

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. DSc. Klavdia Vasileva Sapundjieva, Sofia University**  
of a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

**in the field of higher education:** 1. Pedagogical sciences

**professional direction:** 1. 2 Pedagogy

**doctoral program** in Theory of Education and Didactics

**Author:** Zoya Nedelcheva Capon

**Topic:** "Theatrical and educational strategies in specialized art schools"

**Scientific adviser:** Prof. Dr. Nelly Boyadzhieva, Sofia University

### **1. General description of the submitted materials**

By order № P33-1306 of 19. 04. 2001 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" I was appointed a member of the scientific jury to provide a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: "Theatrical and educational strategies in the specialized schools of arts " for acquiring the educational and scientific degree 'doctor' in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1.2 Pedagogy, doctoral program Theory of education and didactics. The author of the dissertation is Zoya Nedelcheva Capon - PhD student in independent training at the Department of Pedagogy and Education Management with supervisor Prof. Dr. Nelly Boyadzhieva from Sofia University.

The set of paper materials presented by Zoya Capon is in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for development of the academic staff of the University of Plovdiv, includes the following documents:

- request to the Rector of the University of Plovdiv for disclosure of the procedure for defense of the dissertation;
- CV in European format;
- Minutes from the department council, related to the reporting of the readiness for opening the procedure and to the preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation work;

- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- list of observed citations;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

The doctoral student has submitted 5 publications.

## **2. Brief biographical data about the doctoral student**

Zoya Capon was born in 1965. She has a master's degree in acting. She worked as a teacher at the High School of Arts - Plovdiv, and is currently an assistant professor at Plovdiv University.

## **3. Relevance of the topic and expediency of the set goals and objectives**

The topic is relevant because the problems of preparing students in secondary art schools have not yet been sufficiently studied. The research focuses on the development and preparation of their graduates through theatrical activities, which are seen as an opportunity and intersection of specialized aesthetic activity and wider social and moral readiness, life skills and attitude to life. Empathy is derived as a unifying core in these parallel and at the same time interconnected aspects of the process. In this sense, the main goal and objectives of the study are logically derived and with the potential to develop and highlight the current and most significant focuses of the leading idea and the main thesis.

## **4. Knowledge of the problem**

The doctoral student knows the problem both by virtue of her education and through her direct practice as a teacher at the secondary school of arts - Plovdiv. The scientific substantiation of the derived theoretical thesis is supported by the most basic and recognizable theatrical and psychological theories related to empathy. A specific orientation and direct focus on theoretical arrays, which have a direct connection with the researched problem, is shown. In this sense, the theoretical analysis is not scattered, but directly oriented around the goal.

## **5. Research methodology**

The chosen methodology is also oriented directly to the goal and includes methods that are aimed at the studied phenomenon and substantiation of the main thesis. I do not accept that the phenomenological analysis derived as an independent method, which is a specific philosophical technique, with the corresponding depth mechanisms, has been used. Rather, it can be said that the studied phenomenon - educational theater activity is analyzed through theoretical analysis and synthesis. 45 students from three age groups were studied, the data were processed in the direction of proving the effectiveness of the created model / strategies for the formation of empathy and empathic attitude in students.

## **6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation**

In structural terms, the dissertation includes an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, literature - a total of 187 pages. The theoretical part covers the first two chapters, the third chapter is related to the experimental work for the creation of the model, and the empirical part is dedicated to the fourth chapter, which actually tests and verifies the theoretically derived model. In the first chapter the main concepts and theoretical focuses of the research are considered - theatrical activity, learning, competence approach, strategies. Special attention is paid to the theatrical activity in its capacity of educational activity and vice versa - the educational activity in the context of the theatrical. This intertwining has led to some mixing of semantic characteristics. I cannot accept the statement that "What is characteristic of learning is that it is an unconscious process and is not related to the strict intention to learn something" - p. 13 of the abstract, although it means learning through theater or -exactly theatrical activity and theatrical perception in general. The second chapter is devoted to empathy and its connection with theatrical learning activities - nature, types, role in human development. In the third chapter a model for the formation of empathy through theatrical educational activity is constructed. It is presented through a specific program that includes 15 group meetings. Exemplary exercises for preparation, for higher sensitivity, for confidence, for creativity and spontaneity are given. There is a detailed description of 25 exercises and their variants. The fourth chapter presents the approbation of the model. The evaluation of the model is performed in a real learning environment and criteria are derived that determine the changes in the development of cognitive and emotional empathy. The model was tested with students from 8th, 9th and 11th grade, which makes it possible to trace the dynamics in the development of empathic processes. Three stories were used - two personal experiences and one of a popular literary text. The results prove that the theatrical-educational strategies of the model enhance the achievement and manifestation of empathy in

students. The summarized conclusions are specifically oriented and significant for the practice of teaching in art schools. The derived recommendations can be applied in practice and in perspective.

## **7. Contributions and significance of development for science and practice**

I accept the contributions formulated by the doctoral student, although they could be more generalized. Specifically, I believe that the following has been achieved: - Theatrical activity is analyzed as artistic and educational activity and the possibilities of theatrical educational activity for the preparation of students in acting are presented; - Empathy is analyzed in the context of educational theater activities and is included as a major component of theater-educational strategies for student preparation; - A model for the development of empathy through the application of theatrical-educational strategies in education has been compiled and tested. The effectiveness of the model has been tested empirically and in development.

## **8. Evaluation of the publications on the dissertation**

5 publications are attached - in electronic journals, collections of scientific forums and a collection of the University of Plovdiv. They are independent and represent parts of the dissertation research.

## **9. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

The dissertation is a personal work of the doctoral student and a result of her scientific and professional interests.

## **10. Abstract**

The abstract reflects the main content and results of the dissertation. It is compiled according to the requirements of the relevant regulations.

## **11. Critical remarks and recommendations**

Theoretical analysis could be even more saturated, critical and substantiated. In future research to look for an even wider range of components of educational theater activities. **Question:** Can the model be applied in the mainstream school and in what aspect?

## 12. Personal impressions

I have no personal impressions of the doctoral student.

## 13. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

To form a practical guide for the application of theatrical-educational strategies.

## Conclusion

The dissertation contains scientific, applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisii Hilendarski". The presented connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for the application of the Law on Pedagogical Sciences. The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Zoya Nedelcheva Capon has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty 1.2 Pedagogy by demonstrating qualities and skills for independent research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the research presented by the above peer-reviewed dissertation, abstract, results and contributions, and **I invite the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"** of Zoya Nedelcheva Capon in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1. 2 Pedagogy, doctoral program Theory of education and didactics.