

STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL OPINION

delivered by:

Associate Professor Veneta Koseva Uzunova, PhD

DIIT, Trakia University, Stara Zagora,

based on the materials submitted for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree “doctor”

Field of Higher Education 1. **Pedagogical Sciences**; Professional Field 1.2. **Pedagogy**

PhD Program “**Theory of Education and Didactics**”

for the candidate **Nikolina Georgieva Tareva**

Dissertation Title: THE STUDENT TEAM IN PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Research Supervisor: **Associate Professor Albena Alexandrova Ovcharova, PhD**

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the PhD Student

By the order № RD-21-131 of 22.01.2024 of the Rector of the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” which designates me as a Full Member on duty for the Scientific Jury Panel to deliver professional assertion on a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic “The Student Team In Project-Based Learning” for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the Field of Higher Education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences; Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy; PhD Program “Theory of Education and Didactics”. The author of the dissertation is Nikolina Georgieva Tareva – PhD student in full-time studies at the Department of Pedagogy and Management of Education with supervisor Associate Professor Albena Alexandrova Ovcharova, PhD, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The set of materials presented by Nikolina Georgieva Tareva is in accordance with Art 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU. The dissertation meets the requirements for this type of work. The candidate submits 5 articles on the topic, published in the renowned specialized editions. All of them are adequate to the topic of the dissertation research.

Brief biographical data for the doctoral student

Nikolina Tureva graduated in elementary school pedagogy - in 1989. "Hristo Botev" IDNU, Burgas, and in 1992 and VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". Works since 1995. as a primary teacher at "Aleko Konstantinov" Elementary School, the city of Plovdiv. She holds a Second professional qualification degree, professional-pedagogical specialization "Child-adolescent and school psychology" and has completed a number of qualification courses / "Pedagogical diagnostics - an element of empirical pedagogical research", "Art pedagogical tools and games for the personal development of the child and student. Educational workshop and pedagogical practice", "Emotional education of children and students in educational institutions", "Coaching in an educational environment - for whom and how", "Cloud technologies as a tool for creating educational content", etc./.

Nikolina Tureva's education, professional experience and upgrading of pedagogical competence are entirely focused on primary school education, personal development of students and management of classroom processes for more effective learning and creating a positive educational environment.

2. Relevance of the topic

The topic of the dissertation research is particularly relevant and significant on a global and national context. The formation and development of cooperation and teamwork skills in students already in the initial years of education is a key component of social-emotional learning. Project-based learning creates favorable conditions, provides a positive and favorable learning environment in which adolescents learn not only knowledge and skills, but also models for managing relationships.

In scientific and methodological literature, in normative documents and in practice, more and more importance is given to evidence-based programs and resources that develop two essential competencies in human life - intrapersonal and interpersonal, "Me" and others". The theme reflects the synchronicity between social-emotional and academic learning, which is one of the most important problems of education today.

3. Understanding the Issue

Doctoral student Nikolina Tureva has thoroughly, in detail and competently described the theoretical problem for the student team in project-based learning. She knows the basic issues. She thoroughly described the origin, essence, specificity and classifications of this method, as well as its place in Bulgarian education. It detailed the nature and characteristics of the group and team, team interrelationship and group behavior and focused on the student team, the concepts of its formation, group dynamics, cohesion and the development of empathy and cooperation.

She substantiated in a scientific and applied aspect the basic need for the formation and functioning of student teams for the successful implementation of project-based learning.

4. Research Methodology

The content of the chosen methodology includes:

- author's questionnaire on teamwork skills /cooperation, activity, initiative, responsibility/;
- a standardized test for empathy in elementary school children /"Feelings and thoughts"/, measuring changes in general levels of empathy and recognition of emotions;
- a standardized sociometric procedure for determining the level of group cohesion in the class.

This allows to explore students' teamwork skills, group cohesion and empathy levels, and to reveal the possibilities of project-based learning to influence them. The methodology is adequate to the set goal, reflects the performance of the tasks and presupposes the collection and systematization of appropriate empirical data.

5. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation Work and Contributions

The dissertation consists of three chapters.

The first chapter represents a theoretical statement of the problem and reflects the doctoral student's awareness and ability to analyze scientific sources, to structure the content according to the logic and significance of the individual components, and to draw the main conclusions. This chapter examines in detail the two main concepts of the topic - project-based learning and the student team.

