

Review
of dissertation work on
"INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE PEDAGOGICAL
INTERACTION IN THE KINDERGARTEN",
developed by Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Plamenova Engels-Kritidis PhD,
awarding the Doctor of Science degree
by professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool education)
Reviewer: Prof. Vesela Metodieva Gyurova, PhD
Minutes of the Scientific Jury No. 1 / 03.12.2019 /

1. Academic background of the applicant.

Doctor of Science degree candidate Rozalina P. Engels-Kritidis was born on 19.02.1976 and is married with one child. Since May 2014 she has been Assistant Professor in 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool education - language acquisition and speech development), and is a teacher (assistant and senior assistant) at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts (formerly Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education) since May 2006. From 1999 to 2004 she worked as a teacher in kindergarten, as an elementary English teacher and history teacher in the education system.

From 2000 to 2004 she was a full-time PhD student in the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences at the Sofia University, and since September 5, 2005 she is a Doctor of Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics - Pre-School Pedagogy). Graduate program in pre-school pedagogy with specialization in Pedagogy of Mass and Art Communication from October 1998 to July 1999. From September 1997 to September 2004 she studied Bulgarian Philology at the Faculty of Slavic Philology, with a professional qualification of Philology teacher of Bulgarian language and literature. She also holds a second major in history (October 1995 - July 1998) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of History with professional qualification as a history teacher.

From October 1994 to July 1998 she was a full-time student at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Elementary and Pre-school Pedagogy and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Pre-School Pedagogy with professional qualification "child teacher".

From 2000 to 2010, she participated in 9 courses for university professors for postgraduate qualification and specialization, organized at NBU, Sofia University, DIUU, of which prior to the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree Doctor 3 and 6 - before the award of the title "Associate Professor", as well as in 8 courses organized abroad in the period 2003 - 2012, one of which before the Doctor's degree, and 7 before the assignment of the title of Associate Professor.

She participated in eight university projects of scientific and applied importance in Bulgaria and abroad, two of them after having attained academic rank and six after defending her doctoral thesis. She has been included in 16 scientific conferences, meetings and seminars in Bulgaria after attaining academic rank (in 20 - after defending his thesis, and in 11 - before that). She has participated in 14 scientific forums abroad between her doctoral thesis and her habilitation. Following her habilitation (2014 - 2018), she has given lectures on the Erasmus + program at the Ruskin University of England in Chelmsford, UK, the Erasmus + program at the Comenius Pedagogical University in Bratislava, and after obtaining the Doctoral degree - at the

German Institute for youth and children, Munich (Germany), in Bratislava (Slovakia), in Patra (Greece) in Budapest (Hungary), in Cambridge (United Kingdom).

Assoc. Prof. R. Engels-Kritidis, PhD has had a public presentation of monographs in Athens, Greece, a summer seminar on Bulgarian language and culture for foreign Bulgarians and Slavic students, Lozen, organized by the Faculty of Slavic Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", at the Bulgarian Cultural Centre in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Her international academic experience after having attained academic rank enabled her to participate in the evaluation of European research projects (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) under the Erasmus + program (KD1 - "School education" and "Youth"; KD2, etc.) and as an external evaluator of project proposals (2014, 2015 and 2016) in the field of education and science under the EEA grants mechanism.

Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, PhD is a member of prestigious organizations with academic performance: Scientific Secretary of the Bulgarian National Committee for Pre-school Education OMEP, Member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the Bulgarian National Committee for Pre-School to the World Organization for Pre-school Education OMER, Project and Communication Coordinator, Member of the Control Committee of the Bulgarian National Committee for Pre-school Education the formation of OMER at the World Organization for Pre-school Education, a member of the Cambridge Post-Doc Society (Cambridge, UK), a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, a member of the Bulgarian National Committee for Pre-School Education OMER at the World Organization for Pre-school Education.

In the years 2012, 2014, 2017 Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, PhD received scholarships from the Slovak Government, Slovak National Scholarship Program for Foreign University Teachers and Researchers (one month scientific stay in Slovakia). In 2012 she received a scholarship from the German Association for Academic Exchange (DAAD) for a scholarly stay of foreign university lecturers in Germany, and in 2009 – a scholarship from the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary) for a visiting researcher. She also received a scholarship from the Greek Government for Foreign Researchers and the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK (July-August 2006) - with the financial support of the Open Society Institute.

As a Bachelor's Degree lecturer, she teaches basic lecture courses in several specialties: "Introduction to the specialty" (PNUP), "Introduction to pre-school pedagogy in the specialty" (Music), "Pedagogy of language acquisition and speech development" (PNUP), "Fundamentals of Preschool Pedagogy" (Speech Therapy), "Research Technologies in Pre-School Education" (PNUP, PUPCHE). She has been teaching lectures for students (full-time and part-time) and in compulsory elective courses in: "Pedagogical Interaction for the Interpretation of Alienation" (PUPCHE), until now - "The child in the world of proverbs and sayings (PUPCHE).

