklore operates within communities. The following section provides an explanation of each category, illustrating its role in the transmission and preservation of cultural heritage:

- ➤ Literary Folklore includes oral-narrative genres such as tales, fairy stories, legends, myths, and humorous anecdotes. Sustained through oral performance, these traditions fulfill didactic, moral, and mnemonic functions while preserving communal history and cultural values. Together with popular mythology, they serve as a primary vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage across generations.
- Musical Folklore comprises carols, work songs, love songs, and songs associated with major life events such as weddings and funerals. These forms represent a core element of a community's intangible heritage, reflecting aesthetic expression while also performing functional roles in cyclical and ceremonial aspects of communal life.
- Choreographic Folklore encompasses traditional dances, often accompanied by music, which embody symbolic and contextual meanings, social, festive, or ritual. As collective expressions of identity and solidarity, folk dances occupy a central place in community celebrations and festivals.
- ➤ Ethnological Folklore consists of customs, traditions, crafts, and material culture. It includes folk costume, vernacular architecture, traditional foodways, and life-cycle practices. These elements illuminate everyday ways of life and demonstrate the interaction between human communities and their natural and social environments.
- ➤ Ritual and Belief embraces popular beliefs, ritual practices, and symbolic acts connected to supernatural forces or natural phenomena. Such practices reinforce cultural identity and sustain the symbolic balance between human communities and the natural world.

According to Ştefănucă, these forms of folklore are essential for shaping a comprehensive picture of popular culture, with each category playing a distinct role in preserving and transmitting traditional values. In this view, folklore is not merely entertainment but an important instrument of social and cultural education that reinforces community cohesion, with its continuous transmission across generations requiring the active participation of parents, grandparents, and educators involved in the socialization and education of children.

3. The Preschool Curriculum: Folklore as a Pedagogical Resource

Within the framework of Romanian general pedagogy, S. Cristea offers one of the most comprehensive and systematic conceptualizations of the curriculum. According to Cristea, the curriculum constitutes a coherent ensemble of educational activities intentionally designed to achieve formative aims, thereby shaping both the content and the internal structure of the educational process. In the *Dictionary of Pedagogical Terms* (2008), he defines the curriculum as "the coherent set of objectives, contents, teaching—learning—assessment strategies, institutionally organized, aimed at realizing the educational ideal." This definition reflects a systemic vision of education, in which all components of the curriculum are interconnected and directed toward the integral development of the child's personality.

In Cristea's theoretical model, the curriculum is not limited to a syllabus or a catalog of instructional content. Rather, it constitutes a structure that is axiological, normative, and operational in nature. This tripartite framework delineates three interdependent dimensions, as represented in Figure 2.

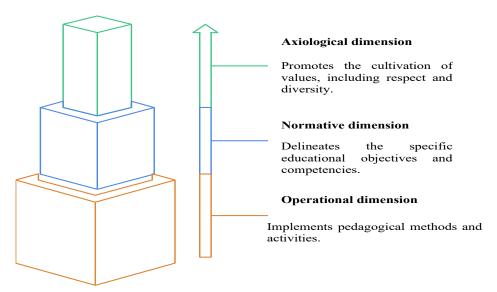


Figure 2. The Structure of the Educational Curriculum

For preschool children aged six to seven, this systemic vision involves the deliberate selection and pedagogical adaptation of folkloric materials, such as stories, songs, and traditional games, in accordance with the developmental objectives pertinent to this transitional stage preceding formal schooling. In this context, the curriculum

functions as an integrative framework, aligning cultural and pedagogical values with early learning goals, and structuring the educational process in a manner responsive to the child's individual and social development.

Within the field of early childhood education, S. Cristea emphasizes the importance of a child-centered curriculum that prioritizes direct experiences and active engagement with the surrounding environment. From this perspective, the preschool curriculum must be contextualized, flexible, and open in structure, fostering opportunities for meaningful learning through exploration, creative expression, and play. The integration of folklore as an educational resource aligns seamlessly with these principles, offering an authentic and culturally resonant context in which pedagogical activities are rooted in the values, symbols, and traditions of the local community.

