

REVIEW
for dissertation work
for the acquisition of the scientific and educational degree “doctor”

Author of the review: Prof. Dr. Boncho Valkov Gospodinov (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Pedagogy)

Scientific field: Pedagogical sciences

Professional direction: Pedagogy of training in...

Scientific specialty: Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature in the initial stage of education

University: SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Faculty: Faculty of Education

Department: Didactics

Dissertation title: Formation of sociocultural and communicative-speech competences through the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in 1st - 4th grades.

Name of the dissertation student: Irena Hristova Raykova

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Neli Ivanova

1. Information about the PhD student

Irena Raykova was born on February 25, 1974. In 1998 graduated from Primary School Pedagogy at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Since 2001 until now, he has been working consecutively as an educator, primary teacher and senior teacher 1-4 grades consecutively in 105 Secondary School “Atanas Dalchev”, Children's Language School “Kimba”, 83 Primary School “Elin Pelin” and 137 Secondary School “Angel Kanchev” in the city of Sofia. There are many specializations in the field of education at home and abroad.

In January 2020, after winning a competition, she was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student at the Department of Didactics at the Faculty of Education of Sofia University.

2. Procedure data

Irena Raykova was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student on January 28, 2020. (Order No. RD 20-269/ 30.01.2020) After a successfully completed procedure for preliminary discussion of the dissertation work in the primary unit - Department of Didactics of the Faculty of Pedagogy, the doctoral student was dismissed early with the right to defense on 28.03.2023. In the period between enrollment and withdrawal, she successfully passed all exams and completed all activities provided for in the individual study plan.

At its meeting on 28.03.2023. of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy (Protocol No. 10/28.03.2023) voted unanimously to open a public defense procedure.

From the very beginning, the procedure fully complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

3. Data for the dissertation and the abstract

The dissertation submitted for review is devoted to a problem whose relevance has become more and more clearly evident in the last two or three decades. Namely, the formation of basic (key) competences in adolescents through training within the framework of school education. The significance of the problem is emphasized by means of the normative regulation for the application of the competence approach in the PES and by-laws, by the many scientific studies and publications devoted to its conceptualization and solution, and also by the serious resources and efforts applied in pedagogical practice for the formation of the key competences.

The dissertation has a total volume of 327 pages and includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography of 123 sources (107 in Cyrillic and 16

in Latin) and 11 appendices. The main text is 296 pages, which includes 42 figures, 42 tables and 40 images.

In the introduction, the author substantiates the relevance and significance of the formation of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences, which are “...a necessary prerequisite for the inclusion of the individual in the national and world culture, for effective communication both with representatives of one's own and other cultures.” (p. 4) The rationale highlights the doctoral student's critical analytical view of the current educational documentation, a consequence of the accumulated good practical experience: “The expected results described in the 1st - 4th grade curricula (SK and KR competences) which the student must have at the end of the 4th grade, do not provide clarity about the methodological approach that the teacher can use in the educational process, for activities that will develop the investigated competencies.” (p. 5) The introduction includes a clear and well-structured conceptual framework of the dissertation research with precisely differentiated and unambiguously and adequately defined components - object, subject, goal, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The first chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the conceptualization of the problem of the formation of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences through the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in the 1st - 4th grades, starting quite appropriately with the terminological clarifications. For the purposes of the research, the doctoral student analyzes and clarifies the content of the concepts of *competence*, *key competence*, *communicative competence*, *sociocultural competence* and *communicative language competence*. Already at the beginning of the analysis, the clarification is made that “... the structural components of communicative competence (sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, social competence, etc. competences) are considered separately in order to clarify and specify their substantive, functional and etc.

Characteristics”, but “in practical terms, in the educational process, it is expedient to form them in unity.” (p. 8) In the course of the analysis, an in-depth knowledge of the publications of numerous Bulgarian and foreign authors dedicated to clarifying is demonstrated of the essence and content of competence, the relationship “competence – competency”, the types of competences and their formation, language as a means of communication, the relationship between language and culture.

Special attention has been paid to the competence approach in BLL (bulgarian language and literature) education at the initial stage of the basic educational degree and, in particular, to the place of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences in the learning process. Here, in addition to knowledge of significant publications on the problem, the author also demonstrates a very good knowledge of the regulations regulating the application of the competence approach - law, regulations, framework curriculum, curricula.

A significant part of the first chapter is devoted to the methodological aspects of the formation of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences through the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in 1st - 4th grade, which is understandable in view of the topic of the dissertation research. The doctoral student analyzes and presents the specifics of the teacher's methodical approach to the formation of the studied competencies, emphasizing the importance of complying with the principles of instruction and effective pedagogical communication in the learning process.

At the end of the first chapter, as a result of the study and analysis of the problem of the formation and development of sociocultural and communicative-speech competences, a theoretical model for the formation and development of these competences was created, which subsequently served as the basis for constructing an empirical model that was tested on time the empirical study.

The second chapter presents the design of a large-scale well-conceived, well-planned and also well-executed empirical study. The research was carried out in a total of 4 stages. The first stage, designated by the author as preparatory, includes two substages. During the first of them, carried out within the framework of the research project “Level of formation of sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences in the initial stage of the basic educational degree”, a total of 314 teachers and 129 parents were surveyed. The survey aims to explore the opinions of teachers and parents regarding:

- the level of formation of SK and CS competences of the students from IS of the BED;
- the methodical approach of the teacher to promote reading and increase literacy;
- the effectiveness of the educational process (applied methods, approaches, forms and means of work in the BLL training);
- the degree of fruitful cooperation between the school as an institution and the parents;
- the degree of cooperation between the school and other institutions (museums, libraries, theaters, etc.).

