

REVIEW

by Margarita Todorova Terzieva – Professor, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, PhD in Philology at Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov”

of a Doctoral Dissertation Submitted for the Award of the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor"

In Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy,
Doctoral Program “Theory of Education and Didactics“

Author: Gergana Georgieva Komsiyiska

Title: Project-Based Instruction in Bulgarian Language and Literature at the Primary Level of Basic Education

Scientific Supervisors: Prof. Rumyana Dimitrova Tankova, DSc – Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”; Prof. Georgi Petkov Ivanov, DSc

1. General Description of the Submitted Materials

By Order No. ПД-22-1621 dated 11.07.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I was appointed as a member of the academic jury for the procedure for the defense of a doctoral dissertation titled “Project-Based Learning in Bulgarian Language and Literature in the Primary Stage of Basic Education” for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Field 1.3. Methodology of Teaching ..., Doctoral Program “Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature.”

The author of the dissertation is Gergana Georgieva Komsiyiska – a part-time doctoral student in the Department of Primary School Pedagogy, with academic supervisors Prof. Dr. Rumyana Dimitrova Tankova, DSc – PU “Paisii Hilendarski,” and Prof. Dr. Georgi Petkov Ivanov, DSc. At the first meeting of the academic jury, I was assigned to prepare a review.

The set of materials submitted by Gergana Georgieva Komsiyiska complies with Article 36(1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at Plovdiv University and includes the following documents:

- Curriculum Vitae;

- Minutes from the Departmental Council meeting regarding the report on the readiness to initiate the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- Doctoral dissertation;
- Author's abstract (summary);
- List of scientific publications related to the topic of the dissertation, along with copies of those publications.

2. Brief Biographical Information about the Doctoral Candidate

Gergana Georgieva Komsijska was born on October 30, 1972, in the town of Pazardzhik. In 1996, she earned a Bachelor's degree from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" with a major in Primary School Pedagogy and a specialization in Psychology. She holds a Master's degree in Applied Social Psychology from the same university. She works as a senior teacher in her hometown. She holds the second professional qualification degree. In 2013, she was awarded the title "Teacher of the Year" and was nominated for the "Neofit Rilski" award in 2017. She has been engaged by the Ministry of Education and Science in the evaluation of textbooks and educational projects in Bulgarian Language and Literature, as well as in Civic and Social Studies.

3. Relevance of the Topic and Appropriateness of the Set Goals and Objectives

The search for new educational technologies and unconventional methodological tools in their application poses a challenge for educators in the first quarter of the 21st century. The dissertation fits into this area of concern with its ideas aimed at enhancing language competencies, fostering cultural development, and stimulating the creative drive of students in primary school age.

4. Understanding of the Problem

The exposition demonstrates a deep understanding of the problem and, to some extent, a critical analysis of the specialized literature related to it.

5. Research Methodology

A technological model has been developed, which includes six methodological algorithms ranked by complexity and specificity: perception and interpretation of a literary or popular science text; comprehension of its content; retelling; formulation of conclusions; development of an emotional-evaluative attitude toward a character; creation of a creative project. These constitute the framework of criteria for the study.

6. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion with a summary, contributions, a bibliography, and appendices. The total volume is 242 pages, of which 224 pages comprise the main text. Included are 25 tables and 61 figures. The list of literary sources contains 128 references, of which 69 are in Cyrillic, 45 in Latin script, and 14 are internet references. Approximately 40% of these sources were published within the last fifteen years.

In the first chapter, the object, subject, aim, tasks, and hypothesis of the dissertation are correctly formulated; distinctions between project-oriented and project-based learning are clarified; educational innovations from recent decades are presented; their conceptual foundations are analyzed from the perspective of European and national educational requirements with state status; and the possibilities for integrating Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL) with other school subjects related to the addressed issues are indicated.

The second chapter reveals the diagnostic procedure by tracing the organization and methodology of the study, its stages, and the author's formulated criteria and evaluation indicators. The elements of the diagnostic toolkit, including the entry and exit diagnostics, are described in detail. A methodological model for developing communicative and speech skills within the context of project-based and interdisciplinary learning has been developed. The lack of a theoretical framework related to this model is compensated for by previously presented practical-applied examples of its implementation.

The most significant contribution is reflected in the research presented in the third chapter. The survey conducted among practicing educators reveals both their preferences and hesitations regarding the implementation of innovative approaches, as well as their determination or reluctance to take risks in transforming the classroom into a pedagogical laboratory. There is a clear awareness that students prefer this type of activity during lessons. The findings are further corroborated by surveys administered to students and parents, who evaluated the project-based activities from both emotional and pragmatic perspectives. The effectiveness of the chosen approach is substantiated by the outcome diagnostics, which highlight a greater proportion of students in the experimental group achieving excellent results and demonstrating the development of key competencies—creative thinking, analysis and interpretation, argumentation, and functional literacy.

In the section “Conclusions and Generalizations,” while discussing the paradoxes in language and literature education, the author asserts that “fourth-grade students require considerably more practical activities in order to comprehend the scientific material.” She proposes various methods to achieve this, including interdisciplinary connections, interactive activities, student portfolios, a problem-thematic approach, among others.

The appendices present the results from the entry and exit assessments of both the experimental and control groups during the respective academic years. In a separate volume of 50 pages, the worksheets, related texts, and the scale for evaluating the results are compiled. Here, I would like to note a remark concerning certain questions posed to the students, which should be refined for greater precision.

7. Contributions and Significance of the Study for Science and Practice

The contributions of the dissertation can be categorized into two groups: scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied.

The scientific-theoretical contributions are:

A critical analysis of the project-based approach and related educational theories, highlighting their potential to enhance the effectiveness of language and literature instruction.

Identification of several methods for stimulating students’ cognitive and verbal activity in primary school.

The scientific-applied contributions include:

Development and testing of a technological model for assessing the communicative and speech skills of primary school students within the framework of project-oriented learning.

Creation of educational resources designed to support the acquisition of knowledge across various school subjects, while simultaneously fostering critical thinking, analytical-synthetic skills, and creative approaches.

In light of the above, it can be asserted that the scientific-applied contributions are predominant in this study.

8. Assessment of Publications Related to the Dissertation

The publications of the doctoral candidate, Gergana Komsiyka, can be classified by type (articles – 3; reports – 9), by venue (articles in national journals – 3; reports in proceedings of national scientific conferences, sessions, and seminars – 9), by language (all written in

Bulgarian – 12), and by number of co-authors (single-authored – 11; with one co-author – 1). These publications reflect the subject matter of the dissertation.

9. Personal Involvement of the Doctoral Candidate

A thorough familiarization with the content of the dissertation allows me to provide a positive assessment of the doctoral candidate's personal involvement in conducting the research and analyzing the results, although it is likely that guidance from the reviewers was utilized in formulating the contributions.

10. Abstract

The abstract, comprising 32 pages, presents a concise summary of the topic, methodology, and experimental part of the study. It meets the requirements and reflects the contributions of the author of the dissertation as well as the results achieved.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

I recommend that doctoral candidate, Gergana Komsiyka, seek more prestigious publication venues that offer greater visibility and potential for citation.

12. Recommendations for Future Application of the Dissertation Contributions and Results

I suggest that parts of the dissertation with a scientific-applied character be published as a separate volume to be utilized by educators in the primary stage of basic education.

Question for the doctoral candidate:

How does project-oriented learning help overcome the cognitive stereotypes of primary school students in the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature?

CONCLUSION

The dissertation **contains scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied results that constitute an original contribution to the field** and comply with all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ADASRB, and the corresponding Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

The dissertation demonstrates that doctoral candidate Gergana Georgieva Komsiyiska **possesses** the necessary theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty “Pedagogy of Teaching,” **exhibiting** qualities and abilities for independently conducting scientific research.

Based on the foregoing, I confidently give my positive evaluation of the conducted research presented in the reviewed dissertation, author’s abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I recommend that the esteemed academic jury award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to Gergana Georgieva Komsiyiska in Higher Education Area 1: Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Field 1.3: Pedagogy of Teaching, Doctoral Program “Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language and Literature.”

August 6, 2025

Reviewer:.....

/Prof. DSc. Margarita Terzieva/

(acad. pos., acad. degree, first name, surname)