

POSITION

from Associate Prof. Maya Sotirova Sotirova, PhD

concerning a dissertation on a topic:

**Formation of sociocultural and communicative language competences
at students through the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature
in 1st - 4th grades**

for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences,

professional field: 1.3. Pedagogy of training in... (Methodology of training in Bulgarian
language and literature in the initial stage of education)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Didactics

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Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Neli Ivanova

1. Information about the author of the dissertation

In the professional development of Irena Raykova, her doctoral studies are a natural continuation of the line of continuous self-improvement and upgrading of acquired competencies. By the time of her enrollment as a part-time PhD student in 2020, she already has sufficient teaching experience as a primary school teacher and trainer to successfully conduct a dissertation research on an issue of undisputed importance to primary school education.

Irena Raykova has a master's degree in elementary school pedagogy since 1998. As a graduate of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" continued his qualification development at the same university - specializations for early foreign language education in English (2003-2004) and for an information technology teacher at the primary stage (2009). In the period

until his enrollment in doctoral studies, he actively participated in various qualification forms in Bulgaria and abroad.

2. Dissertation

The topic of the dissertation research attracts attention, as it meaningfully unites two of the four subject competencies for teaching Bulgarian language and literature at the initial stage - the sociocultural and communicative language competencies. In terms of content, Irena Raykova transforms this semantic unity into a conceptual one and skilfully builds on it her author's methodical approach for their uniform formation in primary school-age students.

The dissertation contains 328 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. The main text is 282 pages in which 42 figures, 44 tables and 40 images are included. A total of 125 literary sources were used (of which 16 in English), reference was made to current normative and strategic documents, for the purposes of the study, study sets and current curricula on BEL for the initial stage were analyzed.

The relevance of the research problem is convincingly justified in the introduction: at the socio-pedagogical level - in connection with the ever-increasing importance of communicative and socio-cultural competences; at the socio-psychological level - with a view to the development of the cognitive potential in order to increase the students' literacy; at the methodological level - in relation to the need to enrich the pedagogical strategies for the formation of the competencies laid down in the curricula. The research focus on socio-cultural and communicative language competences is argued, the object, subject, purpose, tasks, research hypotheses, methods and stages of the research are clearly and precisely formulated.

The first chapter has a conceptual-theoretical nature and is dedicated to the process of forming socio-cultural and communicative linguistic competences through the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in the 1st - 4th grades. The conceptual and terminological clarifications at the beginning give Irena Raykova the opportunity to reveal

the multi-layered essence of these competencies and at the same time to further problematize them in terms of process and content as a goal and expected result of the training. The methodological aspects of the formation of sociocultural and communicative linguistic competences are revealed through the prism of competence-oriented training in Bulgarian language and literature in the initial stage of the basic educational foundation. The variation in the methodical approach of the teacher in terms of their successful mastery both in the lessons of Bulgarian language and literature and in extracurricular and extracurricular activities is commented on. On this basis, the author constructs a theoretical model for the formation and development of the studied competencies, part of which is the methodological toolkit presented in the second chapter. In the overall empirical pedagogical research, the following are very impressive: first, the temporal and territorial scope, second, the rich research toolkit, third, the flexibility in its adaptation during the transition from face-to-face to distance learning in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed methodical ideas are expertly evaluated by teachers according to clearly defined criteria. The toolkit has been successfully tested in real and digital environments. All these characteristics of the empirical research contribute to the high practical-applied value of the developed author's model for the formation of sociocultural and communicative linguistic competences in native language and literary education in 1st - 4th grades. The results presented in the third chapter outline some problem areas in the process of formation of the investigated competences, confirm the research hypotheses and the applicability of the developed and tested methodological approach. In his dissertation research, the doctoral student demonstrates professional commitment, responsibility, research competence and precision, striving to cover in depth all possible sides of the studied phenomenon.

At the end of the thesis, in a volume of 34 pages, there are 13 appendices that present in detail the tools of the empirical research (questionnaires for teachers and parents, cards for expert assessment, didactic tests, worksheets, etc.), as well as a scheme, illustrating the application of the model.

3. Abstract and publications

The dissertation abstract reflects in a correct and comprehensive manner the concept of the research as a whole, the content and structure of the dissertation work, the research results and the main points of contribution.

Irena Raykova's publications under the procedure quantitatively exceed the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" - a total of 6 articles and reports are presented, of which 2 are in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information. In terms of content, they reflect the scientific research and achievements in the dissertation work and prove the candidate's research maturity.

4. Scientific contributions

I believe that the scientific contributions formulated by the author at the theoretical and applied level reflect the actual research achievements in the dissertation work. Following the logic of the set research tasks, I would highlight the following more important contributing points:

1. An in-depth theoretical study was made on the process of formation of socio-cultural and communicative linguistic competences and the necessity of their uniform formation in the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in the 1st - 4th grades was justified.
2. The opinion of teachers and teachers regarding the socio-cultural and communicative-linguistic competences of primary school-aged students was studied. A diagnostic toolkit has been developed to assess the level of formation of these competences, which can be used in pedagogical practice.
3. The difficulties in the process of formation of the investigated competences are brought out and analyzed and concrete methodological ideas are proposed for overcoming them.
4. A model for the formation of socio-cultural and communicative language competences in native language and literary education in 1st - 4th grade has been

constructed and tested, which can be applied in both face-to-face and distance learning.

5. The methodological ideas included in the model have been elaborated and concretized in a practical-applied plan for the different types of lessons in the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in the initial stage, i.e. a model of pedagogical technology is proposed for the formation and development of the investigated competences among students of primary school age.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of the general positive characteristics of the candidate's scientific research activity given above, the indisputable merits of the developed dissertation work and the assessment of the contributing moments in it, as well as the compliance with the normative requirements for acquiring scientific degrees, I confidently give my positive vote for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of training in... (Methodology of training in Bulgarian language and literature in the initial stage of education) by Irena Hristova Raykova.

Member of the Scientific Jury:



May 13, 2023

Assoc. Prof. Maya Sotirova PhD