

Formal opinion on the dissertation on

Forming literary and socio-linguistic competences among students in primary schools through modern children's literature and classics

For the award of Doctor's educational and scientific (academic) degree in the Professional Direction 1.3. Pedagogy of Education /Methods of Education in Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL)/

Author: doctoral candidate Teodora Yankova Valeva

Reviewer: Prof. Yanka Merdzhanova, PhD, Faculty of Education, St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University

Tutor and science adviser: Prof. Neli Ivanova, PhD, Faculty of Education, St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University

*Overview of the thesis and the candidate:* the candidate has a background education as a philologist, long-term practice as a teacher in Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL) and English. She is the author of works and texts for children, co-author in the 'Together' program educating system, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. All the facts related to the professional experience of Teodora Valeva declare her as a relevant expert involved in the modern practice of Bulgarian education aiming the proper training, knowledge awareness and personal development of the minor students. The dissertation includes 163 pages of text, including introduction and three chapters, bibliography and final conclusion. There are 7 annexes to it of 51 pages, 17 spreadsheets, 3 figures, 4 diagrams, 2 graphics and 16 histograms. The bibliography refers to 99 titles, 14 of which in Latin. It is evident that the work is an authentic, consecutive, homogenous and purposeful creative process, backed up with professional competence and achieved sufficient educational awareness and culture. The style and language of Teodora Valeva adhere to the requirements of the modern scientific writing.

*Assessment:* Chapter One represents the concept and main idea of the study and it focuses on the process of formation of literary and socio-linguistic competence (LSLC) through education in Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL); the age characteristics of the students from grades 1-4 and the possibilities of children's literature in that context. Chapter Two highlights the design of the study and the key Model of forming literary and socio-linguistic competence. The idea of their parallel development is justified. Chapter Three analyses the data from the completed research in its three phases – preliminary with a questionnaire addressed to the primary school teachers, parents and diagnostics of the achievements of students; expert assessment of the model; approbation and

analysis of the results through a structured interview with teachers. The structure of the research sample and its distribution in the different phases of the research is very clearly identified – 40 students from control and experimental groups for phases one and three; 150 primary school teachers for the questionnaire research in phase one, 40 parents for phase one; 12 experts in phase two and some of them in phase three. The author has completed a large-scale, continuous work both on a theoretical level and onsite in accordance with the set goal to construct a model to form literary and socio-linguistic competence (LSLC) among the minor students. Both the scope of teachers and students and of parents with their specific participation in this complex process are valuable. The author demonstrated and achieved the following: proper level of *methodological maturity and self-confidence* as an active teacher-methodologist; *research experience and expertise* in the preparation and use of diverse empirical instruments; *expert competence* regarding the applicable laws and regulations and the academic documentation of Bulgarian Language and Literature for the primary levels of education; *scientific writing competence* for analytical explanatory disclosure of the ideas of the author.

*Contribution:* the author gives her contribution both on theoretical and applied levels. I accept them informatively but in my opinion **the author has not managed yet to highlight the specifics in them.** I identify **four significant contributions** in the work of T. Valeva and part of their potential I see in her future research and studies:

1. **Theoretically justified conceptual competent model for parallel formation of literary and socio-linguistic competence in the initial phase of secondary education through the education in Bulgarian Language and Literature.**
2. Constructing a **complex of methodological ideas, methods and instruments** for the formation and development of literary and socio-linguistic competence in grade 4 through education of the discipline Bulgarian language and literature and children's literature.
3. Empirical research, **first**, of the level of formation of literary and socio-linguistic competence in grade 4 through the achievements of the students and the opinion of teachers and parents; **second**, of the quality of the conceptual model through expert research of specialists.
4. Approbation in the educational practice of the Model and **evaluation of its potentials for sustainable systematic application and for irradiating incorporation in modern education in Bulgarian Language and Literature in grades 1-4 .**

*Abstract and publications:* Teodora Valeva presents 5 individual scientific publications and an abstract relevant to a dissertation.

*Recommendations and questions:*

1. **Question:** Which of the specific characteristics typical for the age of the 4-grade students are the most determining and decisive in the formation of the specifics of their literary and socio-linguistic development and how does the author reflect /project/ them in the Model ?
2. **Question:** How does the doctoral candidate imagine **the immediate practical benefit and consequences** of her work at school? How does she see **the multiplication of the effects on a wider plan and perspective** and would she describe it?
3. **Which of her methodological ideas** does doctoral candidate Valeva uphold as **really new and innovative** for the Bulgarian educational practice?
4. Taking into account the questions above I address my **main recommendation** to the author to make herself clear and highlight **the main innovative features in the methods and activities**, which she proposes to the students, the innovative characteristics of the work instruments and tasks.

*Conclusion:* As a result of the made analysis and assessment, I am fully confident to propose to the respected members of the scientific panel (jury of scientists) *to award doctor's educational and scientific (academic) degree of the professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of Education /Methods of Education in Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL) to the doctoral applicant Teodora Yankova Valeva.* Both the procedure and the work and the achieved theoretical and applied contributions comply with the provisions of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and with the high level of scientific research and development maintained at the Faculty of Education at Saint Kliment Ohridski Sofia University.

Sofia

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Author of the opinion:.....

/Prof. Yanka Merdzhanova, PhD/