

OPINION

from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gencho Vassilev Valchev
about a dissertation on a topic
"OPTIMIZING ENGLISH LEARNING OF STUDENTS WITH MILD MENTAL
RETARDATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE"
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences,
professional field 1.2. Pedagogy,

Doctoral student: Violeta Dimitrova Halacheva
Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Milen Zamfirov

Administrative tags

By order No. RD 38-360/07/08/2022. of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" I have been appointed as a member of a scientific jury in the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" and preparing an opinion for a dissertation work on the topic "Optimization of English language training for students with mild mental retardation in primary school age" on Violeta Dimitrova Halacheva, doctoral student of independent training in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy /Special pedagogy/, with academic supervisor Prof. Milen Zamfirov.

In addition to the dissertation work, 3 publications on the subject of the dissertation research, an Abstract, a report on the implementation of the scientometric indicators, a curriculum vitae, and administrative documents on the procedure are attached.

The set of materials presented for evaluation and drafting of an opinion is in a format and with content corresponding to the RSASR and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Actuality and dissertationability of the problem

Ensuring optimal conditions for social and educational integration of children with special educational needs (in particular children with a mild degree of mental retardation) is fundamental not only for the children themselves, but also for the entire complex of professional and personal relationships in the sphere of support of personal development. The polyvalence of the needs of children with a mild degree of mental retardation, determined by the specificity and volume of their personal resources, requires complexity of approaches and coordination of strategies for the inclusion and education of this group of children, not only as part of the educational system, but and as part of the resource of society in general. In this sense, the role of adapted and optimized educational resources and technologies for learning a foreign language (in this case English), as part of the special pedagogical toolkit of developing, adapting and integration strategies, is significant. In this context, the topicality of the topic and its dissertability are beyond doubt.

Knowing the problem

The structure and content of the First and Second parts of the dissertation are a demonstration of good awareness and knowledge of the basic and current scientific issues in the two directions on which the concept of the study is built:

- 1) Peculiarities in the development and education of children with a mild degree of mental retardation with an emphasis on the planning of the educational process and approaches to the education of these children;
- 2) The role of the text in forming functional literacy and building communicative competence, with an emphasis on learning difficulties when working with a text in a foreign language in children with a mild degree of mental retardation.

Доброто познаване на образователните подходи и принципи на обучение на децата с лека степен на умствена изостаналост, детерминирани от спецификата на техния образователен ресурс е обвързано с достатъчни компетенции в областта на педагогическия инструментариум за формиране на функционална грамотност и изграждане на комуникативна компетентност, отчитайки обучителните затруднения на децата с лека степен на умствена изостаналост при работа с текст на чужд език.

The approach to selection, systematization and analysis of scientific information shows knowledge of the specific issue, as well as formed skills for working with sources of scientific information.

Parameters of dissertation development

The dissertation has a classical structure and includes an introduction, four main separate parts, a conclusion, a list of the information sources used (148 titles in English, Bulgarian and Russian). The work is supplemented with appendices, which include methodological developments in the structure of the research toolkit (the rich presentation of the research toolkit, corresponding to the age and cognitive characteristics of the contingent, is impressive). The dissertation has a total volume of 180 pages, with the main text being 160 standard pages (this volume includes the Declaration of Originality and Credibility and Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation Work). The information in the dissertation is illustrated with 31 figures and 57 screenshots, which is an additional plus to the merits of the development. Structurally, the dissertation is logically constructed and well balanced.

Research methodology and organization

The research program is presented in Part Three of the dissertation. The work has a clearly formulated objective, disaggregated into nine specific tasks. The purpose and tasks of the research fully correspond to the declared research hypothesis (which is correctly formulated) and determine the emphasis of the research program.

The group of subjects (40 students with a mild degree of mental retardation - 20 fourth-graders each from Sofia and Pazardzhik, differentiated by gender, age and ethnicity) was correctly selected, according to the purpose and tasks of the study. My only concern is in the direction of statistical inference: To what extent, based on the regularities established with this sample size, global conclusions can be made.

The research program has been developed in detail and in terms of construction it is a structure of three stages:

- 1) Finding experiment;
- 2) Educational / formative stage;

3) Final-resultative stage.

The toolkit is developed precisely, the research procedures are described correctly and in detail. The methods for the empirical research are correctly selected and directly correspond to the conceptual framework of the research. They include observation, diagnostic conversation, didactic experiment. For the purpose of the experiment, 23 electronic learning resources were created, which included tasks, electronic diagrams and electronic visualizations.

For the purposes of primary data processing, statistical analysis and statistical inference, a wide range of statistical methods (primarily comparative methods from deductive statistics) was used. The methods were used correctly and appropriately.

The analysis of the research results is presented in the fourth part of the dissertation. The method of statistical analysis was competently applied, which is a prerequisite for correct statistical conclusions. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results was performed. The differentiation of the focus areas of the analysis is in accordance with the goal and the assumed hypothesis. The data in the tables is demonstrated by screen images (screenshots), in which many operational statistics are also presented, which I think is redundant.

Statistical methods are highly accurate and allow for variable data analysis. The data interpretation was performed competently, the generalizations and conclusions made are a serious basis for future work on the problem.

Dissertation Contributions

The contributions of Violeta Halacheva's dissertation work are of a complex nature: 1) contributions to the scientific theory of the problem of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation at primary school age and the strategies and educational technologies related to this process; 2) contributions of a practical-applied nature - application of specific educational methods in the pedagogical process.

I accept the validity of the contributions that the PhD student has formulated. I want to note that in presenting the contributions of the dissertation work, the doctoral student was objective and did not exaggerate the merits of the dissertation.

Publications on the subject of the dissertation

Three publications are presented on the topic of the dissertation work (all three articles are independent developments of the author). The content of the publications is consistent with the problem areas covered in the development. According to this indicator, the regulatory requirements are met.

Assessment of the Autoabstract

The author's abstract is in a format and with content that meet the requirements of the RASRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Its content accurately reflects the presented dissertation work.

Conclusion

My assessment of the submitted dissertation is based on the following markers:

- 1) Compliance with the regulations of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" - *The presented work and publications fully comply with the regulatory requirements.*

- 2) Contributions. - *The scientific results achieved in the dissertation work are significant for special pedagogical theory and practice.*
- 3) Design. – *Content structuring and layout are done precisely and competently.*

Doctoral student Violeta Halacheva possesses the necessary resource of theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Special pedagogy and demonstrates qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research. This gives me reason to propose to the respected scientific jury to give a positive vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Violeta Dimitrova Halacheva in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy.

27.09.2022
Stara Zagora

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gencho Vassilev Valchev