Cristea further emphasizes the necessity of designing a curriculum that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates the learner, with particular attention to its axiological dimension and the integration of values. Within this framework, the inclusion of folklore assumes a formative role in fostering identity construction and cultural consciousness from an early age, thereby contributing to the broader educational goal of shaping individuals who are both ethically grounded and culturally rooted. Embedding national values within the curriculum is essential for aligning the educational process with the demands of contemporary society while safeguarding cultural continuity. Early childhood curricula, grounded in the principle of freedom as a condition for holistic development, affirm the uniqueness of each child and promote learning environments that nurture self-awareness and a sense of cultural belonging. From this perspective, folklore serves as a valuable educational medium, conveying models, symbols, and traditions that help shape value orientations among children aged six to seven.

Focusing on children at the early school-age stage (approximately five to seven years), curricular analysis highlights the pedagogical significance of incorporating folklore into early educational programs. Such integration supports the development of cultural identity by providing structured learning environments in which traditional values, culturally specific linguistic forms, and foundational elements of community heritage can be experienced and internalized. Folklore serves as an effective medium for fostering linguistic competence through the acquisition of songs, poems, stories, and traditional sayings, each contributing to vocabulary enrichment and the stimulation of creative and divergent thinking in young learners. Beyond language development, folklore conveys core community values, including

respect for family, tradition, nature, and social cohesion, that are embedded within narrative and musical forms, facilitating the internalization of moral principles and the cultivation of socially appropriate behaviors.

Furthermore, educational experiences grounded in folklore offer children opportunities to engage with customs, rituals, and traditional celebrations, thereby deepening their understanding of the interdependence between individuals and their cultural environment. Such experiences foster a sense of cultural belonging and respect for one's heritage, while simultaneously encouraging openness to cultural diversity within a broader global context.

Table 1. Learning Units Organized by Areas of Activity
Adapted from the Early Childhood Education Curriculum (2019)

4.2. Self, Family, and Society		
4.2.1. Personal Development		
Specific Competence 3: Appreciation of National Cultural Values and Respect for One's		
Cultural Identity		
Competence Unit	Examples of Learning	Standards and Indicators
	Activities	
3.2. Respect for National	Listening to carols, Easter	Competence Area: Personal,
Traditions and	songs, and legends;	Emotional, and Social
Recognition of Their	Engaging in practical	Development
Cultural Significance	activities, such as	Standard 1: The child develops a
	drawing or crafting	positive self-concept as a unique
	national items (e.g.,	individual.
	mărțișoare);	Indicator: 197
	Attending performances,	
	thematic films, and	demonstrates trust in familiar
	concerts (Language and	adults and interacts with them
	Folk Culture).	Indicators: 256, 257
4.2.2. Education for Society		
Specific Competence 3: Respect for cultural differences and diversity while promoting national cultural values.		
3.3. Appreciation and	Presenting and describing	Cognitive development
respect for one's own	personal and peer cultural	Standard 2: The child observes,
cultural heritage and that	heritage;	compares, and evaluates actions,
of others	Cultural visits and	events, and experiences.
	excursions;	<i>Indicator:</i> 569
	Viewing educational	Standard 12: The child
	films with intercultural	
	content.	environment and social systems.
		Indicator: 701
4.3. Language and Communication		
4. 4.3.1. Education for Language and Communication		