She holds a Master's Degree as a core member of the Teacher Education Master Program Teams from a field other than the Pedagogy Degree with the main subject "Pre-School Pedagogy", as well as with the Pedagogical Interaction for Interpretation of allegory. Participates in the author's cycle of lectures in English on "Intercultural competence of teachers" and "Educational aspects of integration of migrant children" in the master's program "Educational sciences and intercultural education" in English (from 2013/2014 academic year - until now). In the master's program for early foreign language education she presents the author's cycle of lectures in the

Foreign Language Lecture Books, and in the master's program in pedagogy of mass and artistic communication - the lecture cycle in the ZID "Pedagogical Interaction for Creativity".

As a Master's Degree scientific supervisor in Master's Program "Pre-school Pedagogy for Graduates of Other Specialties" (2013/2014 to 2015/2016 Academic Year) and Master's Program "Educational Sciences and Intercultural Education" in English (two academic years - 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 inclusive). She holds a Master's Degree Program in Pedagogy of Mass and Art Communication, leading a series of lectures at the Selectable Academic Discipline "Pedagogical Interaction for Creativity" until 2014.

In the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts' PhD Programs, Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis PhD successfully implemented a scientific guide in English for the diploma papers of three successfully defended full-time PhD students in pre-school pedagogy from the Republic of Greece in October 2019 and successfully defended one in October 2018. Full-time PhD student in Bulgarian. She is a member of the National Research Institute's National Research Fund for Doctoral Readings 2016 project, participates in a committee for developing doctoral degree curricula, in committees for preparing documents for doctoral degree accreditation (2009; 2015), for development of the concept and status of the Doctoral School at the National Science Foundation (2014).

She has been selected to participate in three scientific juries for the protection of the doctoral degree, developing author's curricula in Bulgarian and English for doctoral degrees (2015; 2017). Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis PhD is responsible for: Erasmus + Co-coordinator of the National Science and Research Institute (February 2016 - present), Member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Science and Technology (2015-2019) Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education / Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Committee on the Preparation of the Post-Accreditation Monitoring and Control Report on the Internal System for Assessment and Maintenance of the Quality of Education and Academic Staff of Higher Schools (2016), of Accreditation Commissions at the Faculty Level for Preparation of Documentation for Program and Institutional Accreditation, of the Committee for Preparation of the Documentation of the National Fund for National Research (at that time - Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts) on the project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science and preparation of a self-assessment report on the change of the name of the "Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education" to the "Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts" (2016; 2017).

2. Structure and content of the dissertation.

The dissertation has a volume of 311 pages, including appendices. It is structured in an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and recommendations, a bibliography and four annexes. The bibliography includes 139 sources in Bulgarian language, 54 sources in English language, and four online applications.

The theoretical study is a volume of 98 pages and is structured in two chapters in their interrelations. I find it appropriate that the psychological, historical, and normative aspects are fundamental to the educational perspectives of learning by experiencing the accumulation of personal experience in the context of individualization and differentiation of pedagogical interaction.

The experimental program of psychological-pedagogical research is a volume of 30 pages, presented in five stages in Chapter Three. The fourth chapter of 48 pages presents the analysis of the results, while the fifth chapter outlines the educational model for differentiation and individualization of 93 pages.

Structurally, the author's focus is on the psychological-pedagogical significance of the application of the author's model for changing the organization of pre-school education, which is definitely relevant to my assessment of the contribution of the study, and will be noted below in the evaluation whether theoretical and empirical research lead to important patterns of organization in the education system in our country.

3. Criteria for evaluating the dissertation "Doctor of Science"

These criteria, which I will focus on in my assessment, derives from its characteristics for: conceptual evaluation, exploratory evaluation, selective-forming stage and evidence-projective evaluation.

First: Conceptual Characterization of the Thesis.

It was distinguished by Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels - Kritidis PhD as a kind of complex for outlining the parameters of the study. The specifics of the processes of individualization and differentiation are clarified in a comparative way, inherent in the pedagogical interaction, but in the context of:

- Psychology with key concepts – uniqueness of individual differences, learning through experience, personal significance, etc.;
- Pre-school pedagogy – historical projection and parameters of interaction, pedagogical situation, state of modern pre-school education, creative games, etc.;
- Regulations and legislation – state educational standards, state of practice, program documentation, etc.

Of interest to me is the theoretical analysis of the links between:

- Situational approach - pedagogical situation as a form of interaction organization, which specifies the application of this approach;
- Learning through experiences as a specificity of cognitive activity in childhood, part of the interaction.