Based on the analysis of the data from the survey, an empirical model of the formation of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences through BEL training at the initial stage of the general education degree has been constructed and substantiated, including three categories of methodological ideas - for the development of cognitive processes, for the formation and development of sociocultural competences and for the formation and development of communicative-speech competences. A methodological toolkit was also constructed, assisting in the development of students' oral and written speech and improving their communication skills. For each methodological idea, goals, tasks,

technology of implementation, expected results such as competencies (sociocultural and communicative-speech) at the curriculum level, methods, form of work and training tools are specified. Along with this, didactic tests were constructed as a diagnostic toolkit for determining the level of formation of socio-cultural competences among students and, more specifically, their reading comprehension skills. A retelling and a creative task (composition based on experience) were used as additional diagnostic tools. Criteria and indicators for measuring the investigated competences have been defined.

The thus constructed empirical model and tools were subjected to expert evaluation by 10 experts - two principals, one deputy principal and seven senior teachers with rich pedagogical experience (work experience in the specialty between 25 and 43 years). The analysis of the data from the expert assessment shows that “...if the methodical approach of the teacher is enriched with the proposed methodological toolkit, it would contribute to the formation and development of students' SK and CS competences.” (p. 213) and that “...the diagnostic toolkit can to serve the purposes of empirical research” (p. 214).

The next three stages, designated by the doctoral student as ascertaining, formative and concluding, essentially represent an absolutely adequately implemented classic version of an experimental research program with one control group. The two groups - experimental and control - are quantitatively equal and consist of 20 fourth-graders each. The results of the conducted preliminary test (Pretest) show that the entrance levels of the two groups are relatively similar, and the doctoral student quite appropriately decided to make the group with a lower entrance level experimental. The experimental testing of the constructed empirical model was carried out during the academic year 2020-2021 in the conditions of two forms of education (traditional face-to-face and distance learning) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the experimental training, observation was carried out

according to predetermined categories in the experimental group, which aims to establish the activity of the students during the study hours, the interest in the educational tasks, the completeness of the answers, the ability to participate in dialogue, etc. The success rate of the students, their term and annual evaluations, as well as the results of the NEE according to BLL, are considered.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents an analysis of the results of the conducted empirical research. Here, the PhD student demonstrates good presentation (tabular and graphical) and empirical data analysis skills. In the analysis of the data from the survey, percentages were used, in the analysis of the data from the expert evaluation - average values, and in the analysis of the data from the experimental testing of the model - statistical tests for testing hypotheses in order to track the performance of the students from the two observed groups (Student's T- test , Mann-Whitney test, Shapiro-Wilk test , Livin's test for equality of variances), as well as average values for each of the two groups with calculation of standard deviation and standard error. The results of the research convincingly confirm the formulated hypotheses and give the author reason to draw adequate conclusions and generalizations.

The dissertation is entirely the work of the author and has been developed in accordance with the requirements and norms of scientific ethics.

The PhD student has 6 publications on the topic of the dissertation - 2 in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information and 4 in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes with a total of 120 points at the minimum required 30 points according to the Minimum National requirements for Scientific field 1. Pedagogical sciences.

The abstract fully corresponds to the structure and content of the dissertation.

4. Scientific contributions

A careful reading and analysis of the thesis proposed for review gives reason to highlight the following main contributions:

1. An author's model has been justified and constructed, including a system of methodological ideas contributing to the formation and development of socio-cultural and communicative-speech competences among students in unity with the development of cognitive processes (motivation, memory, attention, thinking).
2. A well-planned experimental study was carried out to test the constructed model using a proprietary toolkit developed specifically for the study.
3. The proposed methodical approach provides opportunities for improving the literary, linguistic, discourse, etc. competences of the students as well. In my opinion, this is one of the main contributions of the dissertation in practical terms.

I have the following two questions for the doctoral student:

1. On p. 29 we read: “Competence- oriented training is person-oriented. At the center of learning is the student, who actively participates in the construction of his knowledge, interacting with his classmates and the world around him. The new role of the student requires him to show responsibility for his own learning, initiative and personal contribution in solving the set learning tasks.” ***My question is, does the introduction of the competence approach change the place and role of the student in learning?***
2. Could the doctoral student define the term “methodological idea”? I pose the question in this way because one such idea has been labeled situational play (“Invisibility Cloak” on p. 121), others as techniques (“Repeat the Rhythm” and “Count in Reverse” on p. 123), still others as dictation (“Picture dictation” on p. 125), fourth as means (“Visual means” on p. 133), etc.

5. Publications

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6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to state that the dissertation research submitted for discussion fully meets the requirements for such a development. It is entirely the author's own work. It demonstrates a strong personal professional commitment to the researched issues, in-depth knowledge of the essence of the research problem, a high level of skills for theoretical analysis, as well as skills for conducting empirical pedagogical research. A natural consequence of this is a dissertation of high quality.

This gives me reason to recommend to the members of the esteemed jury **to vote for awarding Irena Hristova Raykova the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”** in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy of training in... (Methodology of training in Bulgarian language and literature in the initial stage of education).

23.04.2023

Reviewer:
(Prof. Boncho Gospodinov, PhD)