Specific Competence 3: Reception and reproduction of emotional and ideational content of literary texts, appreciating their educational value		
		C. 1 1 5 TI 1 111
	Participating in school	Standard 5: The child uses
reproduction of the	performances, meeting	multiple modes of verbal, non-
emotional-expressive	with authors, and	verbal, and paraverbal
content of texts through	attending literary	communication
images or audiovisual	matinées (e.g.,	
media	"Conversations with	
	Guguța").	
4.5. Arts		
4.5.2. Music Education		
Specific Competence 2: Participating in musical activities and demonstrating expressive		
movement in response to the varied character of music.		
Expressive performance	Folk music games for	Language and communication
of a simple melody	children: "Castelul,"	development; foundations for
within a limited pitch	"Papa Ruda,"	reading and writing
	"Drăgaicele," "Guess	Standard 4: The child
groups, small groups, and	the Conductor"	pronounces sounds and words of
individually		the mother tongue correctly.
		Indicator: 423
Specific Competence 3: Demonstrating a positive attitude toward musical creations,		
expressing appreciation for national and universal musical values		
3.2 Expressing feelings	Dramatizations based on	Personal, emotional, and social
of joy, confidence,	children's folk music:	development
friendship, love, courage,	"Cu sorcova," "Cu	Standard 3: The child identifies
and optimism through	semănatul," "Papa	and expresses a range of
listening to children's	Ruda";	emotions.
folk songs;	Exercises linking folk	<i>Indicator:</i> 217
3.3 Participating with	melodies with traditional	Standard 7: The child recognizes
pleasure, initiative, and	attire: "Dress the doll to	and respects individual
curiosity in musical	perform a folk song"	similarities and differences.
activities and cultural-	1 7	Indicator: 289
artistic events;		Standard 10: The child
3.5 Associating folk		cooperates with others.
music with traditional		Indicator: 332

An examination of the competencies outlined in the *Early Childhood Education Curriculum*, in relation to content units, learning activities, and performance standards, reveals that, when approached from a folkloric perspective, national cultural elements are consistently incorporated into the formative experiences of children aged six to seven. This integration fosters personal and social development while cultivating a reflective engagement with traditional values and cultural heritage.

Within the learning unit *Self, Family, and Society* (Personal Development), Specific Competence 3 emphasizes the cultivation of an appreciative orientation toward national cultural values through the development of respectful attitudes toward cultural identity. The curriculum achieves this objective through a range of activities, including listening to and interpreting carols, Easter songs, and legends, as well as crafting traditional objects such as "*martisoare*". These practices are further reinforced by cultural events, including performances, films, and concerts related to language and folk traditions, which enhance children's engagement with and deepen their understanding of cultural values.

The learning unit Education for Society builds upon this foundation through Specific Competence 3, which emphasizes the recognition of cultural diversity while reinforcing awareness of national cultural values. Children are encouraged to present and describe aspects of their own cultural heritage alongside that of their peers. This process is supported by educational visits and excursions focused on cultural exploration, fostering an understanding of the role of tradition within a pluralistic context. Intercultural educational films further complement these experiences by providing comparative perspectives between national cultural values and those of other communities.

In the domain of Language and Communication, the curriculum emphasizes the ability to comprehend and reproduce both the emotional and conceptual dimensions of literary texts. Activities such as school performances, author visits, and literary matinées, as exemplified by Conversations with Guguta, contribute to the development of communicative competence. These experiences allow children to engage with literary works in ways that nurture both emotional expression and conceptual understanding. The memorization and recitation of traditional poems further enhance their familiarity with folkloric modes of expression and reinforce their connection to linguistic heritage.

Within the *Arts domain*, particularly in *Music Education*, children participate in musical games rooted in folklore, such as "*Castelul*, *Papa Ruda*, and *Dragaicele*", as well as in dramatizations inspired by traditional musical compositions. These activities foster expressive capacities and aesthetic discernment within a culturally grounded framework. Through sustained engagement with folk melodies and their associated traditions, children develop musical skills while strengthening their connection to cultural heritage and the values it conveys.

The standards and indicators within each domain of activity are articulated with clarity and specificity, providing a coherent framework for monitoring and assessing preschoolers' developmental progress.

The professional preparation of future educators in Moldovan universities should be systematically aligned with both pedagogical knowledge and traditional educational practices rooted in community heritage. Revitalizing these traditions within contemporary teacher education is essential, as it enables emerging educators to understand and integrate traditional values, methods, and instructional techniques into their pedagogical repertoire. Ethnopedagogical culture, conceived as a body of educational knowledge and practices grounded in folk wisdom and collective experience, represents a significant resource for fostering authentic educational engagement. Mastery of this cultural-educational heritage strengthens both the integrity and the contextual relevance of early childhood education.

