

OPINION

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hrisula Atanas Nedyalkova

on the Dissertation for Acquisition of Scientific Degree “Doctor of Science”
in higher education field: *1. Pedagogical Sciences*,
professional field: *1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)*,
on subject:

INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE PEDAGOGICAL INTERACTION IN KINDERGARTENS

Author: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Plamenova Engels-Kritidis

Information on the author

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Plamenova Engels-Kritidis completed her basic higher education in 1998 in the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Bachelor degree in Preschool Education with professional qualification “Preschool Teacher”; at the same time, she completed a second degree in History with professional qualification “History Teacher”. In 1999 she acquired the educational qualification degree Master of Preschool Pedagogy with specialization on Pedagogy of Media and Artistic Communication. In 2004 she completed a Bachelor degree in Bulgarian Philology with professional qualification of Philologist / Teacher of Bulgarian Language and Literature; in December of the same year she defended her Doctor of Pedagogy thesis on subject “Building skills for interpretation of the allegory of proverbs and sayings in children aged 5-7 years-old”.

Assoc. Prof. Engels-Kritidis started her professional career as a preschool teacher at the National Palace of Children in Sofia, in the “Ljuboznaiko” Pre-School group on Arts and English, heading classes on Bulgarian and English languages for 4-7 year-old children (1999-2000).

Subsequent positions include: Teacher of History (in English language) in 9th and 10th grade; Teacher of English Language in primary school grades at the 123rd Secondary School “Stefan Stambolov” (2000-2002); Teacher (part-time) of English Language at the National Palace of Children (2000-2003) and at the Educational Center “Maximum” (2004-2005).

Assoc. Prof. Engels-Kritidis started her academic career in Oct 2000 – 2006 as Honorary Assistant in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education; subsequent positions include: Lecturer (full-time) – Senior Assistant (May 2006 – May 2008); Chief Assistant in Preschool Pedagogy (June 2008 – May 2014); Assoc. Prof. in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy – Language Acquisition and Speech Development) (May 2014 – present).

The author’s scientific interests include several professional and thematical fields: Pedagogy, Preschool Pedagogy, Pedagogy of Language Acquisition and Speech Development, Intercultural Education, Pedagogy of Media and Artistic Communication, Early Foreign-Language Tuition, Comparative Preschool Education, Research Technologies in Education, Inclusive Education, Individualization and Differentiation in Education,

Paremiology, etc. On issues related to the above fields, she has participated in more than 50 meetings, seminars, and conferences in Bulgaria, as well as 14 abroad; given 7 lectures abroad; participated in 6 scientific societies of foreign journals; participated in 7 scientific and practical-application projects. She has completed 8 specializations and qualifications abroad and has received 14 awards, grants, and accomplishments.

The author has excellent theoretical preparation and rich professional experience that has resulted in her numerous academic and expert activities.

Information on the Scientific Degree procedure

The Dissertation work has been allowed to defense with Order № ПД 38-666 dated 26 Nov 2019 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” related to the composition of the scientific jury and the parameters of the public defense. The documents presented show that there have been no issues noted during the fulfillment of the Dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Plamenova Engels-Kritidis.

Information on the Dissertation and Abstract

The Dissertation examines an issue that has not been researched in the specified pedagogical context – the creation and approbation of an innovative model that offers a pedagogical toolset for individualization and differentiation of the group interaction in kindergartens, in order to personalize the interaction with each child while accounting for his/her specifics and respecting the personality of all other children in a given group.

The present Dissertation is structured in accordance with the applicable scientific standards for this kind of work. It is comprised of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion with recommendations, a bibliographical index, and appendices. The Dissertation is 312 pages long; of these, the main text takes up 285 pages. The bibliographical index is 16 pages long and includes 140 items in Bulgarian language, 50 in English language, and 3 electronic source links. The Dissertation illustration includes 14 tables, 47 figures, and 56 photographs.

Presentation and scientific evaluation of the Dissertation

The introductory part highlights the contemporary relevance of the issue and the motives for the choice of subject, the main one being the author’s scientific intent to showcase, from scientific-theoretical as well as practical-application aspects, the significance of individualization and differentiation of the pedagogical interaction in kindergartens, and to develop and test an original conceptual-technological educational model for individualization and differentiation, aimed at expanding each child’s possibilities for educational progress.

The richly-expansive structure of the Dissertation attests to the precision and in-depth examination of the work. Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis presents the theoretical analysis through a fresh dissection of the archetypal understanding of differentiation and individualization and ventures on their detailed examination, not simply as physical distribution and personal approach, but as a multi-layered and multi-variation process aimed at the educational achievements and the personal well-being of each child. The Abstract is 53 pages long and follows the structure of the Dissertation, presenting a complete and precise picture of the contents and the main accomplishments therein.

Contributions of the Dissertation

The list of contributions corresponds to the actual scientific accomplishments of the Dissertation, which are a result of years-long research and professional experience. The overall highlights are as follows:

In theoretical aspect:

- A significant area of research with an examination of a serious educational issue
- Motivation of the need for timely application of individualization and differentiation in preschool institutions
- Highlight of the educational parameters of learning by emotional experience and children's personally-significant practical experience in the context of individualization and differentiation of pedagogical interaction in kindergartens, with a focus on the importance of each child's emotional well-being and level of active involvement
- Affirmation of a new perspective of the pedagogical situation as the leading form in kindergarten, based on its organization in a way that realizes the possibilities for individualization and differentiation of the pedagogical interaction with children
- A special contribution of the Dissertation is the presented system of criteria and indicators for evaluation of the effect of individualization and differentiation of the pedagogical interaction in kindergarten.

In practical-application aspect:

- Development and realization of an original conceptual-technological educational model for individualization and differentiation, aimed at expanding each child's possibilities for educational progress
- An undeniable contribution is the presented pedagogical toolset (incorporating methods, approaches, means and forms) for appropriate individualization and differentiation of interaction in kindergartens
- The model is given further perspective by the suggested possibilities for sub-grouping and dynamic regrouping of children as a form of organizing the differentiation in kindergarten
- A significant contribution is the developed and tested in practice complex educational technologies for effective individualization and differentiation of the group pedagogical interaction in kindergarten within the framework of the pedagogical situation.

The present Dissertation is proof of a high level of professional competence, of analytical mindset, of research culture, of in-depth knowledge of pedagogical issues, and of skill for interpreting them in a contemporary framework.

Publications and participation in scientific forums

A total of 12 printed publications of the author are presented – 6 of them where she is the sole author, and 6 where she is a co-author, which satisfies the relevant requirement. All the publications present different aspects of the Dissertation's research topic.

Fulfilment of scientometric indicators

The presented reference shows that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis scores 413.30 points, which is over the minimum of 350 points as per the national requirements related to the procedure for acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor of Science”.

In conclusion, the analysis performed on the work, the proven scientific contributions and accomplishments of the candidate provide ample reasons for me to propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury that *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Plamenova Engels-Kritidis* should be awarded the scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in the higher education field: *1. Pedagogical Sciences*, professional field: *1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)*.

10 January 2020

The author of the Opinion:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hrisula Nedyalkova