The history of origin and development, of dissemination and application, of the establishment of the "project" as a teaching method, its rethinking and redefinition in chronological and geographical terms is traced. Its position in Bulgarian education is reflected and described. Its role in creating a social and emotional environment and its relationship with the much-needed modern educational transformations and real-life activities are discussed. The essence, specificity, different types and

classifications, stages of implementation of project-based learning are presented in many aspects, reflect the different positions and views of its researchers

The role of the teacher in its implementation, his place in the learning process at the initial stage, good practices, the normative base in particular, and in a broader plan - the trends and educational policies are also thoroughly and analytically presented, and the doctoral student was able to cover the issues in its entirety.

The student team with its essential characteristics is also present in the precise theoretical analysis. The doctoral student demonstrates a broad knowledge of pedagogical and socio-psychological concepts related to the group as a subject of scientific research, the distinction between the concepts of "group" and "team", interrelationships in the team and group behavior, roles in the team, the stages of formation of the student team and its functioning.

Special attention is given and the necessity of forming and functioning of student teams in the implementation of project-based learning is argued. The specifics of group dynamics, cooperation, the development of empathy and group cohesion have been traced.

In its entirety, The First Chapter reflects the doctoral student's ability to describe and analyze a wide range of scientific sources; logically and structurally arrange content constructs by making a transition and tracing the problematic from the history of its emergence through the current state and delineating its trends with an eye to the future. The conclusions synthesized at the end give focus and direction to the empirical research.

The Second Chapter briefly presents the design of the empirical study. Object, subject, goal, tasks are defined. The raised hypotheses are concrete, and the methods used make it possible to verify them. The engagement of the doctoral student with the research problem is also projected in the author's questionnaire, which is subjected to a reliability check and factor analysis in Chapter Three. The study contingent, which represents an impressively significant sample, is also described.

In **The Third Chapter**, the results of the empirical study are described and interpreted. The research material was subjected to statistical processing – frequency characteristics, measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion were calculated for the descriptive methods, diagrams and histograms of the raw score of the scale and individual subscales were made. Methods which were used to test the hypothesis of normality of the distribution of the scale and subscales. A variance analysis was made of the results before and after the application of project-based learning.

The results are presented in their sequence, visualized through tables, figures and diagrams. Quantitative and qualitative analysis are precisely carried out. Empirical data are quite sufficient in scope. The ability of the doctoral student to interpret them in a clear, reasoned and orderly manner is remarkable. They have served to draw convincing main conclusions.

At the end of the development, **the conclusions** of the dissertation research with a theoretical and practical aspect are formulated. The four hypotheses have been proven and valuable recommendations for practice regarding working with student teams in a project-based environment at the initial stage of education have been made.

Scientific contributions can be divided into theoretical and practical-applied aspects.

The theoretical is reduced to a comprehensive, I would say large-scale survey of historical and contemporary scientific and practical-applied theories related to the student team in project-based learning.

The developed and tested diagnostic tool for children of primary school age is of practical application value, through which the levels of the indicators of teamwork skills - cooperation, activity, initiative, responsibility - are established.

Also, the conducted empirical research is distinguished by its originality, scale and high value for the practice of project-based learning.

The recommendations made for practice could be promoted and widely used in the initial stage of education.

6. Evaluation of the Publications and Personal Contributions of the Doctoral Student

The presented publications on the topic of the dissertation are 5 and meet the requirements. I am convinced that the text, the obtained results and the outlined contributions in the doctoral student Nikolina Georgieva Tarova's dissertation are entirely her personal work.

7. Abstract

The abstract contains the main components of the dissertation work, the results and their analysis. It meets the requirements and presents the sequence and realization of the research goals and objectives.

8. Recommendations for Future Use of Dissertation Contributions and Results

I recommend the dissertation to be published as a stand-alone book to promote both the extensive theoretical research and the methodology developed in relation to working with student teams in a project-based environment in primary education. I think it holds the potential to build on and continue, and the recommendations for practice could be widely used in the implementation of project-based learning and the formation of student teams in the initial stage of education.

CONCLUSION

The Dissertation *contains scientific and scientific-applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science* and **meet all the requirements** of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

The dissertation presents that the PhD student Nikolina Georgieva Tareva **has** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Theory of Education and Didactics, **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research. Due to the above I confidently give my **positive** assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and **I propose to the honorable scientific jury to awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor"** to Nikolina Georgieva Tareva in the Field of Higher Education 1. Pedagogical Sciences; Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy; PhD Program "Theory of Education and Didactics".

22.02.2024.

Author of the Opinion&:

Assoc. Prof. Veneta Uzunova, PhD