The overarching objective is to prepare a new generation of educators capable of synthesizing traditional pedagogical insights with contemporary educational approaches, thereby advancing a balanced and contextually responsive practice that addresses the evolving needs of modern society. The integration of folklore into the early childhood education curriculum provides a substantive foundation for children's cultural, linguistic, and moral development, preparing them to become reflective and actively engaged members of their communities.

3.1. Lessons from Finland, Ireland, and Poland

Within the broader context of globalization and the diversification of educational practices, the comparative study of folklore integration into early childhood curricula has gained increasing significance. As an authentic vehicle for the transmission of values, traditions, and cultural identity, folklore is increasingly recognized internationally as a valuable pedagogical resource, particularly during the formative stages of child development. Several European countries, alongside international initiatives, have introduced policies and programs aimed at revitalizing and integrating intangible cultural heritage from the earliest years of education.

A comparative analysis of these models provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of diverse approaches to integrating folklore within early childhood education. Such comparisons reveal both the variety of implementation strategies and the shared educational functions embodied in folklore traditions. The following

discussion examines selected examples from Finland, Ireland, and Poland, along with initiatives supported by UNESCO, which collectively illustrate the international relevance and applicability of this pedagogical orientation. Across a range of European and non-European contexts, early childhood education systems increasingly recognize folklore as an essential resource for shaping cultural identity and supporting the holistic development of the child.

In Finland, the integration of intangible cultural heritage into preschool education is embedded within a curriculum framework that emphasizes play-based, experiential, and context-sensitive learning. From the earliest years, children are introduced to local cultural symbols through folk songs such as *Piiri pieni pyörii*, narratives drawn from *Kalevala* mythology, and traditional dances. These culturally embedded practices support the development of language, empathy, and national consciousness. Educators are trained to employ these resources not merely as forms of recreation, but as pedagogical tools for transmitting foundational values, including solidarity, respect, and cultural continuity.

In Ireland, Celtic myths and legends, along with traditional symbols such as the *shamrock, leprechauns*, and *the Samhain festival*, are integrated into narrative and artistic activities in preschool settings through initiatives such as *Heritage in Schools*. These programs actively involve the local community, including traditional storytellers who engage directly with young children in educational contexts. Within this framework, folkloric narratives function not only as tools for vocabulary development and imaginative stimulation, but also as resources for exploring moral values and the interconnectedness of the individual, nature, and the wider community.

Poland provides a coherent model for the integration of regional folklore into the preschool curriculum through thematic projects centered on cultural heritage. Folklore weeks organized in kindergartens encompass integrated learning activities such as listening to traditional songs including *Sto lat* and *Hej Sokoly*, engaging with oral poetry, creating folk costumes, performing traditional dances, and preparing regional recipes in collaboration with parents. This participatory approach cultivates a sense of attachment to one's cultural heritage while fostering an appreciation of regional diversity. At the same time, it strengthens cooperative relationships among children, educators, and families, thereby reinforcing the social dimension of early childhood education.

At the global level, UNESCO actively supports the valorization of folklore and intangible cultural heritage in education through its *Living Heritage and Education*

programme, developed within the framework of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO policy documents consistently advocate for the integration of traditional knowledge into national curricular frameworks, with particular emphasis on early childhood education, where learning is mediated through expressive, symbolic, and participatory forms. The overarching objective is to foster respect for cultural diversity, reinforce collective identity, and promote social cohesion by recognizing both shared values and cultural differences.

Viewed from an international comparative perspective, a clear trend is emerging toward the reintegration of folklore into early childhood education as a key dimension of axiological development and identity formation. The models examined demonstrate that folklore functions as a living and adaptable pedagogical medium through which foundational values can be transmitted to younger generations in ways that are both contextually relevant and universally resonant.

