

## OPINION

on a dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree  
“PhD” (doctor)

Author of the review: Prof. Snezhanka Dobрева Georgieva, PhD

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Scientific field: 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Professional field: 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics – Pedagogical  
Communication)

University: Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, Faculty: Faculty of Pedagogy

Department: Didactics

Topic of the dissertation: TRUST IN PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN  
TEACHERS AND PARENTS – DETERMINANTS AND STRATEGIES FOR  
DEVELOPMENT

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Bistra Kirilova Mizova, PhD

This review is prepared in accordance with Order No. RD-38-680/05.11.2025 of the Rector of  
Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

### **1. Description of the submitted materials**

The set of materials submitted to me in electronic format (dissertation, abstract, four publications) is in accordance with the terms and conditions established in the Higher Education Act (Chapter V), the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The materials are sufficient in volume and content to clarify the scientific results and the contributions reflected in the dissertation. The dismissal of Gergana Traycheva Kateva with the right to public defense (as of 01.02.2025) is in accordance with Order No. RD-20-352/03.02.2025 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. After a preliminary discussion of the dissertation at a meeting of the Department of Didactics, a decision was made to allow it to be defended publicly. No violations of the procedure were committed.

### **2. Biographical data of the doctoral student**

Gergana Traycheva Kateva was born on 04.10.1987. She graduated from the Trakia University – Stara Zagora in 2018, majoring in Early Childhood and Primary Education. In 2020, she obtained a master's degree from the same university with the qualification Master of Pedagogy - Early Childhood and Primary Education. She was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student by Order No. RD-20-293/27.01.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

From 2016 to the present, she has been working as a teacher at the „Mak” Kindergarten, Sliven.

### **3. Structural compositional framework and content of the dissertation**

The topic of the study shows an orientation towards a research program with contributions of a scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied nature. A significant and current problem of modern pedagogical practice is examined – trust between teachers and parents as a key factor for effective pedagogical communication. In the conditions of a dynamically changing social, technological and institutional environment, the relations between the family and the school acquire new dimensions. Trust, as a fundamental social mechanism, determines the quality of communication, the degree of commitment and the opportunities for cooperation. The topic is extremely relevant both for pedagogical theory and school practice; it has been insufficiently researched in the Bulgarian context. Therefore, G. Kateva's dissertation fills an important scientific and practical gap. The author argues for the need for systematic research on trust and emphasizes its role in the development of students, in improving the school climate and in strengthening partnership relationships between adults involved in the educational process.

The macrostructure of the dissertation work is in accordance with the standards for this type of scientific research. The text is organized into an introduction, two chapters, each of which contains five sections, conclusion, scientific contributions, list of publications. The dissertation work has a total volume of 232 pages, of which 184 pages are the main text, 9 pages are used literature and 37 pages are appendices. The work is the result of a thorough study of current literature, presented in the bibliographic description with 140 titles, of which 126 are in Latin. The appendices to the dissertation work (with eight subdivisions, presenting three questionnaires/surveys, a focus group scenario, an interview scenario, a rotation matrix and tables with frequency distributions, averages and standard deviations) are evidence of the correctness of Gergana Kateva's research practice and her desire to objectify and explain the objectivity of the established results. The research methodology is appropriate and applicable in a comparative plan and in future studies.

**The introductory part** of the work is concise, logical and purposeful. In it, the doctoral student motivates her choice of research problem, highlighting arguments in favor of its scientific and social significance, as well as an insufficient degree of research. The emphasis is on the purpose, object, subject, and methodology of the research; the structure of the work is briefly presented.

**The first chapter** “Theoretical foundations of pedagogical communication and trust between teachers and parents” outlines the theoretical framework of the study. Conceptual clarifications have been implemented; a thorough and targeted analysis of pedagogical communication has been proposed; the multi-layered roles and functions of the teacher are correlated with his possible communications with parents. The role of the parent in the educational process is explained in several contexts – expectations from teachers and students, roles of parental inclusion in the school culture, obstacles and challenges in the partnership, prospects for improving cooperation. Different approaches and models of interaction have been carefully traced (Bentele's layered model, Mayer et al.'s models); trust has been conceptualized as a key theoretical category in pedagogical communication. I believe that the theoretical presentation is sufficiently extensive and offers an original synthesis of different schools and approaches. The doctoral student presents a clear conceptual framework of pedagogical communication; analyzes historical, cultural and technological contexts; justifies the teacher's communicative competence as a key factor; defines and systematizes the concept of “trust” through various scientific approaches; examines trust at three interconnected levels. The depth, good structure and correct reasoning of the theoretical part are evidence of critical thinking,

analytical skills and scientific interpretation skills.

