

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Elena Lazarova Karashtranova, PhD
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On PhD Thesis

For awarding the Educational and Science Degree “**Doctor**”

Scientific field: 1. Pedagogy

Professional field *1.3. Pedagogy of Education in...*

Doctoral programme: *Teaching Methodology: Geography*

Author: Stanislava Plamenova Misheva

Title: *Application of Maria Montessori's methodology in geography education*

Academic Advisor: *Prof. Maya Petrova, PhD*

1. General overview of the procedure and the PhD student

I have been appointed a member of the academic committee for the ensuring of a procedure for a defense of a PhD Thesis entitled: “Application of Maria Montessori's methodology in geography education” for awarding of the educational and science degree “Doctor” in the scientific field 1. Pedagogy, in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education in..., doctoral programme: Teaching Methodology: Geography, following order № ПД-38-662 from 19.12.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The author of the dissertation is Stanislava Plamenova Misheva – a PhD student in self-preparation form of study at the Department "Regional Development" with academic advisor Assoc. Prof. Maya Petrova Vasileva, PhD.

The materials presented both electronically and in paper by the candidate are in compliance with the Regulations on Development of the Academic Staff of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The PhD Thesis entitled Application of Maria Montessori's methodology in geography education consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion and five appendices. Eighteen tables and eight figures are also included in the dissertation, all comprising 219 pages. The sources referred to are 159, out of which 68 are in Bulgarian and Russian and 91 in English and Italian.

The PhD student has attached three publications in the field of the dissertation research.

2. Topicality of the subject of research and competence in the matter of discussion

One of the most important aspects of the contemporary stage of development in pedagogical research is related to the means of increasing the active attitude of participants in the learning process as well as the motivation of students. In this sense, the topic of the hereby presented dissertation, which is devoted to the development of a unified subject methodology in the education of Geography as well as the integration of the Montessori Method as a tool for self-development, is topical and applicable in the learning process.

3. Methodology of research

The dissertation clearly presents the subject and object of research, the aims to be fulfilled, the research tasks as well as the hypothesis of the thesis. In relation to the aim and tasks, the PhD student has used an adequate number of research methods – theoretic analysis, experimental analysis, mathematical-statistical analysis, surveying and monitoring of students, modelling and interpretation of results. The instruments of result reports are fully correspondent with the specificity of the research conducted. The obtained results are clearly analyzed and presented in a reliable and authentic way.

4. Characteristics, evaluation of the PhD Thesis and contributions

The PhD Thesis is well-structured and meets the official regulations for a dissertation.

The first chapter presents a thorough theoretical analysis of the technology as a theory and methodology, on the basis of which the possibilities of offering a model of a unified subject educational methodology in the education of Geography is outlined.

The second chapter presents a full description of the Montessori Method and the possibilities of its application in the general subject framework of Geography education in Bulgarian schools in junior high school stage.

The third chapter outlines the specific means of application of the Montessori Method in the education of Geography in Bulgarian schools in junior high school stage. Specific scientific workshops that serve as a basis of the establishment of methodology of self-development in studying Geography of Bulgaria have been created and explained in detail. This chapter brings forward the experimental training which has been conducted, and which serves as a validation of the tools used for evaluation (monitoring list for orientation of classroom supervision; QBS questionnaire addressed to students; QBS180 questionnaire addressed to parents; the self-efficiency scale aiming to investigate the perception of self-efficiency with teachers) and analysis of the obtained results. The PhD student demonstrates the ability to select instruments for evaluation and analysis of data, which in this case is vital due to the lack of a developed methodology.

The contributions of the dissertation are well grounded and can be summarized in a theoretical, theoretical-practical and practical aspects:

- The technology as a theory and methodology was researched, on the basis of which a conceptual model of general subject educational technology of geography education was derived.
- A new approach to examining the Montessori methodology is proposed - as a technology of self-development in the teaching of geography, justified by the trends in the modern development of geography didactics.
- Based on the ideas of the methodology of Maria Montessori, a new structure of methodological development of the geography lesson, applicable in the practice of education, was constructed.
- Specific methodological developments of scientific workshops with up-to-date educational content from the geography and economics curricula for junior high school are proposed. Scientific workshops enable their adaptation to STEAM technology training as well.

5. Recommendations and notes of the PhD Thesis

As a note, I think that the used statistical methods are not clearly described.

6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the PhD student

The presented three publications (the participant as the only author) are related to the dissertation and present basic results from it, which is why they fully comply with the regulations towards candidates for awarding the educational and science degree “Doctor”.

7. Author’s summary

The proposed project of author’s summary of the dissertation presents the overall content of the PhD Thesis and gives a clear idea of what the PhD student has accomplished.

8. Suggestions on the future implementation of the dissertation contributions and results

I believe that it would be useful to put into effect the possibilities of adapting the scientific workshops to the resources provided by STEAM technologies.

CONCLUSION

The PhD Thesis presents theoretical, theoretical-practical and practical results which are original contribution in science and meet the regulations of the Act on Development of The Academic Staff in The Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations of application of the Act as well as the regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The Dissertation shows that the PhD student Stanislava Plamenova Misheva possesses detailed theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific field of Teaching Methodology: Geography by demonstrating very good qualities and skills for conducting an independent scientific research.

All of the above gives me grounds to be fully convinced and assess positively the conducted research, presented by the reviewed PhD Thesis, Author’s summary, results and contributions, as well as to recommend that the academic jury award Stanislava Plamenova Misheva the education and science degree “Doctor” in the Scientific field: Pedagogy, in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education in..., doctoral programme: Teaching Methodology: Geography.

09.03.2023

Member of the academic jury:.....

Assoc. Prof. Elena Karashtranova, PhD