I would like to emphasize that in my opinion there are two important centers of conceptuality, which are imposed as a contributory characteristic of work, but which I find to be debatable and important for the study presented in practice:

- individualization and differentiation of pedagogical interaction as approaches in pre-school education;
- individualization and differentiation as principles of organization requiring appropriate organizational forms, but also as results of the author's research through an experimental system of forms, methods, means, techniques.

I would like to state here the findings, with a proving effect on the conceptualization of labor in its theoretical and experimental foundations:

1) In both of the above mentioned centers, I have a richly presented and thoroughly studied theoretical formulation of the problem. The author, in my opinion, definitely places emphasis on the forms of organization through the principles of individualization and differentiation, as

a specification of approaches, which is further projected on the content of the experimental research in Chapter Three.

2) Competently in the psychological-pedagogical plan are presented the stage researches of the author in Chapter Three - purpose, tasks, hypotheses and their derivatives as null / alternative hypotheses. At the same time, there is a reasonably presented logical connection between them for proving the assumptions.

Second: analysis and evaluation of the research nature of the dissertation.

With respect to the research evaluation of the dissertation for the Doctor of Science degree, I can confirm my appreciation for the rich empirical experience presented as a result of combining informative, psychological and pedagogical methods with precision and statistically verified in relation to the comparative data survey.

Here, according to the requirements of the reviewer, the criterion of the difference between the habilitation work for the title of associate professor and the present dissertation work with its innovative character should be clearly met.

The innovative character of the study of the present work is actually dependent on its conceptual essence, insofar as the factors selected for the analysis of the objectives, hypotheses, conditions for the verification of the objectives - the research tasks - are analyzed.

The difference between them in the years of the professional recognition of Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis PhD on the essence of the research phase related to the renewal of research decisions for the introduction of innovations in the development and application of the research stages, as well as the demonstration of advantages over alternatives.

Chapter three, "Psychological and pedagogical study of the effect of enhanced individualization and differentiation of pedagogical interaction in kindergarten", in describing the parameters of the study, aims to prove the importance of enhanced individualization and differentiation of pedagogical interaction in kindergarten, as well as to research and develop research and educational technologies for their effective implementation in kindergarten practice, structuring a conceptually technological variant-dynamic educational model for individualization and differentiation, focused on the different educational opportunities of each child. In the definition of the subject and object, the author has her own view as a research style of defining them with respect to the choice of copyright references.

Nine tasks (formulation of enhanced - degrees according to criteria in 5 grades), leading hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were formulated.

The leading hypothesis (p. 106) is about linking educational progress towards educational content (reported through the school readiness test of F. Stoyanova and G. Bizhkov), and enhanced individualization and differentiation with learning-based technologies through a meaningful childhood experience.

In the ***first sub-hypothesis***, we derive a ratio of 3 – 4-year-olds and 6 – 7-year-old children, who are offered an individual and differentiated approach, taking into account the routine of pedagogical interactions, as well as their educational progress. The smaller ones are expected to dominate due to the increased and multidirectional approach and lack of routine workload. I recognize that this hypothesis is relevant to the introduction of children into educational

institutions from the age of 4 and to the creation by teachers of an orientation and attitude towards knowledge, according to age.

The *second sub-hypothesis* (p.108) draws a link between the advantages of educational progress in boys as a result of the effect of the applied model over that of girls. In my view, this test will improve the teacher's motivation for integrating pedagogical forms and the dynamic transitions between them.

The *third sub-hypothesis* (p.108) binds a straightforward correlation between the degree of emotional well-being of children and their educational progress in focusing on the goals of survival. Together with the *fourth sub-hypothesis* (p.108), which seeks correlation between the goals of transforming the model implementation activity and the educational progress of children, I regard these links as extremely important for the organization of pre-school education, which increasingly needs to be addressed, emancipated from school forms and methods of perception and affirmation, precisely through the formative model applied by Assoc. Prof. Engels-Krtidis, PhD.

The *fifth hypothesis* is based on the expectation of the positive attitude of the directors, the assistant directors and the head teachers for individualization and differentiation in their interaction with the adolescents. This reflects on the selected groups of research criteria (p. 108 - p. 116) - for the child, for the teacher and for the subjects in the management and assessment of the quality of education.

Crucially important to me in this regard are the presented projective projections not only in the ascertain stages, but in a separate specially distinct stages of changing the established tendencies in the innovative-model forming stage.

