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STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND CIVIC EDUCATION TEACHER AS A DETERMINANT OF THE TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT (GRADES 8–12)

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... (Methods of Teaching Philosophical Disciplines)

Scientific Supervisor:
Prof. Yanka Rasheva-Merdzhanova

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The dissertation comprises an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography containing 100 sources (87 in Cyrillic and 13 in Latin script), 34 online resources, 42 tables, and 3 figures. The total volume of the study is 180 pages.

The dissertation was discussed and approved for defense by the Departmental Council of the Department of Didactics at the Faculty of Education, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," during its session held on March 10, 2026.

The public defense of the dissertation will take place on June 5, 2026, at 13 p.m. in the Rectorate building of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

The defense materials are available to interested parties at the Faculty of Education within the Rectorate of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

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I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance of the Research Topic

In the context of dynamic social, cultural, and educational transformations, the teaching profession is confronted with increasing demands for quality, adaptability, and reflective practice. The teacher of Philosophy and Civic Education (PCE) is expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to facilitate the development of critical thinking, civic responsibility, and socially responsible attitudes among students. Within this framework, students' expectations of their teachers emerge as an important indicator of professional effectiveness and the educational significance of the pedagogical role.

The relevance of the present study is determined by several critical factors. First, twenty-first-century society requires young people not merely to acquire curricular knowledge but also to develop competencies that enable them to participate actively and responsibly in social, political, and cultural life. The Philosophy and Civic Education teacher occupies a central position in this process, as his or her professional identity and pedagogical practice directly influence students' motivation, attitudes, and academic achievement.

Second, contemporary students are exposed to complex social phenomena—globalisation, digital media, political conflicts, and social inequalities—which shape both their perceptions of the world and their expectations of education. In this environment, the teacher functions not only as an educator but also as a facilitator of dialogue, a model of civic behaviour, and a mentor in the development of ethical and value-based orientations. Consequently, students' subjective expectations of their teachers become not merely a measure of educational satisfaction but a determinant of the formation of the teacher's **Professional Self-Concept**—a multidimensional construct encompassing pedagogical competence, personal characteristics, and educational practices.

Third, despite the growing importance of civic education within contemporary curricula, there remains a shortage of empirical research examining how students' perceptions and expectations influence teachers' professional identity. This creates a significant research gap in understanding the interrelationships between student perceptions, teaching practice, and educational outcomes, particularly within upper secondary education (Grades 8–12), where the development of critical thinking and civic maturity is of fundamental importance.

Finally, the investigation of this issue has direct practical significance for educational policy and teacher professional development. The findings may contribute to the development of more effective teacher education frameworks, continuing professional development programmes, and mechanisms for evaluating pedagogical effectiveness that take into account not only administrative standards but also the authentic expectations of students as active participants in the educational process.

2. State of the Research Problem

The issue of the influence of students' expectations on the teacher's Professional Self-Concept is multifaceted and has been examined within several academic fields, including educational psychology, civic education, and didactics. Nevertheless, the specific interaction between students' expectations and the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher remains comparatively underexplored.

3. Object and Subject of the Research

The object of the present study is the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the school environment in the process of professional self-determination and professional development.

The subject of the dissertation is the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

4. Aim and Objectives of the Research

The research aim is twofold:

1. Based on an investigation of the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards the teacher and their influence on the development of the teacher's Professional Self-Concept, to construct: a Model of a Sustainable Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the school environment; and a Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the context of the **School of the Future**.
2. To synthesise a comprehensive set of approaches and techniques for communicating mutual expectations between teachers and students as a stimulus for the teacher's

sustainable professional self-determination and, simultaneously, for the personal and cognitive development of students.

Research Objectives

1. To conduct a theoretical analysis of scientific concepts concerning self-concept and the professional profile of the contemporary teacher.
2. On this basis, to synthesise a specific professional profile of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher and to substantiate the concept of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.
3. To investigate the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards the teacher and their influence on the development of the teacher's Professional Self-Concept.
4. To construct a model of a sustainable Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the context of age-related changes in students' expectations.
5. To conduct an empirical investigation of the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher among students in Grades 8–12.
6. To analyse the research findings and synthesise a set of approaches and techniques for communicating mutual expectations between teachers and students as a stimulus both for the teacher's sustainable professional self-determination and for students' personal and cognitive development.

5. Chronological Framework of the Study

Work on the dissertation commenced in 2023. The empirical study was conducted between 27 January and 16 July 2025. A total of 75 teachers from 34 schools located in 25 Bulgarian cities participated in the research. The dissertation was completed in January 2026.

6. Empirical Basis of the Research

The study is based on questionnaire surveys administered in three versions:

- a questionnaire for students in the lower upper-secondary stage (Grades 8–10);
- a questionnaire for students in the upper upper-secondary stage (Grades 11–12);

- a questionnaire for teachers concerning their perceptions of students' expectations and their own Professional Self-Concept.

The student survey for Grades 8–10 involved **1,355 respondents**, while the survey for Grades 11–12 involved **754 respondents**. Additionally, **75 teachers** participated in the study. In total, the empirical research encompassed **2,109 students** and **75 teachers** from across Bulgaria.

c	Students (Grades 8–10)	Students (Grades 11–12)	Total Students	Teachers (N=75)
Burgas	277	191	468	11
Sofia	164	109	273	15
Kardzhali	121	87	208	4
Shumen	150	53	203	6
Petrich	140	42	182	5
Pazardzhik	101	45	146	4
Plovdiv	96	29	125	8
Razgrad	75	30	105	2
Pleven	16	50	66	2
Kazanlak	42	9	51	2
Montana	27	19	46	2
Ruse	29	15	44	1
Vratsa	28	8	36	2
Vidin	24	9	33	2
Stara Zagora	13	20	33	3
Silistra	12	16	28	1
Asenovgrad	24	0	24	1
Yambol	1	14	15	1
Svilengrad	9	0	9	1
Karlovo	0	5	5	1
Dobrich	3	0	3	1
Other cities*	3	2	5	Haskovo, Lovech, Saedinenie
TOTAL	**1355**	**754**	**2109**	**75**

Research Instruments

The following instruments were employed:

- Questionnaire for Students in Grades 8–10;
- Questionnaire for Students in Grades 11–12;
- Questionnaire for Teachers.

7. Validation of the Research Results

For the purposes of the study, both paper-based questionnaires and online questionnaires distributed through the SurveyMonkey platform were used. The online format enabled nationwide participation and broader accessibility for respondents willing to take part in the research.

The teacher sample consisted of 75 Philosophy and Civic Education teachers from across Bulgaria. According to the responses provided, participants represented 23 cities, including Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Kazanlak, Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Petrich, Asenovgrad, Pazardzhik, Yambol, Haskovo, Silistra, Ruse, Svilengrad, Burgas, Razgrad, Shumen, Lovech, Dobrich, Pleven, Karlovo, and Saedinenie.

The student sample included 2,109 students from 25 cities. The discrepancy in the number of represented cities is attributable to several teachers not specifying their location.

Data processing involved quantitative, qualitative, and comparative analyses. The results are presented through average values and interpreted within the context of the relationship between students' subjective expectations and the process of constructing the teacher's Professional Self-Concept.

The findings demonstrate that student reflection constitutes a leading determinant of teachers' self-evaluation and professional self-perception.

8. Scientific Novelty of the Research Findings

The scientific novelty of the study lies in identifying and systematising the relationship between students' expectations and the formation of the Professional Self-Concept of Philosophy and Civic Education teachers within the context of secondary education (Grades 8–12).

For the first time within the Bulgarian educational context, this issue has been examined comprehensively, with students' expectations being considered not merely as indicators of educational satisfaction but as active determinants of teachers' professional identity.

A significant contribution of the research is the empirical identification of key categories of student expectations—pedagogical, communicative, personal, and value-oriented—which directly influence the way teachers construct their Professional Self-Concept.

The findings extend existing theoretical models of teacher identity by incorporating the student perspective as a significant socio-psychological factor.

Another innovative aspect is the integration of philosophical-pedagogical and psychological frameworks for analysing the Professional Self-Concept of Philosophy and Civic Education teachers. The study advances traditional approaches focused primarily on personal characteristics and institutional requirements by introducing the dialogical and reflective nature of teacher–student interaction as a structural component of professional identity.

An additional scientific contribution is the development and validation of a research instrument designed to investigate students' expectations and their impact on teachers' Professional Self-Concept within the context of Philosophy and Civic Education. The resulting data enable more detailed and reliable measurement of such interactions and may serve as a foundation for future comparative and longitudinal studies.

9. Practical Significance of the Research Findings

From an applied perspective, the practical significance of the study lies in the formulation of evidence-based conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving the preparation, qualification, and professional development of Philosophy and Civic Education teachers.

The findings contribute not only to the advancement of theoretical knowledge but also provide sustainable solutions for enhancing the quality of educational practice within the contemporary school environment.

II. MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises **184 pages**, organised into an introduction, Part I, Part II, a conclusion, bibliography, four appendices, statements of contributions, and a declaration of originality. A total of **131 sources** were consulted.

Dissertation Title

Students' Expectations of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher as a Determinant of the Teacher's Professional Self-Concept (Grades 8–12)

Introduction

Part I

The Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher in the Perspective of the "Education of the Future"

1. Presentation of the educational framework and contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education within the context of the "Education of the Future"

   1.1. "Education of the Future" as a social project

   1.2. Educational frameworks and leading paradigms in Philosophy and Civic Education

2. From the Individual Self-Concept to the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher: Concepts, Realities, and Interrelationships

   2.1. Psychological theories and models of self-concept

   2.2. The problem of professional self-determination in scientific theories

   2.3. Philosophical-pedagogical approaches: from the philosopher-teacher to the contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education teacher

2.4. Professional profile of the contemporary teacher and the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher

3. Authorial Research Conceptual Model of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher and Its Investigation within the Context of Age-Related Dynamics in Students' Expectations

3.1. Content-oriented conceptual model

3.2. Functional conceptual model

Part II

Empirical Investigation of Students' Expectations of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher as a Determinant of the Teacher's Professional Self-Concept

1. Research design: methodology, programme, and instruments
2. Validity and reliability of the study
3. Analysis of teacher survey results
4. Analysis of student survey results

4.1. Grades 8–10

4.2. Grades 11–12

5. Comparative Analysis of Teacher Survey Results Relative to Student Data
6. Framework of Methods and Techniques for the Communication of Mutual Expectations Between Teachers and Students
7. Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher as an Educator within the "School of the Future"
8. Comparative Conclusions, Proposals, and Future Horizons

CONCLUSION

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APPENDICES

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

2. Content of the Dissertation

The introduction outlines the research problem, its relevance, the object and subject of the study, the research hypothesis, and the methodological framework.

Research Aim

The study pursues a twofold objective:

1. Based on an investigation of the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards teachers and their influence on the development of the teacher's Professional Self-Concept, to construct a model of a sustainable Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the school environment.
2. To synthesise a comprehensive set of approaches and techniques for communicating mutual expectations between teachers and students as a stimulus both for the teacher's sustainable professional self-determination and for students' personal and cognitive development.

General Research Hypothesis

The study is based on the assumption that the development of a sustainable Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher is:

1. Significantly influenced by students' expectations;
2. Characterised by clearly identifiable age-related dynamics across Grades 8–12.

Object of the Study

The object of the research is the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher within the process of professional self-determination and professional development in the school environment.

Subject of the Study

The subject of the dissertation is the age-related dynamics of students' expectations towards the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

Research Methods

Theoretical Level

- Analysis of scholarly literature;
- Systematisation and synthesis of theoretical perspectives;
- Modelling;
- Conceptual design.

Empirical Level

- Survey of students regarding their expectations of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher;
- Survey of teachers regarding their perceptions of students' expectations and their own Professional Self-Concept.

Applied Level

- Development of a set of techniques for communicating mutual expectations and perceptions between teachers and students within the educational process.

PART I

THE PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND CIVIC EDUCATION TEACHER IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE "EDUCATION OF THE FUTURE"

1. Educational Framework and Contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education within the Context of the "Education of the Future"

The first section examines the educational framework and the dominant paradigms in contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education through an analysis of regulatory and curricular

documents governing instruction from Grades 8 to 12, as well as documents specifying teacher qualifications and competencies.

Particular attention is devoted to the most recent curricula published by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science for Philosophy (Grades 8–10) and Civic Education (Grades 11–12). These curricula are presented in terms of their thematic areas, key topics, conceptual frameworks, and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to acquire.

Special emphasis is placed on the development of key cognitive and functional competencies, including:

- analysis of philosophical texts;
- writing philosophical essays;
- participation in discussions;
- case analysis;
- project development;
- public presentation skills.

The annual number of instructional hours allocated to these disciplines at each grade level is also examined.

Education of the Future as a Social Project

The dissertation further explores the concept of the "Education of the Future" as a social project, highlighting the need for new competencies and skills required by contemporary society.

Examples of innovative educational models from different countries and educational theorists are discussed, alongside alternative educational systems and programmes designed to support student learning and development.

At present, most students around the world continue to be educated according to the educational model established by **Jan Amos Comenius** in the early seventeenth century. However, the rapid development of technology and its increasing influence on everyday life have generated a growing need to transform educational practices for new generations of learners.

One notable example discussed is the work of Salman Khan and the development of Khan Academy, which demonstrates innovative methods for engaging students through accessible and effective learning opportunities.

The dissertation also examines several alternative educational systems developed in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, which provide families with different educational pathways tailored to their individual needs and values.

Particular attention is devoted to the **School 2100** educational system, whose primary objective is the fullest possible development of the individual potential of both students and teachers. The instructional materials employed within this framework and its underlying pedagogical principles are analysed in detail.

Other educational models, such as **Perspective**, **Harmony**, and **Planet of Knowledge**, are also discussed, together with examples of innovative schools that embody alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Their principal strengths, as well as certain limitations, are identified.

The study additionally reviews well-known educational alternatives such as the Waldorf Education approach and the Maria Montessori educational method, alongside the less widely known but highly intriguing **Sendov System**.

The common objective of these alternative approaches is the optimisation of educational processes so that students leave school better prepared for participation in social life.

At the same time, the dissertation considers more radical perspectives, including the possibility of replacing teachers with artificial intelligence and the complete digitalisation of education.

One conclusion is unequivocal: the future of education will inevitably be closely connected with digital technologies and the new competencies associated with them. Teachers will therefore need to learn how to integrate these technologies effectively into their professional practice.

Future education will increasingly focus on developing the knowledge and skills necessary for life in emerging social realities, and this task currently constitutes one of the primary responsibilities of Philosophy and Civic Education teachers.

2. From the Individual Self-Concept to the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher: Concepts, Realities, and Interrelationships

This section begins with an overview of psychological theories of self-concept and related constructs, including: the Self; identity; self-concept.

The dissertation discusses definitions and theoretical perspectives proposed by scholars such as William James, Sigmund Freud, and B. F. Skinner.

The structure of self-concept is examined through dimensions such as: the real personal self; the ideal personal self; the real social self; additional dimensions of self-perception.

Connections are then established between these theoretical perspectives and the teaching profession, particularly the professional profile of teachers, which serves as a foundation for the empirical investigation.

Special attention is devoted to self-esteem, given its close relationship with self-perception and personal confidence. Communication processes and the individual's role within them are also examined, as teaching is inherently based on interaction with students, colleagues, parents, and school administrators.

The dissertation further discusses the elements of self-concept identified by Margarita Dilova: body image; social identity; personal life history; psychological self-portrait; perceived potential for personal change.

Each of these dimensions is considered relevant to the teacher's personality and, consequently, to the formation of the teacher's Professional Self-Concept.

The study also provides a more in-depth examination of theories of self-concept developed by various authors in order to demonstrate the complexity of this construct. Particular attention is paid to characteristics such as: self-evaluation; self-confidence; self-perception; aspirations; achievements; self-improvement; self-preservation.

A central position is given to William James's theory of the Self, which distinguishes between two principal components: the **I** and the **Me**. James further identifies four dimensions of the Me: the Spiritual Self; the Material Self; the Social Self; the Active Self.

The dissertation explains the distinctions between these dimensions and examines James's concepts of self-preservation and self-improvement as fundamental functions of the Self.

Self-esteem is also analysed as a critical factor in self-development and identity formation.

Professional Profile of the Contemporary Teacher and the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher

The dissertation proceeds with a separate examination of the professional profile of the contemporary teacher in general and, more specifically, of the Philosophy and Civic Education (PCE) teacher.

The requirements established by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science for obtaining teaching qualifications are presented, including the relevant educational and qualification levels. Opportunities for career advancement through the acquisition of higher professional qualification degrees and participation in continuing professional development programmes are also discussed.

Particular emphasis is placed on the concept of **lifelong learning** and the necessity of continuous professional development. Such development is viewed as essential not only for improving the quality of educational practice but also for addressing the cognitive and, to a certain extent, the emotional needs of students.

Returning to the concept of the Self and its characteristics, the dissertation highlights the importance of social roles. These roles are of special significance because teaching is a profoundly social profession. Teachers perform a wide range of roles and must be capable of integrating them effectively and appropriately.

Among these roles, the professional role occupies a central position. Embedded within it are numerous social functions, perhaps the most important being that of a **role model**.

Students often pay greater attention to what adults do than to what they say. Consequently, teachers, whose task is to educate and prepare young people for participation in society, must continuously monitor and regulate their own behaviour.

The dissertation further identifies several characteristics of the teaching profession that should be recognised by anyone entering the field: teachers are subject to close public scrutiny; a strong and inseparable relationship exists between teacher and student; the profession requires both autonomy and individuality; professional practice is based on principles of equality and mutual respect; teaching is highly dependent on the specific institutional environment; the profession demonstrates a continuing tendency towards feminisation.

Following this overview of the teaching profession and its distinctive features, the study outlines the professional profile of the contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

The requirements for obtaining professional qualification as a PCE teacher are presented in accordance with Appendix No. 1 to Article 10 of Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 (amended in 2020).

Particular attention is devoted to a specific category of competencies unique to this professional field: **philosophical competence**.

This competence encompasses: the ability to understand philosophy and philosophical concepts; the ability to recognise and evaluate knowledge or phenomena as philosophical in nature; the ability to engage in philosophical reflection and independently construct philosophical knowledge and arguments.

As Krůsteva (2020, p. 77) notes, philosophical competence involves the capacity not only to understand philosophical thought but also to develop and articulate philosophical reasoning independently.

3. Authorial Research Conceptual Model of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher

The third section integrates the psychological theories of self-concept with the professional profile of both the teacher in general and the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher in particular.

Its purpose is to demonstrate how characteristics of the Self interact with the choice of the teaching profession. The decision to enter this professional field is influenced both by personal characteristics and by the specific features of the profession itself.

Drawing upon theoretical conclusions and empirical findings, the dissertation proposes a definition of the **Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher**.

This section presents two original conceptual models developed by the author: A **Content-Oriented Conceptual Model**; A **Functional Conceptual Model**. Both models possess theoretical, analytical, and practical relevance.

Content-Oriented Conceptual Model

The first model focuses on the structure of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

The model is visualised and interpreted through four interconnected and hierarchically organised levels that characterise the dynamics of professional identity: Personal identity; Psychological competencies; Professional competencies; Professional and personal qualities.

The model serves as an analytical framework for understanding the professional profile of the teacher within the context of contemporary education.

Functional Conceptual Model

The second model investigates the relationship between age-related changes in students' expectations and the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

The model explores how students' evolving developmental and social characteristics influence their perceptions of teachers' professional roles and qualities.

For both conceptual models, specific questionnaire items are identified and justified as the empirical foundation for their construction and validation. In this way, a coherent methodological connection is established between the theoretical framework and the empirical findings.

PART II

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND CIVIC EDUCATION TEACHER AS A DETERMINANT OF THE TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT

1. Research Design: Methodology, Programme, Instruments, and Methodological Framework

The empirical study focuses on students' expectations and their influence on the construction of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

Aim of the Empirical Investigation

The aim of the empirical investigation is to identify and analyse the factors influencing the formation and development of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher.

Research Objectives

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- planning and conducting empirical research among Philosophy and Civic Education teachers;
- planning and conducting empirical research among the students taught by those teachers in both stages of upper-secondary education;
- identifying and analysing the determinants influencing the development of the teacher's Professional Self-Concept;
- examining the age-related dynamics of students' expectations.

Assumptions Underlying the Study

The empirical investigation is based on several assumptions:

- teachers continuously construct and develop their Professional Self-Concept throughout their professional careers;

- the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher is influenced by multiple factors, among which professional qualifications and competencies, as well as students' opinions and attitudes, are particularly significant.

Working Hypotheses

Based on the object and subject of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. The Professional Self-Concept of the teacher is strongly influenced by students' opinions, behaviour, and attitudes.
2. Students' responses are expected to differ according to age and grade level:
    - students in Grades 8–10 are expected to focus primarily on external and personality-related characteristics of the teacher;
    - students in Grades 11–12 are expected to place greater emphasis on competencies, knowledge, skills, and interpersonal attitudes.

1.1 Methodology

The empirical investigation was conducted through questionnaire surveys administered to Philosophy and Civic Education teachers and their students.

This method was selected because it allowed for the inclusion of a large number of respondents from diverse geographical locations.

1.2 Research Programme

The study was implemented through two complementary formats: paper-based questionnaires; online questionnaires. The purpose of combining these formats was to increase participation and facilitate the inclusion of respondents from geographically distant locations. Within the city of Sofia, teachers who expressed willingness to participate were visited personally and provided with paper questionnaires for themselves and their students. The minimum number of teachers required for the sample was calculated using data from the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute for the 2023/2024 academic year. According to these data, Bulgaria had: 74 united schools; 115 grammar schools; 491 secondary schools; 421 vocational schools. Assuming that each institution employed at least one Philosophy and Civic Education teacher, the estimated population consisted of approximately **1,101 teachers**. Given the large size of

this population, the research sample was constructed on a voluntary participation basis. Student samples were subsequently formed from the students of the participating teachers.

The analysis was conducted at three levels: Separate analysis of teacher responses; Separate analysis of student responses; Comparative analysis of all three respondent groups.

1.3 Research Instruments

The empirical investigation employed three research instruments: Questionnaire for Teachers; Questionnaire for Students in Grades 8–10; Questionnaire for Students in Grades 11–12. The surveys were conducted between 27 January and 16 July 2025. Teachers and students from upper-secondary schools in 25 Bulgarian cities participated in the study. The successful implementation of the research was made possible through the cooperation of school principals, who granted permission for the surveys to be distributed among both students and Philosophy and Civic Education teachers.

Methodological Framework of the Empirical Analysis

A comprehensive interdisciplinary approach was adopted for the processing and interpretation of the collected data. The methodological framework incorporated three principal forms of analysis.

1. Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were employed to provide a detailed presentation of the empirical data through frequency distributions and percentage-based analyses. The quantitative study included a total of **2,184 respondents**, comprising:

- **75 Philosophy and Civic Education teachers**;
- **2,109 students**, of whom:
    - **1,355 students** were from Grades 8–10;
    - **754 students** were from Grades 11–12.

The size of the sample ensured a high degree of statistical significance and enabled a reliable representation of professional and educational attitudes within the secondary school context.

2. Qualitative Analysis

An in-depth content analysis was conducted on the open-ended responses provided by both teachers and students. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the subjective dimensions of the Professional Self-Concept. Particular attention was devoted to themes such as: motivations for choosing the teaching profession; the perceived role of destiny or vocation in the teaching career; emotional dimensions of teacher authority; perceptions of professional fulfilment and educational mission.

The qualitative analysis complemented the statistical findings by providing nuanced insights essential for understanding the humanistic nature of Philosophy and Civic Education.

3. Comparative Analysis

A large-scale comparative analysis was undertaken between the different educational stages. This included: comparisons between students in Grades 8–10 and Grades 11–12; comparisons between teachers' self-perceptions and students' expectations and evaluations. The analysis enabled the identification of areas of convergence and divergence within the teacher–student relationship and provided a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which the Professional Self-Concept develops.

2. Analysis of the Teacher Survey Results

This section examines selected questions from the teacher questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of **33 items**, of which **14 were equivalent to questions included in the student questionnaires**. These parallel items were specifically designed to facilitate comparative analysis between teachers and students.

A total of **75 teachers** participated in the survey. According to the responses provided, participants represented **23 Bulgarian cities**, including: Sofia; Plovdiv; Stara Zagora; Kazanlak; Vidin; Vratsa; Montana; Petrich; Asenovgrad; Pazardzhik; Yambol; Haskovo; Silistra; Ruse; Svilengrad; Burgas; Razgrad; Shumen; Lovech; Dobrich; Pleven; Karlovo; Saedinenie.

The findings provide valuable insight into teachers' professional identities, self-perceptions, and interpretations of students' expectations.

3. Analysis of the Student Survey Results

This section analyses selected questions from the student questionnaires. The participating students were all taught by the teachers who had taken part in the study. Questionnaires were distributed only after permission had been obtained from school principals. Data collection was conducted through both online questionnaires and paper-based forms, depending on the preferences of the participating teachers.

The student sample included: 1,355 students from Grades 8–10; 754 students from Grades 11–12. The student questionnaire contained 21 items, of which 14 corresponded directly to questions included in the teacher questionnaire, enabling comparative analysis between the two respondent groups.

For greater clarity, the analysis was divided into two separate subsections: Students in Grades 8–10; Students in Grades 11–12. This structure facilitated the examination of age-related differences in students' expectations.

4. Comparative Analysis of Teacher and Student Survey Results

This section presents a comparative analysis of responses provided by the three respondent groups: teachers; students in Grades 8–10; students in Grades 11–12.

The purpose of the analysis is to identify: similarities and differences between the three groups; age-related changes in students' expectations; points of convergence and divergence between teachers' self-perceptions and students' evaluations. The analysis focuses specifically on those questionnaire items that were equivalent across teacher and student surveys. This comparison provides important evidence concerning the extent to which teachers' Professional Self-Concept corresponds with students' actual expectations.

5. A Set of Approaches and Techniques for Communicating Mutual Expectations Between Teachers and Students

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical findings, the dissertation proposes a comprehensive set of approaches and techniques designed to facilitate more effective communication and pedagogical interaction. The proposed framework includes:

Verbal Communicative Techniques, Reflective Techniques, Dialogical and Interactive Techniques, Regulatory Communicative Techniques, Empathic and Supportive Techniques, Visual and Technological Tools. The proposed framework seeks to improve the quality of the educational microclimate while strengthening mutual understanding between teachers and students.

6. Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher as a Teacher in the "School of the Future"

This section conceptualises the contemporary professional profile of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher through the lens of twenty-first-century educational transformations. Drawing upon both theoretical analysis and empirical findings, the model is defined as a reflective and adaptive system integrating several key components.

Humanistic-Technological Syncretism

Within the School of the Future, the teacher is positioned not as a source of information but as a mediator who combines digital literacy with critical philosophical thinking. The model emphasises the superiority of human qualities—particularly emotional intelligence and value-oriented guidance—over purely algorithmic forms of instruction.

Ethical Leadership

A central category within the model is **justice**, identified as a foundational element of the Professional Self-Concept. The teacher is conceptualised as both an authoritative figure and a moral role model whose influence derives from: transparency in assessment and decision-making; recognition of students' individual potential; consistency between values and actions.

Functional Dynamics: The Civic Mentor

The model acknowledges the specific nature of Civic Education and reconceptualises the teacher as a **civic mentor**. This role extends beyond the transmission of knowledge and focuses on: developing practical social competencies; preparing students for active participation in democratic society; fostering civic responsibility and engagement.

Communicative Reflection

The model assumes that the Professional Self-Concept develops through ongoing dialogue with students' expectations. A central thesis is that conscious management and interpretation of these expectations constitute an important factor in: reducing professional burnout; enhancing educational effectiveness; supporting sustainable professional development.

The proposed model offers an innovative understanding of teacher professionalism in Philosophy and Civic Education by defining it not as a static collection of knowledge and skills but as a dynamic process of self-actualisation responsive to the changing realities of contemporary education.

3. Conclusions

Comparative Conclusions

1. Refutation of the Assumption Regarding Age-Related Shifts in Student Expectations

One of the most significant scientific findings of the present study is the refutation of the working hypothesis that, during the final stage of secondary education (Grades 11–12), students' expectations shift primarily towards subject expertise and academic competence. The data clearly indicate that even at the end of upper-secondary education, students continue to prioritise the need for: social support; fairness; emotional understanding. This finding challenges traditional assumptions regarding age-related dynamics in education and demonstrates that the Professional Self-Concept of the contemporary Philosophy and Civic Education teacher should be constructed not primarily around the role of a "source of knowledge" but rather around the role of a mediator and value-oriented guide. The results further reveal that the socio-psychological significance of the teacher does not diminish as students mature. On the contrary, it evolves into a stronger expectation for empathic leadership and authentic communication.

2. Discrepancy Between Subjective Self-Evaluation and External Perception

A pronounced tendency was identified whereby students evaluate teachers' performance more positively than teachers evaluate themselves. This finding suggests that the teacher's Professional Self-Concept is characterised by a healthy degree of professional self-criticism, while students perceive the teacher as a well-established authority figure.

3. Respect as a Stable Professional Determinant

Respect towards Philosophy and Civic Education teachers was found to be remarkably high among both student groups. This serves as evidence of a stable and positive Professional Self-Concept. Open-ended responses revealed, however, that respect is not viewed by students as something granted automatically by virtue of professional status. Rather, it is perceived as a dynamic construct built through: reciprocity; empathy; emotional self-regulation; constructive classroom interactions.

4. Deficiencies in Methodological Interaction

A substantial discrepancy was observed regarding the recognition of teaching methods used in the classroom. Teachers reported employing a broad range of pedagogical techniques, whereas students predominantly identified only: discussion; explanation. This finding indicates a need for clearer operationalisation and communication of teaching methods so that students become consciously aware of the learning processes in which they participate.

5. Refutation of Expected Age-Related Dynamics

The empirical evidence does not support the assumption that students in the second stage of upper-secondary education gradually replace expectations concerning personal qualities with expectations centred on subject competence. On the contrary, more than half of the participating teachers and a considerable proportion of older students reported an increasing need for: social support; personal guidance; emotionally responsive interaction. The Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher remains strongly determined by the role of a **social mentor** throughout the entire period of secondary education.

6. Independence of Students' Self-Evaluation

While approximately 78% of teachers believe that their expectations influence students' self-esteem, every third student reported that teachers' expectations do not significantly affect them personally. This finding is particularly important for contemporary education. Students respect teachers as professionals while simultaneously maintaining a substantial degree of psychological autonomy regarding teachers' personal expectations.

4. Scientific Contributions of the Research

Theoretical Contributions

1. Conceptualisation of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher

The dissertation proposes three original authorial models of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher: a Content-Oriented Model; a Functional Model; a Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher in the School of the Future. Together, these models provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the structure and development of professional identity within this educational field.

2. Theoretical Substantiation of Determinants

The dissertation theoretically substantiates the relationship between the principles of pragmatic didactics (following N. Kolishev) and the construction of the Professional Self-Concept. The findings demonstrate that the principal determinant of teacher identity is not the accumulation of formal qualifications and certificates but rather the capacity for meaningful and reflective interaction with students in authentic educational contexts.

3. Contribution to Developmental Psychology in Education

The study challenges the traditional assumption that students nearing the completion of secondary education focus primarily on teachers' subject expertise. Instead, the findings provide theoretical support for the increasing significance of the teacher as a source of emotional and social support for older adolescents.

4. Enrichment of the Concept of the Professional Self-Concept Through the Introduction of the "Civic Mentor"

The dissertation expands existing understandings of the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher through the introduction of the conceptual figure of the **civic mentor**. This role is defined as that of a mediator who translates abstract philosophical categories—such as justice, freedom, and ethics—into practical social skills and models of civic behaviour.

5. A New Interpretation of Pragmatic Didactics

A new interpretation of pragmatic didactics, based on the work of N. Kolishev and adapted to the field of Philosophy and Civic Education, is developed. The scientific contribution lies in the argument that **civic mentoring** represents the most effective pedagogical mechanism for achieving functional civic literacy because it synchronises teachers' reflective professional practice with the contemporary social expectations of students.

Practical and Applied Contributions

1. Diagnosis of Student Expectations

A large-scale empirical investigation was conducted to identify students' actual expectations and compare them with teachers' Professional Self-Concepts. The study revealed several critical areas of discrepancy, including perceptions regarding: teaching methods; humour in classroom interaction; professional roles and responsibilities.

2. Methodological Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher

An applied model of the teacher for the **School of the Future** was developed. The model integrates: digital literacy; emotional intelligence; fairness; leadership; reflective practice. These are conceptualised as essential components of contemporary professional competence.

3. Development of a Communication Framework

A concrete framework of communicative approaches and techniques was designed, including: verbal strategies; reflective methods; empathic techniques; interactive approaches. The framework is intended to improve classroom climate and reduce professional stress while facilitating mutual understanding between teachers and students.

4. Empirical Verification of Justice as a Core Professional Value

Quantitative evidence demonstrated that **justice** constitutes the principal foundation of teacher authority within Philosophy and Civic Education. This finding provides a basis for future teacher-training programmes and professional development initiatives in pedagogical ethics.

5. Identification of a Functional Transformation in the Professional Self-Concept

A clearly defined functional transformation in the Professional Self-Concept of the Philosophy and Civic Education teacher was identified during the second stage of upper-secondary education (Grades 11–12). The introduction of Civic Education as a distinct subject contributes to a shift in the teacher's role: from a predominantly theoretical lecturer to a **civic mentor**. Within this framework, professional authority is derived less from formal qualifications and more from the teacher's ability to serve as: an ethical guide; a civic role model; a leader within an educational environment increasingly understood as a **"laboratory of citizenship."**

5. Publications Related to the Dissertation Topic

The following publications are directly related to the dissertation research and present key aspects of its theoretical framework, empirical findings, and conceptual developments.

Dimitrova, K. R. (2025). *Factors Influencing the Choice of the Teaching Profession among Philosophy and Civic Education Teachers*. In: **Proceedings of the XII International Scientific Conference**, Veliko Tarnovo, 20 November 2025. Veliko Tarnovo: Conference Proceedings, pp. 193–197. ISSN 2534-9317.

Dimitrova, K. R. (2026). *Model of the Philosophy and Civic Education Teacher as an Instructor in the "School of the Future"*. **International Journal of Current Science Research and Review**, 9(1). ISSN 2581-8341.

Dimitrova, K. R. (2025). *The Classroom as a "Laboratory of Citizenship": A Pragmatic Interpretation of Civic Education*. **Yearbook of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Book: Pedagogy**, Vol. 118, pp. 116–128.