

OPINION

on awarding the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

by Assoc. Prof. Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova, PhD,

member of the scientific jury of Burgas Free University

Field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences

Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy

Scientific specialty: Preschool and primary school pedagogy

Burgas Free University, Center for Humanities, Pedagogy Program Board

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

Author: Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Pepa Miteva, PhD

1. Dissertant data

Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova has a master's degree in elementary school pedagogy from the "Konstantin Preslavski" University of Shumen (1986-1989). In the period 2001-2004, she obtained a master's degree in psychology at "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" University of Veliko Turnovo. After training at the World Academy of Positive Psychotherapy in Wiesbaden, Germany (2003–2008), she received an international certificate of psychotherapeutic competence. Since 1992 until now, she is the director of the "Dimitar Talev" Secondary School in Dobrich. As a teacher and manager, she holds a First Professional Qualification Degree, as well as certificates for professional qualification "Development and management of projects under EU programs" and "Development of projects 2007-2013 in line with operational programs" from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (2007).

Vesela Pancheva's professional expertise is convincingly presented and defended. It contains sufficient grounds to support its ambitions for improvement and proof in the field of theory and practice of primary school education. The acquired knowledge and skills allow the doctoral student to competently make her choice for a multifaceted study on an extremely important and educationally significant topic related to the transformation of aggressive behavior into assertive behavior by creating fairy tales among students in the 3rd and 4th grades.

2. Data on the doctoral studies

Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova is enrolled in an independent form of study in the doctoral program "Preschool and primary school pedagogy" in professional direction: 1.2. Pedagogy at the Center for Humanities with Order No. UMO 107/16.03.2021 of the rector of the Burgas Free University. The dissertation was developed on time. On 25.05.2023, at a meeting of the Academic and Scientific Council of the Center for Humanities at the Burgas Free University, the dissertation work was discussed in advance and proposed for public defense.

All requirements for the implementation of the dissertation defense procedure have been met. There are no violations committed.

3. Data on the thesis, the abstract and the publications

The dissertation has a total volume of 326 pages, of which 237 pages are the main text. The research results are illustrated with 7 tables, 10 figures and 21 diagrams. The applications are separated into an independent book body. They are collected in a total of 89 pages, and they include author's creative tools - dodecahedron and various types of cognitive maps, developed lessons, children's creativity, etc.

3.1. Relevance of the topic and structuring of the development

Vesela Stoyanova's dissertation is dedicated to an extremely *current and pedagogically significant problem* related to the increasing manifestations of aggression among children and young people and the increasingly tangible need to create working school policies to overcome aggressive behavior among students in the initial stage of primary school educational level. *The originality* of the research stands out in the development of an innovative model for transforming aggressive behavior into assertive behavior by creating stories in 3rd and 4th grade students. Assertiveness is one of the most important social skills in the modern world, which makes the creation of working models for its formation increasingly relevant and imperative.

The work has a markedly theoretical-analytical and practical-applied character. The PhD student competently combines theoretical analysis with experimental research. The organization and stages of the scientific research work meet the requirements for this kind of research. The language and style of presenting the theses and concepts is clear and precise. The preparation of the PhD student and her many years of experience in the educational system had a positive impact on the adequate development of the scientific research concept and formulation of the researched problem.

The content is structured in an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, conclusion, recommendations, contributions and a list of publications on the topic. During the development of the dissertation, 193 titles were analyzed, of which 160 printed editions in Bulgarian, 12 in Russian, 7 in English and 14 Internet sources.

3.2. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work

In the *introduction*, the author substantiates the significance and relevance of the dissertation research. She argues the reasons for her research work and the need to develop, test and introduce in pedagogical practice a model for the transformation

of aggressive behavior into assertive behavior by creating magical stories for students in the initial stage of education.

