

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Pelagia Mihaylova Terziyska, South-West University "Neofit Rilski" on the topic: "**MODEL OF DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING IN GREEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA**", for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy)

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This opinion was prepared on the basis of order No. RD-38-592/ 24.10.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as the decision of the scientific jury on the procedure.

General presentation of the procedure and the PhD student

Aikaterini Tsalokosta is a full-time doctoral student in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) with training in English at the Department of Special Pedagogy, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The procedure and the presented set of documents is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University.

The obtained education - a bachelor's degree in classical philology, a master's degree in psychology and an interest in dyslexia and managing the behaviour of students at school provoked Aikaterini Tsalokosta to continue her studies in the Doctoral program "Special Pedagogy" and to carry out research on problems of teaching students with dyslexia in secondary schools.

Actuality of the topic

The implementation of differentiated education is an integrated pedagogical philosophy with high efficiency, as it allows teaching and learning to be carried out

according to the individual differences of each student, creating opportunities to achieve his maximum performance in accordance with his own educational, behavioral and emotional profile. The application of differentiated learning is of utmost importance in the learning process in all academic subjects, including language and literature learning. However, mastering language skills is not an easy process for all children and especially for those with dyslexia. Therefore, the dissertation research of Aikaterini Tsalokosta is necessary and significant for pedagogical theory and practice.

Based on researched literature sources and familiarization with the research results of various authors, doctoral student Tsalokosta draws attention to the need to look for opportunities to introduce change in the education of children with dyslexia, since they often do not respond effectively to traditional teaching strategies and techniques, offered by the curricula. She emphasizes the importance of differentiated teaching so that the needs of students with dyslexia are met, they are provided with the opportunity to acquire new skills and the goals of equal and fair learning proposed by the philosophy of inclusive education are achieved. She focuses on the Greek education system and in particular on the teaching of Greek language and literature in secondary schools by applying differentiated teaching strategies and practices, according to a complex pattern of factors related to the characteristics of teachers, students and the school environment. This makes the dissertation research particularly relevant and significant.

Dissertation presentation and content evaluation

The dissertation submitted for review contains a total of 179 pages, of which 153 main text and 10 pages of literature, including titles in Greek and English, as well as online sources. The application - questionnaires is spread over 16 pages. The text includes 36 tables, 7 diagrams and 6 figures.

The dissertation is structured in an introduction, 4 chapters and a conclusion.

In the introduction, the relevance of the chosen topic is justified, and concepts about dyslexia and the role of differentiated education for children with dyslexia are briefly presented.

The literature review on the researched issues is done in the first two chapters. Briefly presented are the views of various authors on the essence of dyslexia, its etiology, classification and clinical characteristics, and diagnosis. Attention is directed to learning styles, interventions in the school and the role of the teacher in this process. Differentiated learning is examined in a historical context, as well as general principles, conditions and sectors of differentiation. Past and present approaches to teaching Greek language and literature are indicated; opinions on strategies and techniques of differentiated instruction in the classroom, as well as on the factors influencing teachers in implementing differentiated instruction for students with dyslexia.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 present the research methodology, the analysis and the summary of the obtained results. The purpose, tasks, 2 hypotheses and methods of the research are correctly specified. In accordance with the formulated goal - to create a Model of differentiated learning of students with dyslexia in secondary school during the study of the subject "Greek language and literature" and to test the relevant hypotheses, 8 research questions and 5 research tasks were formulated.

The research conducted follows a mixed research approach based on methodological triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of the results.

The population for the study consists of all teachers who teach or have taught Greek language and literature to secondary school students. These are the secondary school teachers who belong to the "IIE02 Philology" branch in Greece. A basic condition for the teacher's participation in the study is to teach or have taught children with dyslexia within the state Greek school (secondary level). The sample selected from the population enables the necessary primary data to be collected.

Doctoral student Tsalokosta describes the sample of 109 teachers on which both the quantitative and qualitative research of the present study is based. She also describes in detail the intervention of the student with dyslexia - 28 interventions carried out in 2022.

Statistical analysis of the data was performed using the SPSS statistical program. Descriptive statistical analysis was initially performed. Inductive data analysis or statistical inference was then performed to test the research hypotheses. A thematic analysis was used in relation to the qualitative data arising from the interviews.

The analysis of the results obtained from the conducted research gives grounds to doctoral student Tsalokosta to summarize that the application of differentiated teaching to children with dyslexia, of appropriate and different strategies and practices leads to the improvement of the language and broader skills of the student with dyslexia. Differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom increase the reading ability of these students.

The findings she makes in relation to the limited application of differentiated teaching are:

- lack of knowledge about differentiated learning and the disorder of dyslexia;
- lack of support from both the macro environment (Ministry of Education and diagnostic agencies) and the microenvironment, as a dyslexia-friendly school culture does not appear to have developed.

These findings are important for taking appropriate actions to improve pedagogical practice and suggest necessary changes in the culture of schools, which should become more favourable to students with dyslexia. Recommendations for the practice have been formulated, and activities for its improvement have been specified.

The main contributions are correctly formulated - in theoretical and practical aspects.

Estimation of the publications:

The publications are 3 in number and are on the subject of the dissertation work.

Abstract of the dissertation:

The abstract presents the dissertation work in a summarized way. The content of the individual chapters is sufficiently informative. The author's summary conclusions, recommendations and contributions are highlighted.

Recommendations and Notes to the Dissertation:

- In the theoretical part, when presenting the concepts of different authors, the point of view of the doctoral student is missing.

A question:

What can help create a school culture conducive to students with dyslexia?

CONCLUSION:

The presented dissertation work, developed by doctoral student Aikaterini Tsalokosta, meets the requirements that are put forward to developments for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

On the basis of the outlined merits of the work, the demonstrated skill for scientific research and the contributions of the author, I give a positive assessment and propose to the honorable Scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Aikaterini Tsalokosta in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences , professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Special Pedagogy".

Opinion author:

28/12/2023

Prof. Dr. Pelagia Terziyska

