

## STATEMENT

**By Prof. Dr. Silvia Tsvetanska** - Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

member of the scientific jury, appointed by Order No. UMO-137/3.07.2023 of the Rector of the Burgas Free University

**Regarding** : procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy - doctoral program "Preschool and primary school pedagogy"

**Dissertation topic** : "A model for transformation of aggressive behavior by creating stories among students in the initial stage of education (3rd - 4th grade)"

**Author of the dissertation** : Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova - PhD student - Burgas Free University - Center for Humanities

**Research supervisor** : Prof. Dr. Pepa Miteva

### **Data on the PhD candidate**

Doctoral student Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova has a professional biography that shows consistent upgrading of competence and dedication to the idea of professional improvement through continuous learning. She is undergoing systematic training in a professional bachelor's degree in primary school pedagogy at the Institute for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers in Dobrich; bachelor's degree in elementary school pedagogy from Shumen University "K. Preslavski" (1989) and a master's degree in psychology from Veliko Tarnovo University (2004). This educational basis shapes her profile as a specialist in the field of elementary pedagogy, and it is no coincidence that the orientation towards the ONS "Doctor" is also in the field of the initial stage of training. I do not know the applicant personally and his career path, but I assume that he has teaching experience that influenced the choice of topic, although it is not described in the CV. From 1992 to the present, Vesela Stoyanova has been the director of the "Dimitar Talev" Secondary School in the city of Dobrich, improving her knowledge and skills in various forms of continuing education during all the years of her practice. As a dominant in this process of conscious learning, the interest in the development and management of projects emerges - a problem that she not only studies, but also teaches. It is obvious that reaching study in the BSU doctoral program is a logical consequence of accumulated experience - social and professional, as well as a desire for research work not in educational management, but in an area that strongly corresponds to what happens in the classroom and the behavioral aspects of working with students.

## **Evaluation of the dissertation work**

The main parameters of the dissertation - content, structure, research design, approach to presenting the results - testify to the doctoral student's skills in organizing and conducting scientific research. From the choice of a research problem to the way of its development, the emotional commitment of the author and the striving for originality and own style of interpretation are evident. At first glance, the topic of managing aggressive behavior in elementary school students sounds familiar, and indeed it often piques the interest of researchers. The originality of Vesela Stoyanova's approach is that she is not so much interested in the manifestations of aggression as in the possibilities for its transformation in the direction of assertiveness. The conceptual framework is very clearly defined - based on behavioral models in psychology in the continuum passivity - assertiveness - aggressiveness. Assertiveness is inferred as an attractive behavioral pattern that is achieved by engaging in a story-making process. It is the methodology for creating fairy tales by students (3rd-4th grade) that is the backbone of the doctoral student's research project. In this, Vesela Stoyanova sees meaning not only as a research work, but also as a practice, and puts considerable effort into the development of materials for working with students, which she calls "end products" of the dissertation work.

Perception of the author's ideas is greatly facilitated by the good structuring of the text, which is divided into an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. Applications are listed separately. In the first chapter, the conceptual apparatus is clarified and the theoretical foundations of the problem are outlined. The key concepts of assertiveness and aggressiveness are defined behaviorally, and some features of primary school age are also brought out. The second chapter contains only the design of the empirical study with its aims, tasks, object, subject, hypotheses and organization of the conduct. Chapter three is devoted to the model of creating fairy tales as the center of research pursuits, and chapter four focuses on the results of the research data analysis. The attempt to apply correlation analysis in the statistical processing of the data, looking for dependence on various signs, as this is tied to the proof of the hypotheses, should be highly appreciated. In this approach lies the potential for an even deeper interpretation of the obtained results, from which the doctoral student seems to refrain. Although no evidence of a pronounced high degree of dependence is reported, the results can be used to formulate inferences to guide future research. From reading the text, I am left with the impression that the priority for Vesela Stoyanova is highlighting the applied side of the model, rather than its verification and detailed description as parameters and object of research.

In this regard, it is worth describing even more categorically the factors that determine the functionality of the model and the decisions about its use by pedagogical specialists.

### **Achievements and scientific and applied contributions in the dissertation**

I accept the doctoral student's idea of contributions, as they are divided into two groups - theoretical and practical-applied. I think that the wording could be more precise and highlight the truly innovative achievements of Vesela Stoyanova. The contributions at the theoretical level could be brought out even more distinctly, as oriented to specific areas of pedagogical knowledge and art-pedagogy in particular, and not only to the psychology of behavior. Personally, I find a significant contribution of the doctoral student in the development of interdisciplinary problems for the needs of pedagogical practice. The combination of pedagogical and psychological aspects of the researched problem is done skillfully and appropriately dosed. Undoubtedly, the highest added value is achieved in terms of pedagogical practice and development of methodological resources for working with primary school students. Valuable are the author's developments of the "Guide to Writing Magical Tales", the maps and other tools that can be widely used for various purposes.

### **Abstract and publications on the topic of the dissertation**

The abstract accurately reflects the content of the dissertation and gives an idea of the research concept and the results achieved from its implementation. On the topic of the dissertation, the doctoral student has published 5 publications, which carry 50 points according to the system for minimum national requirements in PN 1.2. Pedagogy. This score exceeds the minimum requirement of 30 points from indicator group "D". The publications are of a scientific nature, published in non-refereed editions - journals and conference proceedings. Through participation in scientific forums, the necessary popularization of the main results of the dissertation research was also achieved.

### **Notes, questions and recommendations**

The author has chosen to separate the appendices from the main text of the dissertation, probably because of their volume (87 pages). Some of the applications are of higher importance and are frequently referenced, such as the toolkit samples, so I think it would be neater if they were positioned at the end of the text.

My interest in the practical usefulness of the application of the model causes some interrelated questions that I would like to address to the doctoral student: 1) In what way in the

education of students from 3-4. class can find application of the created model - what is the appropriate educational environment, organizational forms and context for it, in order to obtain maximum effectiveness? 2) Is prior training necessary for the pedagogical specialists who will use the model (psychologists, pedagogical advisors, primary teachers, class teachers) and how can it be implemented?

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation contains undeniable merits and shows the skills of the doctoral student to create products of scientific value. The overall review of what has been achieved convinces me of the author's contribution to the presented topic. With conviction, I express my **positive assessment** and propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury that Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova **be awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy.**

August 7, 2023

Prepared the statement:

Assoc. Prof. Silvia Tsvetanska, Ph.D