In the *first chapter*, Vesela Stoyanova develops the theoretical foundations of her research. The author focuses on the analysis of the concepts «aggression», «aggressiveness», «aggressive behavior», «assertiveness», «assertive behavior», selecting and reflecting on opinions and concepts of our and foreign scientists. At the same time, it clarifies their essence, characteristic manifestations and variations in childhood. In the third paragraph, the PhD student directs her attention to the age characteristics of primary school-age children, with special attention being paid to the specifics of children's creativity. The communicative structure of the magical tale is clarified and creative tools are presented for the formation of fairy tale-making skills.

The author supports the thesis that aggressive behavior can be corrected and transformed into assertive behavior. She claims that «assertive behavior and the patterns of its manifestation can be learned after a certain repetition and length of time after purposeful work in this direction».

In the *second chapter* of the dissertation, the PhD student presents the methodology of the empirical research. Correctly specifies a goal, tasks arising from the goal, object and subject of research, hypotheses. The purpose of the research is well-argued, the research methods, the stages and the sample for its implementation are described precisely. The results are illustrated by diagrams, tables and graphs.

The third chapter is of the highest importance and with a contribution to pedagogical theory and practice, because it presents the developed author's model for creating magical tales. The approved socio-pedagogical model is subject to the complex approach and has a comprehensive impact on the child's personality - on an emotional, linguistic, mental and behavioral level. Particularly valuable for pedagogical practice are the creative tools developed by the author for creating

magical tales - dodecahedron, cognitive maps and an electronic interactive game with a text and audio file. They provide opportunities for every elementary teacher to draw ideas for enriching the educational process with modern pedagogical solutions that are suitable for application in an educational and non-academic environment.

In *the fourth chapter* of the dissertation Vesela Stoyanova presents a detailed, analytical and visual analysis of the results of the experimental research. This chapter is differentiated into six paragraphs and I consider it to be of value because of the way the results are presented and the static processing methods are used. The author indisputably proves the possibilities of summarizing and systematizing rich empirical material, which she skillfully brings out in data and subjects to qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The conclusions clearly outline the results of the conducted research. Through them, PhD student Vesela Stoyanova proves that she was able to realize the goal, to solve the planned tasks and to carry out the verification of the hypotheses raised. It provides convincing evidence of the applicability in mass practice of the ideas embedded in the developed and tested model for the transformation of aggressive behavior into assertive behavior through the creation of magical tales.

The abstract has a volume of 58 pages. The included content is systematized and specifically reflects the most essential aspects of the dissertation work.

The results of the conducted research are popularized in six publications on the subject of the dissertation work and reveal essential aspects of it. They have been published in periodicals and presented at various forums. All publications of Vesela Stoyanova are independent.

4. Scientific contributions of the dissertation work

The scientific self-assessment of the contributions adequately reflects the achievements of the PhD student, and I agree with the scientific contributions made by her. The developed model for the transformation of aggressive behavior into assertive behavior by creating magical stories in 3rd and 4th grade students is original, effective and applicable both in mass practice in elementary school and in extracurricular environments.

5. Questions and recommendations for the PhD student

How do you see the development of the model developed in your future work as a teacher and manager?

What difficulties/factors would prevent the mass implementation of your concept in educational and extracurricular environments?

In the long term, I recommend to doctoral student Vesela Stoyanova to approve the model in the other classes at the initial stage of education and to prepare an innovative technology for the transformation of aggressive behavior into assertive behavior by creating magical fairy tales in elementary school.

6. CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains *scientific, scientific-applied and practical-applied results that represent an original contribution to science*. They comply with all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its implementation and the corresponding Rules of the Burgas Free University.

The dissertation shows that PhD candidate **Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova** has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty of Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy. Demonstrates qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Based on the above, I confidently give my *positive assessment* of the conducted research, the achieved results and contributions. *I offer to the respected members of the scientific jury my positive vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "PhD"* to **Vesela Pancheva Stoyanova** in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, scientific specialty Preschool and primary school pedagogy.

14.08.2023

Veliko Tarnovo

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD)