

OPINION

for the dissertation thesis of Milena Stoyanova Plugarova-Raycheva, PhD student in the Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”, on “*Development of transferable competences through the teaching of philosophy at school*”, submitted for obtaining the educational and academic degree “doctor” in the professional area 2.3. Philosophy, by Prof. DSc. Vesselin Petrov Petrov, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at BAS

The dissertation thesis of Milena Stoyanova Plugarova-Raycheva has a 200 pages’ volume, and consists of introduction, four chapters, conclusion and bibliography of 89 titles (38 of them in Cyrillic and 51 in Latin) and of more than 40 online publications and regulatory documents, as well as a list of dozen used textbooks.

The topic of the dissertation thesis is enormously actual, and connected with the important question of education, which has a key importance for the development of every society and state. Of course, no one dissertation thesis is able to comprise all aspects of the question of education. In the concrete case, the object of investigation by the dissertation student is the teaching of philosophy at the secondary school in Bulgaria, and the concrete subject of investigation are, according to the author, “the key problems and possible decisions connected with the application of competences approach in the teaching of philosophy” (p. 4) In this respect the dissertation thesis is innovative because of the lack of enough investigations in this area in Bulgaria.

The dissertation thesis has a very clear structure that makes much easier the thought tracking of the author and of her ideas. The aim of the dissertation thesis is clearly formulated as “analysis of the regulatory framework, the aims and activities in the teaching of philosophy at the first gymnasium stage in connection with the practical application of a model of development of transferable key competences” (p. 4). The formulated in this way aim, as well as the subject of investigation itself condition the tasks of the dissertation thesis, totally six in number, to the solving of which the chapters of the dissertation are devoted. The hypothesis of the dissertation thesis is that “The application of a model of development of transferable competences ... increases the level of the individual and the social competences ... and cooperates for the development of the other key competences” (p. 9).

The first chapter is entitled “Approaches to the learning and teaching”. Contemporary regulatory documents are considered here, which constitute the basis of the competences approach, first of all the four basic principles of Jacques Delores announced first in 1997. The ideas of three basic philosophical and psychological approaches are considered also:

behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism and their limitations are pointed out. They are among the most disseminated and popular, but are not the only ones. Maybe it would be better to mention (just for completeness) also some other contemporary approaches (more than 50 such approaches and their variations are outlined nowadays). That would increase a little bit the volume of this very short chapter. However, on the other hand, this is not necessary directly for the topic of investigation in the dissertation thesis.

The second chapter is entitled “The competences approach and the teaching of philosophy” in the table of contents, and just as “The competences approach” in the text of the dissertation itself (p. 31). This chapter analyses the regulative framework of the competences approach. It begins with the key competences and the author stresses that “a competence is a key one, when it contributes not only to the separate individual and also to the society” (p. 33). Eight such competences are enumerated: language literacy, multilanguage, mathematical, digital, personal, civil, entrepreneurial, and a competence of cultural awareness (p. 34). After that the available regulative documents are analyzed, and some problems of the Bulgarian school education are pointed out, for example, the small number of hours for philosophy, and some recommendations for the distribution of the hours in different classes are made. I myself would add that the increasing of the number of hours in philosophy would not in itself improve essentially the matter, if the quality of teaching would not be improved – something that depends on the teachers, but that problem is not directly connected with the regulative framework; I just mention it as a fact. Rather, that has a connection with the next question that is considered in the dissertation thesis – the specific aims of the teaching of philosophy. Four specific aims of the teaching of philosophy are pointed out. The curriculum of philosophy in the school is considered after that and the activities for the development of transferable competences are analyzed. It is correctly stressed that the competences approach is a holistic one. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the functions of the subject of philosophy in the school which presupposes and explanation what are the uses of dealing with philosophy in the school.

The third chapter is very short and is entitled “The emotional intelligence and the conceptual framework LifeComp”. It analyses in a historical perspective, first, the emotional competence, and then it specifies the framework of the competences for the life. It explains the essence of the emotional intelligence, and points to five reasons, because of which it is necessary to train the emotions. The conceptual framework LifeComp is, according to the author, an adequate conceptual framework that can and should be applied in the practice in the EU states. It is stressed in the chapter that the teaching of philosophy suits for the increasing of

the level of emotional intelligence of the pupils, and the conceptual framework LifeComp is a good instrument for practical application in different real contexts.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation thesis is entitled “Educational resources and practices”. In fact, here is justified the formulated at the beginning of the dissertation the hypothesis that “The application of a model of development of transferable competences ... will increase the level of the individual, social and civil competences of the participants in the investigation and will cooperate for the development of the other key competences”. It is achieved with analysis of the didactical resource with a subject based approach, then three educational practices and presented and analyzed with an accent, respectively, on the development of the individual competence, social competence, and civil competence. It is analyzed, first, a textbook in philosophy in English in connection with the application of a model for development of transferable key competences through the teaching of philosophy. Here I have a purely technical remark: the author uses the future time “will”: “will be described and analysed” (p. 112), “will be bound” (p. 113), “will be presented” (p. 128), etc., but it is not proper for use at the end of the dissertation thesis. It should be used present time: for example, ‘here are described and analyzed’, ‘that is bound’, and so on. Next, the PhD student makes an analysis of the achieved results of the conducted educational practices, according to which “the correctly conducted methodologically lesson ... is a reliable form of teaching and development of key competences”.

The conclusion of the dissertation thesis consists of the conclusions that the author makes on the basis of her investigation. She reminds the aim, the tasks and the working hypothesis and states that all of them are successfully fulfilled. The dissertation ends with the contributions; the author has pointed four contributions. However, I have some remarks concerning their formulations: they are pointed rather descriptively instead of saying what every one of them consists in. For example, in the first of them it is enough to say that constructive suggestions are made for an actualization of the regulative framework. The second contribution should stress the presentation for the first time of teaching of philosophy through the application of conception of emotional intelligence of the conceptual framework LifeComp. The third contribution should be the innovation of the suggested author’s resource – the textbook of philosophy in English. The fourth contribution has to be entirely reformulated, because the pointing of that for whom the topic and the investigation are interesting cannot be a contribution. However, though the formulations of the contributions are not good, the contributions themselves are available.

The abstract of the dissertation thesis represents completely and precisely the dissertation,

the publication of the author on the subject are pointed and they are enough according to the requirements of the Bulgarian law and the regulatory documents.

I have no other critical remarks besides the pointed above in the text of the present opinion. They do not diminish the value of the dissertation thesis and have more technical character concerning the way of expression of the author's thought or concern the future work, if the author plans to publish her work.

I do not know the PhD student and have no joint publications together with her, i.e. I am not in conflict of interest with her.

In conclusion: We have a serious and thorough dissertation thesis which covers all the requirements for obtaining of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in the field of philosophy. That is why I shall vote convincingly "for" the awarding of that degree to the PhD student.

Sofia, 19.09.2022

Prof. DSc. Vesselin Petrov: