

OPINION

by Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, DSc

on the Dissertation of

Polyxeni Bougioukli

full-time PhD student of the Department of Preschool and Media Pedagogy,

Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts –

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,

PhD programme “Preschool Pedagogy – Intercultural Education”

(with tuition in English language)

Professional field: 1.2. Pedagogy,

for acquisition of educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

Title of Dissertation:

**“LEARNING SPACE AS A FACTOR OF CHILDREN’S INTERACTION
AND COMMUNICATION IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS”**

Scientific supervisor:

Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva, PhD

The dissertation authored by Polyxeni Bougioukli represents a work of scientific research comprising of 242 pages, which include 24 pages of bibliography and 22 pages of appendices. The text includes a balanced and justified number of tables and graphs that have been correctly described following the work’s contents. The bibliography includes 450 English language titles.

Formally, the dissertation consists of two main parts – theory and research. The theoretical part is divided into three chapters: I. Preschool Education, II. Intercultural Education, and III. Communication and Interaction. The research part is also divided into three chapters: IV. Methodology, V. Data Analysis, and VI. Conclusions and Contributions. Although traditionally it is not accepted to have the conclusion as a separate chapter, this decision fits the context of the proposed structure due to the balance that is created between the two almost symmetrical parts of the dissertation.

The presented research sets as its primary aim “to study and establish the connection between ... learning space and the development of two main parameters, which are *interaction* and *communication* in preschool education between children from different countries”.

The theoretical part is comparably well-developed and finds its projection in the hypotheses. There is a clearly-defined first hypothesis of the research – “a well-organized space for learning in preschool education will ensure more positive results in the intercultural interaction and communication of children”.

Even though the second hypothesis – namely, that “teachers are aware of the importance of the learning space in education” – may appear somewhat trivial, it nevertheless finds its motivation and confirmation further on in the research results.

The research methods used include a questionnaire, observation (under protocol), and an experiment connected with changes/innovations in the organization of the learning space in aid of intercultural and educational goals.

The research was done with the participation of 47 teachers and 109 pupils, including children from Albania, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and Ukraine.

I accept the list of contributions, which are uniquely organized and outlined by the author.

The writing style of the dissertation, which ensures it can be read easily, makes a very good impression.

As a whole, the abstract follows the dissertation’s structure and presents it relatively accurately, but there are some exceptions (for example, it does not include the introduction, etc.). *Chapter 5* of the abstract requires the addition of a connecting thread that traces the proof of the two hypotheses, as the information in this part is fragmented in places. The same applies – to a smaller extent – to the dissertation as a whole, as there are places where statistical data takes precedence over its actual analysis.

The PhD student has the required publications in the field of research presented in the dissertation.

Note:

In the Bulgarian language translation of the abstract, in some places there are inaccuracies that affect the concepts indicated in the context of the dissertation.

Questions:

- 1) In a few sentences, could you highlight the similarities and differences between the terms *interaction* and *communication* in the context of the dissertation?
- 2) Could you briefly clarify your understanding of a “well-organized learning space” (which forms part of your main hypothesis) specifically in the context of intercultural interaction, providing also some specific examples?

In conclusion: The dissertation under review possesses the qualities of a doctoral dissertation and, taking into account its scientific-research and practical value, I recommend Polyxeni Bougioukli to be awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, stating my positive vote.

The author of the Opinion:

17 December 2024

Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, DSc