

OPINION

By Assos. Prof. Fani Evgenieva Boykova, Ph.D.

University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

on a dissertation

**for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in: the field of higher
education 1. Pedagogical sciences**

professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy

doctoral program *Theory of education and didactics*

Author: Nikolina Georgieva Tureva

Topic: "The student team in project-based learning"

Research supervisor: Assos. Prof. Albena Alexandrova Ovcharova Ph.D. ,

University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By order RD-21-131/22.01.2024 of the Rector of University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of the 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 direction: 1.2. Pedagogy; doctoral program "Theory of education and didactics". The author of the dissertation work is Nikolina Georgieva Tareva, with scientific supervisor Assoc. Dr. Albena Alexandrova Ovcharova, Department of "Pedagogy and Education Management", Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

In order to participate in the procedure, Nikolina Tureva has submitted a set of materials that is in accordance with the requirements of ZRASRB, PPZRASRB and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The professional biography of the doctoral student demonstrates a desire for continuous self-improvement. She has participated in over 20 training courses and various forms of additional qualification to upgrade her pedagogical competences.

2. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation examines the significant and current issue of developing social competences in teamwork through the application of project-based learning. The doctoral student argues for the choice of her research field with the specifics of education at primary school age. She determines this period of learning as the most appropriate for building foundational skills for working collaboratively and developing social/emotional skills and empathy. The topic is also relevant in the context of modern competence-oriented training, where educational interaction and the active participation of students are stimulated.

3. Knowing the problem

In the interpretation of the studied problem, the long-term teaching experience of Nikolina Tureva is demonstrated. The doctoral student thoroughly and competently motivates the choice of topic, clearly outlines the object and subject of the research. In the dissertation work, the author successfully achieves the set tasks, among which stand out: to theoretically justify the work on projects in the initial stage of education; to conduct an empirical study, and its results to become the basis for deriving practical recommendations for teamwork in project-based learning in primary education.

4. Research methodology

The research toolkit is relevant and suitable for the specifics of the problem. Among the used research methods, the study of theoretical, theoretical-applied sources and regulatory documents, the processing and analysis of empirical data occupy a leading place.

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The dissertation is presented in 246 pages, of which 205 pages are the main text. The bibliographic awareness of the doctoral student, her ability to approach analytically and systematize problematically known scientific production on the researched topic, are demonstrated in the extensive list of studied literature including: 21 primary sources, 191 literary sources, of which 79 in Cyrillic and 112 in Latin; 11 internet sources. The appendices that verify the empirical work and support the made conclusions and inferences are presented in 25 pages.

The structure of the dissertation work is traditional for this type of research: introduction, 3 chapters, outcomes, conclusion, used sources and literature, appendices. The main text includes 28 tables, 76 figures and 2 diagrams that illustrate the analyzes and conclusions made.

The essence and specificity of project-based learning are presented in the first chapter in a broad historical context of the development of the idea. The doctoral student pays due attention to the discussion of project-based education in publications by Bulgarian scientists. The terminological apparatus of the dissertation research has been specified. The regulatory documents and school policies for the application of project-based learning in modern Bulgarian education have been studied and commented in detail. The second chapter presents the design of the empirical study. It was conducted with the participation of 702 students aged 7-11, studying in the primary stage of education in schools in the cities of Plovdiv, Krichim, and Dupnitsa, as well as in the villages of Graf Ignatievo and Popovitsa. The large number of participants from different settlements gives the survey representativeness. The precision of work on the developed issues is also manifested in the non-standardized author's questionnaire developed by the doctoral student, which was tested before the research. Known research methods were applied and standardized in the experimental work. The analysis of the results of the conducted research is presented in the third chapter. The experimental work toolkit demonstrates the doctoral student's ability to competently analyze the collected data and visualize it graphically. Based on the theoretical and empirical studies and analyses, methodological recommendations for working with student teams in a project-based environment at the primary stage are substantiated.

6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

The contributions of Nikolina Tureva's dissertation research are of a scientific-theoretical and scientifically applied character. Historical and contemporary scientific and practical theories related to the student team in project-based learning have been extensively studied. A diagnostic toolkit has been applied, through which the levels of indicators of social competence for teamwork at primary school age can be established. An empirical study has been conducted on the potential of project-based learning to influence the teamwork skills and empathy levels of primary school students. Recommendations are offered for working with student teams in a project-based environment in the primary stage of education.

7. Abstract

The abstract is made according to the requirements and correctly reflects the content and main results presented in the dissertation work.

8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

With a practical value for school practice, it would be useful for the dissertation research and its presented results to be popularized through publications in refereed and indexed scientific periodicals, as well as as an independent publication.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The dissertation work shows that the doctoral student Nikolina Georgieva Tureva possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and skills for independent conducting of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research and propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Nikolina Georgieva Tureva in the field of higher education: 1. *Pedagogical sciences*, professional direction 1.2. *Pedagogy*, doctoral program *Theory of education and didactics*.

28.01.2024

Prepared the opinion:

Assos. Prof. Fani Evgenieva Boykova, Ph.D.