**The second chapter** entitled “Empirical study of the prerequisites and level of trust in pedagogical communication between teachers and parents” is one of the strengths of the dissertation. Gergana Kateva uses a mixed approach, including three questionnaires (two for parents and one for teachers); focus groups with teachers; in-depth interviews with parents. The multifaceted nature of the study was achieved with the representativeness of the number of respondents and with the precision of the substantive emphasis in the different research fields, respectively: questionnaire “Parental trust in the class teacher/primary teacher” (108 parents); questionnaire “Parental expectations and satisfaction with the school” (228 parents); questionnaire “Teachers' perceptions of parents and their own role” (171 teachers); focus groups with teachers (31 participants); in-depth interviews with parents (18 participants). I respect the courage of the doctoral student to formulate open-ended questions, seeking an intersection between the three main aspects of trust – cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The chapter presents the results of the psychometric tests, an analysis of the three research levels (interpersonal, organizational and systemic), and proposes strategies for developing trust. The methodology is correctly selected and adequate to the set goals. The psychometric test of the instruments speaks of a high scientific culture. The research is large-scale, well-organized and analytically processed. The results obtained clearly reveal the leading determinants of trust – competence, integrity, goodwill; discrepancies in the expectations of teachers and parents; the influence of school culture and management practices; the role of public attitudes and institutional trust. The skillfully applied triangulation gives credibility and depth to the analysis. I appreciate the doctoral student's work in the final chapter on formulating strategies for developing trust – at the interpersonal, organizational, and systemic levels - and discussing their applicability and importance for practice in Bulgarian schools.

**The conclusion** summarizes the results achieved, the conclusions drawn and the contributions of the study; emphasizes the importance of trust as a basis for full pedagogical communication; presents practical guidelines for future actions in the school environment.

#### **4. Contributions of the dissertation**

The strategies derived by the doctoral student are of a contributing nature: strategies for developing trust; at the interpersonal level – improving communication skills, active feedback, empathetic approach; at the organizational level – developing school policies for transparency, supportive leadership, teamwork, forms of parental involvement; at the systemic level – normative and social mechanisms for strengthening institutional trust. These proposals have high practical value and can actually be implemented in school practice.

I accept the contributions formulated by the doctoral student as well-founded and correct, adequately reflecting the original moments in the dissertation research. I systematize the scientific contributions of the dissertation work in the following areas:

– **Theoretical contributions:** systematization and interpretation of concepts of trust in pedagogical communication; development of a multi-layered analytical framework;

– **Methodological contributions:** constructed and validated instruments for researching trust; successfully applied mixed methodology;

– **Empirical contributions:** research for the first time in a Bulgarian context of trust at three interconnected levels; identification of key determinants specific to the Bulgarian school environment;

– **Applied contributions:** proposed practical strategies with potential for real application

in school policies.

### **5. Qualities of the abstract and publications on the topic of the dissertation**

From the reference, which certifies the implementation of the scientometric indicators in accordance with the minimum national requirements, 4 publications are prominent. The published publications are on the issues of the dissertation research, respectively: „Aspects of trust in pedagogical communication between teachers and parents“ (presented at the Scientific Forum „Methodology of pedagogical research – classical and contemporary trends“; co-authorship with the scientific supervisor) – 2023; "Models for conceptualizing trust in pedagogical communication between teachers and parents" (published in the journal "Rhetoric and communication") – 2023; „Parental expectations for school education in teachers' perceptions: intersections of (dis)trust in pedagogical communication“ (published in the Yearbook of the “Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” School of Education) – 2024 and „The professional self-image of teachers in the mirror of parental perceptions“ (KNOWLEDGE) - 2025.

The presented abstract has a total volume of 67 pages, contains all the necessary requisites and correctly reflects the dissertation work in structural and substantive terms. The emphasis is on the goal, object, subject, content and results of the study. The summary of the scientific and applied contributions is correct.

### **6. Critical notes and recommendations**

I believe that the study would benefit from a more detailed examination of digital communication and its influence on trust.

I recommend that a monograph be produced based on the dissertation to popularize the results and research approaches of a practical and applied nature.

### **7. Conclusion**

I have no reason to suspect plagiarism in the evaluated dissertation work and I believe that it is the work of Gergana Kateva. I appreciate the scientific qualities and contributions of the dissertation, the correct research and creative work of the doctoral student and express a positive assessment of the presented dissertation research, the abstract and the publications. In accordance with my positive assessment, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Gergana Traycheva Kateva the educational and scientific degree „doctor“, in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences, in the professional field 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics – Pedagogical Communication).

Shumen

13.12.2025

Prepared the opinion:  
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