

Review

of a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
Professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Theory of Education and Didactics" - Theory of Education

EDUCATIONAL AND THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Assessment of the procedure

Rusata Gadjanova is a full-time doctoral student at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" - Department of "Theory of Education". The submitted work with an abstract and documents meet the criteria and requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for its implementation. The work was discussed at a meeting in the Department of "Theory of Education" on January 14, 2025. The decision was unanimous that it meets the criteria for a dissertation-type scientific research in a professional field and the formal structural and content requirements. Critical notes and recommendations for improvement were made, which the doctoral student took into account to the necessary extent by refining the text before the final submission for assessment by the scientific jury.

Formal and substantive parameters of the dissertation

The dissertation meets the requirements in terms of layout, structure and content. The volume of the dissertation exceeds the requirements for this scientific and educational degree. It covers 297 pages divided into an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, bibliography and appendices. The ratio of theoretical to empirical parts is 1:1. The theoretical parts follow a deductive principle by presenting views on photography as an art and its relationship with pedagogy, psychology and consulting practice. The bibliography contains 200 sources, of which 161 in Cyrillic, 23 in Latin and 16 Internet resources. The appendices present tools from the empirical work - a questionnaire for a focus group with teachers and a questionnaire with students.

Assessment of the scientific problem

The topic is dedicated to a scientific problem that is not new to pedagogy and psychology, but has not been the subject of independent research in dissertations on pedagogy in our country. Art and its genres have been the focus of the theory and history of art and culture, philosophy, sociology, psychology and in pedagogical scientific works, including dissertations. Educational-therapeutic aspects of various types of art and artistic activities with children and adolescents have been the subject of research in dissertations. Photography has not been the subject of independent research in dissertation studies on pedagogy - theory of education. The research focused on photographic art enriches and confirms the conclusions and findings already made in art pedagogy, and contributions are expected in terms of applied aspects of education - in particular educational-therapeutic aspects.

The formulation of the topic does not explicitly state the target group to which the study is directed, but the proposal clarifies that these are adolescents and young people in individual and group forms of work. In this regard, the doctoral student follows and continues the research and interests of the scientific supervisor, thereby tracing a school in the theory and methodology of education - in particular the art of photography in the adolescent period of development and education, as well as in youth.

Evaluation of the proposal and design of the study

The proposal of the study provides a very good and convincing orientation for the starting position and theses, which specify the direction of search and expectations for scientific contributions. The object of research is photography, and the subject is the educational and therapeutic aspects of its application in specific pedagogical forms when working with adolescents and young people. The research objectives in the dissertation are related to the search for opportunities to achieve "a desired effect regarding the upbringing, development, functioning and socialization (as a general concept) of the young person through the language of photography."

To achieve these goals, photo tasks are used in a specific form of activity - a group work studio and in individual consultative work with young people experiencing sadness, loneliness, etc. This outlines the specific group and contingent of the study and specifies that the "desired effect" is sought in young people experiencing sadness, loneliness, etc. This gives clearer and more specific expectations for contributions in the experimental work and the sought-after educational and therapeutic aspects of photography..

The specific tasks of the study are relevant to the goals and meet the requirements for this type of scientific work in a theoretical and applied plan and, in general, have been successfully implemented. Based on a study of sources, a practical and applied model is constructed, an appropriate methodology for applying the model in work with adolescents and young people in an individual and group form is developed. In practical activities, an approbation of the model has been implemented, through which effects and opportunities for individual and group work with young people are proven.

The doctoral student is committed to developing a design program for working with photo tasks, which, according to the declaration, is flexible and reflects the author's aspiration for it to be applicable in various practical fields and contexts, for working on various topics and to be a suitable tool for achieving various pedagogical and therapeutic goals (in planning expected and desired results of educational interaction, improving personal functioning, etc.).

The research design is diverse and suitable for realizing the goals and objectives of a study with qualitative and quantitative methods. Their selection is consistent with the application of a model for working with photography. It includes case studies, surveys, focus groups with teachers, observation, an experimental model for working with students, analysis of products from the activity and feedback from its application. The methods used are tied within the framework of an experimental activity on the application of a model for working with a specific age group.

The research methodology allows for the extraction of subjective information from shared opinions and from the results of the activity. The choice of qualitative methods of analysis reflects the understanding of the scope of educational impact in its socio-personal dimension.

Assessment of contributions

The dissertation enriches research in the field of art pedagogy and, more specifically, the educational and therapeutic possibilities of photography in individual and group forms of work with adolescents who are in a stage of intensive personal development. Research on photography in its educational and therapeutic aspects has been systematized, which can help serve in the preparation of educators and helping specialists. On this basis, a partially tested structured model for working through photography for self-knowledge, development of coping skills and personal development in the process of upbringing and self-education is proposed. The proposed program can enrich the methodology of educational therapeutic work in the pedagogical and social spheres with a new tool.

Critical notes, questions and recommendations

The theoretical parts would benefit from a review with a broader and more in-depth critical assessment of analogous studies on the problem in art pedagogy and in the methodology of upbringing, and not so much in therapy. Apart from the publications of the scientific supervisor, no other specific scientific studies of an experimental nature on the problem have been used, highlighted and analyzed in more depth. In our country, there are such, including dissertations, which highlight the results of experimental work on educational and therapeutic aspects of art with adolescents. They can serve as a basis for deriving specific features and possibilities of photography as a genre of art in education.

More specifics may be desired in the conclusions from the experimental work. It would be good to emphasize in what respect the results of an empirical study enrich, confirm or correct the field of experimental research in art pedagogy, specifically related to photography. In this regard, the question is whether there are such specifics and if such are highlighted, to which sphere or direction in educational work they can be related based on the studies and experimental work. What essentially are the proven educational and therapeutic aspects of photography for adolescents and young people?

The conclusions from the experimental studies are related and interpreted in relation to the specific socio-age group, conditions and duration of testing, as well as through expert independent assessment or in comparison with other similar studies. In this regard, my question is based on what arguments or evidence the doctoral student believes that he has developed the design program for working with photo tasks, which is plastic and applicable in various practical fields and contexts. Are there any other studies that prove this?

It is good to highlight and develop the doctoral student's view on discussion issues that arise from the research and perspectives for complementing and enriching the research. This will outline the scientific reflection to indicate the boundaries of the concept and the unexplored fields of the applied research methodology regarding the possibilities for proving the thesis.

In connection with the popularization of the results of the study, it would be useful to enrich the scientific resources in the field of art pedagogy and the methodology of education to publish the results of the scientific research in its entirety or as a separate methodology for work.

Assessment of the abstract

The abstract contains 53 pages and correctly presents the content and individual parts of the dissertation work, a summary of the conclusions, contributions, publications on the topic, and literature used.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation

Three publications on the topic of the dissertation have been made in materials from university scientific forums, which have been reviewed: Collection of student works on art therapy, NBU, 2017; Anniversary forum of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", Topic: "Therapeutic aspects of photography in the experience of loneliness in adolescence and youth", 2022; Anniversary scientific conference at VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Topic: "Possibilities for photo-therapeutic impact in remote consulting", 2023.

Conclusion

Based on the fulfillment of the criteria and the main scientific contributions as a result of the theoretical research and experimental work, I propose with full conviction to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to vote for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Rusana Georgieva Gadzhanova in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, Scientific specialty "Theory of Education and Didactics" - Theory of Education.

March 28, 2025

Prof. Dr. Neli Boyadzhieva