

OPINION

FROM

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professor in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy.

Regarding a dissertation
"Comparative study of history textbooks for the first three high school classes
in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia"
for acquisition the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative education)

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1. Brief information about the doctoral student

Svetozar Petrov has a serious theoretical background – a bachelor's program in history at the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo, a master's degree in ancient and medieval history at the same university.

He worked at the Regional Historical Museum in Ruse, as a reporter, teacher at the Vocational School of Tourism and Food Technology "Nikola Dimov" - Pirdop, teacher at SOUEE "St. Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher". He is now a teacher and current alumni of the "Together in Class" Foundation.

From 2019 to 2022 he is a full-time doctoral student at Sofia University "St. Climent Ohridski". His training in full-time doctoral degree provides a good basis for the development of the dissertation.

He speaks English and Russian.

2. Relevance of the topic

The presented work gives reasons for the following assessments:

The topic is up to date and precisely formulated. The choice of the topic deserves to be assessed positively, mostly because of the author's intentions to enter into a very controversial issue. Research, related to history textbooks, is particularly relevant in the Balkan countries. The Balkans are a region full of conflicts. Some of these conflicts date back centuries, even millennia, and are focused on textbooks. Balkan countries have traditionally linked past and present. Based on this connection, political decisions are made, doctrines are drawn, interests are declared.

A huge amount of diverse literary material has been studied, skillfully used by the doctoral student in the research and in its presentation. There are skills for selection and use of literature sources in view of the highlights of the research. The dissertation uses 128

sources of six types – 28 normative documents, 11 curricula and 16 textbooks. Of the presented sources, 17 are in Cyrillic and 45 in Latin. Internet resources include 20 titles.

The subject of the research are the history textbooks for the first three high school classes in Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. In this way, the subject of the research is approached with the necessary conceptual clarity. Many temptations have been overcome, which accompany such research in the direction of excessive expansion of the subject at the expense of the depth of the study.

The main problems are presented at a high theoretical level. Didactic analysis of history textbooks is usually done rarely, and their methodological and pedagogical value is assessed even less often. In this case, however, theoretical knowledge and practical experience are brought together, without an attempt to oppose theory and practice.

Scientific thinking with responsibility for the ideas, theories, concepts and approaches presented in this way is demonstrated. Skills and sobriety in the assessments are shown. The author's abilities to use different research methods are evident – comparative analysis, content analysis, didactic analysis, quantitative data analysis, use of the Anderson and Krathwohl Taxonomy. The research methods are used in a balanced and synchronized way.

Correct, valid and reliable results of independent research and conclusions in accordance with the goals and objectives of the dissertation are presented.

The applied methods in the processing of the data obtained from the different stages of the research ensure the objectivity of the conclusions from the research. The presence of a large number of tables determines the significant number of conclusions in the dissertation. The dissertation research contains 126 tables, distributed as follows – 34 in the first chapter, 90 in the third chapter and 2 in the conclusion.

The dissertation is written in strict scientific language and style, with the correct structure of the text.

The technical design is made according to the mandatory requirements.

3. Content of the dissertation - evaluation characteristics

The proposed work has a theoretical and applied nature.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, used literature. The volume of work is 263 standard pages.

The **Introduction** argues the relevance and significance of the problem. The scientific apparatus of the dissertation research is presented: object, subject, goal, tasks, hypotheses and methods, which are extremely precisely and correctly formulated.

The **First chapter** "Structural models of school education, programs and goals in Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia" compares the structural models in different countries. The main normative documents in each of the countries, the different types of schools, the degrees and the study cycles are considered. Similarities and differences in the structural models of these countries are formulated and the corresponding conclusions are made. The textbook is considered as part of the structural models of school education. Comparisons follow. The curricula in the three countries are thoroughly analyzed – elements, study material and goals.

The **Second chapter** "The textbook as part of education. The history textbook. Methods and criteria for textbook analysis" outlines the role of the textbook as an element in the educational system. The author focuses specifically on history textbooks. Various

methodologies for textbook analysis are presented in depth. Content and didactic analysis is made. The criteria for analysis of textbooks used in the dissertation are indicated.

The **Third chapter** is the largest in volume. It presents a serious and in-depth analysis of the textbooks on the criteria – didactic elements, questions and tasks for the lessons for new knowledge, thematic review. The textbooks that are analyzed are listed at the beginning.

The **Conclusion** analyzes the main inferences of the dissertation. The final conclusions for the curricula in the three countries by classes are presented, as well as the final conclusions for the textbooks under criteria 1, 2 and 3.

4. Contributions of the dissertation work

I fully accept the contributions formulated in this way by the doctoral student. Svetozar Petrov's research is of a contributing nature. The **reasons** for this are the following.

In the theoretical aspect

An own methodology has been developed for comparative research of curricula and textbooks. The methodology includes the use of the Anderson and Krathwohl Taxonomy. The dissertation demonstrates that such a methodology is suitable for comparative study of textbooks from different countries in different languages.

A comparative analysis of nine history curricula was conducted – three each from Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. The programs are for I, II and III high school classes in the countries. Their structural elements are compared. The complexity of the different types of goals in them is compared – general, specific and educational.

The conclusions provide information where is the Bulgarian historical education in comparison with the historical education in the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia – Bulgaria's neighboring countries. Advantages and areas of improvement in each country are indicated, as well as common positives and negatives.

In the applied aspect

The structural models of school education in Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia are comparatively studied. The mechanisms for publishing textbooks in the three countries are considered separately and comparatively.

The author's set of criteria for comparing textbooks, which is used in the dissertation, is presented.

Apart from the analysis of textbooks in history and civilization, after minimal adaptation, the criteria can also be used for the analysis of textbooks in other humanitarian subjects – geography and economics, man and society and others.

5. Evaluation of the abstract and publications on the topic

The abstract meets the requirements and adequately reflecting the content of the dissertation.

5 author's publications on the topic of the dissertation, published in specialized editions, are presented.

6. Recommendations

There is no proportionality between the individual chapters in the dissertation. The first chapter consists of 79 pages, the second of 25, and the third of 122.

Some of the more important thoughts, assessments and conclusions in the course of the presentation could be given in italics or in bold.

7. Conclusion

I consider that the goal and objectives of the study have been achieved. My evaluation of the dissertation is definitely positive.

The achieved results and the presented arguments give grounds to give my **positive vote** in the Scientific Jury for defense of dissertation on "Comparative study of history textbooks for the first three high school classes in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia" by **Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov** to acquire the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative education).

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Veliko Tarnovo

Author of the opinion:.....S.....
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