

REVIEW

by **Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Ganeva, Ph.D.**

member of a scientific jury appointed by Order No. UMO-22 / 11.10.2023 of the Rector of the Burgas Free University for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Ph.D."

Author: Vanya Kuzmanova Avramova

Scientific field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences

Professional direction: 1.2. Pedagogy

Scientific specialty: Preschool and primary school pedagogy

Dissertation topic: "Pedagogical model for inclusive education of children with SEN in the initial stage of education (7-11 years)"

Scientific supervisors: Prof. Maria Aleksieva, Ph.D. and Assoc. Prof. Itska Derizhan, Ph.D.

Programme Board "Pedagogy"

Faculty of Humanities, Burgas Free University

1. Data on the PhD candidate

Vanya Kuzmanova Avramova is a graduate of the Burgas Free University, where she successfully graduated from the Bachelor's program "Social Activities and Counseling" and the Master's program "Social Counseling and Psychology". From 2008 until now, *she has been working in her specialty, in the field of social services for children and adults, at the "Vladislavovo" Foundation in the city of Varna.* The scientific interest in the dissertation topic begins with its scientific developments in the master's degree. In the last ten years, the doctoral student has upgraded her competences with numerous *additional qualifications on the research issues of the dissertation*, such as "Consulting on cases for work with children and parents with PAS-syndrome", "Social work with children and

adults with chronic diseases and physical disabilities", "Specialized training of teams from active social services for children", "Emphasis in working with children with multiple disabilities", "Introduction to inclusive education", "Planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive integration policies", etc.

2. Data for the Ph.D

Vanya Kuzmanova Avramova is **enrolled as a doctoral student in an individual form of study, with a study period of 18 months** , at the Center for Humanities of the Burgas Free University, under an accredited doctoral program "Preschool and primary school school pedagogy" with Order No. UMO-108/16.03.2021, based on Art . 7 and Art. 9 t of the Regulations for Academic Development composition at BSU and at the decision of the Scientific council of BSU from 12.03.2021

In 2022 with Order No. UMO- 63/13.12.2022, **her training period was extended by six months** .

Pursuant to Art . 15, para. 1 and para. 5 of the Regulations for Academic Development composition at BSU and at the decision of the Scientific council of BSU dated 30.06.2023, and Order No. UMO- 147 / 26.07.2023 of the Rector of BSU was **dismissed with the right of defense**.

All legal and regulatory rules provided for under this procedure, are kept.

3. Data on the dissertation, abstract and publications

3.1. Actuality of the topic. Knowing the problem

In the dissertation "Pedagogical model for Inclusive education of children with SEN in the initial stage of education (7-11 years)" **the personal commitment and high motivation** of Vanya Avramova on the researched problem is evident. The doctoral student is **an active participant** in institutions that work in the field of social and educational services. With the realization of

this scientific development, it shows **its responsible attitude** towards improving their functioning.

Inclusive education is **a current and challenging topic** . The dynamism with which it entered and developed the inclusive process provokes constant changes and updates, which ensures that it will be on the agenda for improvement for a long time to come. **The significance of the research issue** comes from the large number of interested and affected participants in inclusive education, of which children are in the first place.

3.2. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is **structured according to the basic requirements** for this type of scientific work – introduction, four chapters, conclusions, conclusion, bibliographic reference and appendices. **The total volume** is 208 pages, of which 195 pages are the main text and 13 pages are appendices. **The literary sources used** are 114, of which 96 are in Bulgarian and 8 in a foreign language. The used research tools are included as appendices. The obtained results of the empirical research are presented in tables, diagrams and figures. According to the requirements, a dissertation (3 copies) on paper, abstracts in Bulgarian and in English are attached.

3.3. Content of the dissertation

The introduction of the dissertation introduces the topicality of the topic, the difficulties before the implementation of quality inclusive education, as well as the main emphasis on the researched topic - inclusive policies, inclusive teams, risks before the implementation of the process, the ineffectiveness of the inclusion of specific groups of children and students - with special needs, with chronic diseases, at risk and with outstanding gifts. The conceptual framework of the dissertation is presented correctly and in a concise version (the main chapter is developed in the torus).

The first chapter presents the theoretical formulation of the researched problem (in 87 pages). Inclusive education is examined through six main directions of its implementation, which shows the large-scale view of the doctoral student on the studied matter. The literary review and analysis covers *the ideas, principles and policies, both in Bulgaria and internationally*, and discovers their interconnectedness and influence. The holistic characterization of *child development* in the studied childhood demonstrates a good knowledge of scientific works and contemporary authors in the field. *Children, subjects of inclusive education*, are at the core of Vanya Avramova's scientific interest. It describes in detail the most vulnerable and difficult to include groups of children, with a stronger emphasis on children with special educational needs. The theoretical part ends with the characteristics of the other main actors facing the difficulties of inclusive education – *parents and teachers* .

Based on *the good theoretical analysis*, in **the second chapter - Organization of the empirical research**, a theoretical model of the empirical research is presented, a thesaurus of the main concepts in the dissertation work , *the goal and tasks* are set , which are well formulated. *The researched persons* are 338, covering the target groups that cover the research objective (teachers, psychologists, social workers, special pedagogues, parents of children with special educational needs), which makes the sample representative.

Four hypotheses have been raised , which reveal the ambition of the doctoral student to discover the deficits, difficulties and opportunities of quality inclusive education for children with special educational needs. *More centrality in the assumptions would add further value to the extensive evidentiary survey.*

The selection of *the research toolkit* is in the contemporary context of research and evaluation of inclusive environments. Four methods suitable for the study were used to prove the raised hypotheses. They are described in detail and attached.

In **Chapter Three, the results** of each methodology are very *thoroughly and analytically interpreted*. Precise visualization enables quick orientation in the picture from the obtained empirical data. The skills of the doctoral student to analyze and derive the essence from the obtained results contribute to the development of the *generalized model for an inclusive educational environment for students with SEN*.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation presents its *practical and applied contribution*. Following the set goal and the empirical results, PhD student Vanya Avramova develops a **Pedagogical model for inclusive education of children with SEN in the initial stage of education (ages 7–11)**. The model of interaction in inclusive education is five-component. Graphically presented and described in detail (in 22 pages) and with understanding are its content elements (22 sub-components). The five "rays" of the model illuminate *the overall significant interaction between the participants* - people and institutions, part and essence of the process of inclusive education.

The conclusions drawn emphasize the proof of the raised hypotheses. The dissertation ends with a brief conclusion.

3.4. Abstract

In terms of content and structure, **the abstract meets the requirements** for this type of text. All content characteristics of the dissertation work and its contributions are reflected, the list of the author's publications is included.

3.5. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The doctoral student meets the necessary scientometric criteria for acquiring scientific degrees. **A dissertation** was developed and presented for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Ph.D.". **The publications on the topic of the dissertation** are three scientific articles in the magazine "Contemporary Humanitaristics" and Annual of BFU.

4. Scientific contributions of the dissertation work

4.1. Contributions of a theoretical nature

- ✓ The theoretical understanding of the participants in the inclusive educational process has been expanded.
- ✓ Deficiencies, gaps and inefficient practices in the application of the inclusive process have been identified, which hinder its quality implementation.
- ✓ The need for a new approach in creating an inclusive environment for students with special educational needs is outlined.
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4.2. Contributions of a practical and applied nature

- ✓ The practically applicable interactions between the various institutions implementing inclusive education have been established.
- ✓ The possibilities of the Model for improving the cooperation between the participants in the inclusive process have been revealed.

The comprehensive research carried out by PhD student Vanya Avramova confirms its significance, as well as the place of the *Pedagogical Model for inclusive education of children with SEN in the initial stage of education (7–11 years)* in practice.

5. Recommendations and questions

Recommendations:

- ✓ An "Inclusive Classroom" component can be expanded by emphasizing relationships between students, *for example* with a "Interpersonal Communication" subcomponent.
- ✓ The model can be constructed and presented in a format that is accessible to participants in the inclusive process in order to be put into effective use in educational and social practice.

Questions:

- 1. In the "Inclusive support" component, "Parental organizations" are included, is there a need for training for parents as well as for teachers and other specialists? In what form can trainings for parents be introduced?**
- 2. In your opinion, how can social attitudes towards children with special educational needs regarding their inclusion in the school be improved?**

6. Conclusion

The peer-reviewed dissertation work "Pedagogical model for inclusive education of children with SEN in the initial stage of education (7-11 years)" of doctoral student Vanya Kuzmanova Avramova brings its scientific and research contribution, which makes me give my *positive assessment* of it. The submitted dissertation, abstract and publications meet the scientific and technical criteria and are in accordance with the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Ph.D." in Scientific Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences. I have no doubts about plagiarism in the scientific work and in the publications presented.

I propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool and primary school pedagogy) of Vanya Kuzmanova Avramova.

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Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Ganeva, Ph.D.

08.12.2023

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