For my assessment, the evidence are:

- The formulated goal of the “innovation model to offer a unified conceptual-technological, system-structural, variation-dynamical pedagogical toolkit for effective individualization and differentiation of group interaction, providing alternative opportunities for personalization through adequate educational projections, taking into account individual differences of time moment, respecting the particularities and respect for the personality of all other children in the group. Here, the emphasis is on individualization in group belonging with optimal individual expression of potential, emotional well-being and active involvement in pedagogical interaction with respect for all children in the group. Experimentally implemented differentiation as a micro-group variant for individualization, in which children are grouped and regrouped based on their characteristics and with a focus on their optimal development through the use of a variable-dynamic system of methods, techniques, means, forms of pedagogical interaction. The innovative moment is set correctly through children's self-assessment. The model is shown in Figure 44.
- The presented methods for presenting and comparing results from the stages of the ascertainment /control and the formative study. As I noted above, they are provided by a group of competently selected research methods, a prerequisite for qualitative precision and scientific analysis, ie. ascertaining/controlling and formative there is a characteristic large-scale contribution of the study in stages with respect to the marked years from 2010 to 2018:
 - Objective evaluation by the method of monitoring by unified indicators, Leuven scale for well-being with modification by Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Krtidis, PhD;
 - An attempt to link the process of pedagogical interaction with emotional well-being and communication with others through pedagogical situations and other forms, as through games

and other activities. In this part, I should also mention the system of criteria and indicators, which in addition to the general character have a stage orientation in the study.

Definitely, by this second criterion, ***my assessment of dissertation work is extremely high for the accumulation, processing and systematization of empirical data.*** In this sense, the need for a scientific degree is a proof of the richness and depth of the interpretation of scientific facts, processes, phenomena, relationships, their registration and classification in the direction of hypotheses and tasks.

Third: analysis and evaluation of the selectively-forming nature of the dissertation.

In ***Chapter Five***, the author professionally outlines the key concepts used in the theoretical and experimental characteristics of the model (p. 184 - p. 275), its relevance and innovativeness, its conceptual dimensions, examined individually and supported technologically with 56 specific methodological illustrative proofs from application activities and model validation.

In fact, the forming experiment is summarized in Figure 44 (p. 186) and Figure. 45 (p. 191), as I have already emphasized on several occasions, convincingly verifies by her experimentally the most important innovative system of objective evaluation, where Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis PhD has succeeded in achieving professional excellence as a well-established pedagogical experimenter and researcher over the years.

Personally, in my role of evaluating the achievements of my colleagues in the pedagogical field, I have always brought this characteristic of their scientific growth to the highest degree in relation to:

- ***quantifiable effects of change with correlations for proving the leader with sub-hypotheses;***
- ***statistically confirmed provoked changes - the most important for me in a dissertation pedagogically valuable in its research;***
- ***objective and step-by-step evaluation of the analysis of the results (preliminary actual), dissemination phase, presented with statistical methods and coefficients, devoid of any fluctuations.***

The quantitative parameter can be defined here in terms of scale as well as definitely statistically flawless.

Fourth: analysis and evaluation of the proof-projective nature of the dissertation.

In fact, in my role as a reviewer, it is important to confirm the originality of the research model. This very high appreciation of me comes from its representativeness, precision, scientific reasoning and evidentiality. These criteria also apply to the summary results of the study tasks for proving the hypotheses presented in 43 figures as varieties of diagrams.

In a formative plan, in tables of criteria and indicators, all subjects in the interaction are bound: with the attitudes of children, teachers, principals, head teachers, which I find extremely positive for proving the first four sub-hypotheses in their mutual logical projection and the fifth sub-hypothesis, as significant for subjects relevant to the quality of childhood education.

The conclusions, which are 20 in number, are supported by the statistical correlation coefficients, also separated by the research hypotheses. Recommendations of the same number have been made, which give logical completeness to the integrity of the work - the analysis and

summarization of the results lead to proposals for teachers, principals, head teachers, parents as active actors involved in the research copyright model, united for the benefit of adolescents.

Consequently, there are also six proposals for changes to the regulation from kindergarten to universities, which are accepted by both dedicated teachers and innovative teachers.

I accept with *admiration the contribution points* outlined by Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, PhD especially those in the research-experimental aspect (№9 - №14), as they stem from her *original author's model presented and approached in the formative stage to the statistical confirmation of the leader and the related five hypotheses*.

Here, she convincingly proves the need for up-to-date and professionally dedicated research educators who have a positive influence on the change of the system, who have proven innovatively their presence in the academic community.

The abstract and the dissertation publications enclosed therein (six self-published and six in co-authorship) meet the requirements laid down in the proof of conformity for the degree of Doctor of Science.

In presenting my review, I appreciate that, on all four criteria for evaluating a dissertation for a "Doctor of Science", it is definitely significant, innovative, and projected to change childhood education. Therefore, in accordance with them, I confirm in writing my positive assessment of him and I strongly suggest that the members of the scientific jury award this scientific degree "Doctor of Science" to Assoc. Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis PhD in the direction of 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool education).

7nd January 2020

Reviewer:

(Prof. Vesela Gyurova, PhD)