4. Technology as a Tool for Preserving and Teaching Folklore in Preschool Settings

Introducing children to elements of national cultural heritage makes a substantive contribution to the formation of identity, the development of a sense of belonging, and the cultivation of respect for tradition. Within the rapidly evolving context of the information society, early childhood education is confronted with the challenge of addressing the developmental needs of a generation that engages with digital technology from the earliest stages of life. Folklore, long associated with oral transmission and rural environments, is increasingly acquiring renewed modes of expression and dissemination through digital media. The digitalization of folklore involves more than the technical conversion of traditional content into electronic form; it requires a pedagogical reconfiguration of how cultural values are conveyed, interpreted, and experienced by preschool children.

Research indicates that contemporary technological resources can play a significant role in sustaining the vitality of intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting axiological, aesthetic, and identity-oriented education in early childhood settings. In the digital era, folklore offers potential not only for preservation but also for reinterpretation through modalities aligned with the sensibilities and learning preferences of today's children. When applied with pedagogical discernment, technology serves as an effective instrument for revitalizing intangible heritage. Integrating digital tools into early childhood education facilitates access to authentic

cultural content, presented in interactive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate formats.

Educational mobile applications featuring illustrated folk tales, interactive games inspired by Romanian mythology, and animated folk songs serve as effective tools for cultivating curiosity and promoting active engagement among young children. YouTube channels dedicated to children's folk music, enriched with animations and on-screen lyrics, further support the internalization of rhythmic and lexical patterns characteristic of traditional language. Additionally, podcasts featuring authentic storytellers or recordings of elders recounting local legends and fairy tales offer valuable resources for facilitating auditory activities and dramatizations in the preschool environment.

Another relevant example involves physical or virtual visits to ethnographic museums, which can be integrated into educational activities aimed at familiarizing children with traditional artifacts, customs, and historical ways of life. Such experiences connect contemporary children to the past through technological media that are both accessible and meaningful.

Figure 3 demonstrates how technology can be utilized to support the preservation and teaching of folklore in preschool education, highlighting its role in fostering cultural understanding, engagement, and early childhood development.

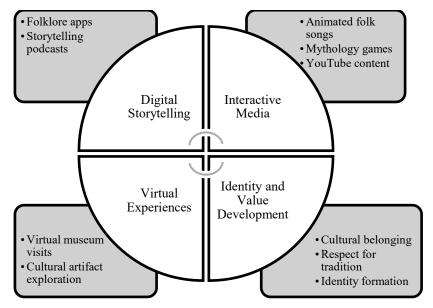


Figure 3. Technological Approaches to Folklore in Early Childhood Education

Building on these technological approaches, educators must exercise discernment in selecting digital content, ensuring it is developmentally appropriate, culturally accurate, and aligned with the cognitive and emotional levels of young children, while avoiding materials that misrepresent cultural symbols or trivialize cultural messages. Thoughtful integration of digital resources into educational activities can enhance the appeal of pedagogical practices and strengthen the connection between children and traditional cultural values, thereby supporting the objectives of education for identity, continuity, and belonging.

5. Conclusion

Within contemporary preschool curricula, folklore serves as a fundamental vehicle for transmitting cultural values, linguistic structures, and social norms. *The Moldovan Early Childhood Education Curriculum* exemplifies this approach by strategically embedding folkloric elements across key pedagogical domains, including *Self, Family, and Society; Language and Communication; and the Arts.* This deliberate integration facilitates children's internalization of foundational cultural values and the development of a conscious and respectful cultural identity.

International examples from Finland, Ireland, and Poland, alongside UNESCO initiatives, underscore the global significance of incorporating intangible cultural heritage into early education to foster belonging, empathy, and social cohesion. The effectiveness of such integration depends on the professional preparation of educators, who must combine contemporary pedagogical expertise with ethnopedagogical knowledge and the capacity to employ digital tools judiciously, ensuring that folklore remains authentic, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate.

A curriculum that harmonizes tradition and innovation, designed from a folkloric perspective, promotes moral, social, and cultural development. It cultivates children who are culturally grounded, reflective, and actively engaged. Far from being supplanted by formal education, popular pedagogy continues to serve as a foundational mechanism for identity formation, affirming its enduring relevance in contemporary early childhood education.

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