

R E V I E W

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Professional direction 3.5. Public communications and information sciences

Subject: dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree
"doctor" in Professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy)

Author of the dissertation: **Katya Dimitrova Stoyanova**

Dissertation topic: MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING IN 5-7
YEAR OLD CHILDREN

Academic supervisor: Prof. Danail Danov

Katya Dimitrova Stoyanova is an extramural doctoral student in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy; Doctoral Program Media Literacy). Her academic education is directly related to the topic of the scientific work. She holds a master's degree in journalism from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" (2000), where in 1994 she completed the qualification courses for assistant director in television.

The research work of the doctoral student Katya Stoyanova is developed in accordance with the requirements for structural and content outlining of the text and possesses the qualities of a scientific work "dissertation". An innovative and topical theme related to the set goal is presented - to establish the interdependence between critical thinking skills and the level of media literacy, and based on this - to develop a model for the development of critical media literacy in the context of media education for 5-7-year-old children. The object of the research is precisely formulated - the process of forming media literacy in minors. By successfully applying established research methods, extensive empirical material has been analyzed in order to substantiate the subject of the dissertation research - critical thinking through media literacy in the context of preschool media education.

The relevance of the work is supported by the fact that it was developed in tune with the many challenges facing the modern education system. Particularly valuable in the work is that the doctoral student recognizes critical media literacy as an important factor, tool and environment for preparing children for real life.

The general text of the dissertation is spread over 172 pages and is structured in an introduction, five chapters (each organized in separate sections), and finishing with conclusions and recommendations, as well as scientific contributions, a bibliography list in Cyrillic and Latin, and 12 appendices.

Straight in the **Introduction**, Katya Stoyanova formulates two of her main contributions. For her, "critical media literacy" is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes for critical reading and competent participation in the various environments of media communication; exercising moderate skepticism about information from and to recipients; asking relevant questions and searching for answer options; an interest in understanding of otherness in its various aspects'. And more: the doctoral student emphasizes "the game as the basis of the interaction with children, which takes place during the implementation of the *Model for the development of critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children*, so that more complex material can be presented to them as a productive and fun activity and to be accepted by them with willingness and interest' (p. 8).

The five sections of the seminal **Chapter One: MEDIA LITERACY IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION** focus on the essence of media literacy within preschool education. Critical media literacy is projected through the competence and multimodal approach, as well as in the context of educational directions in preschool education. The research questions posed are related in a comparative plan to the use of devices, activities, children's skills, their perceptions, through mediation and the effectiveness of the educational programs offered in the context of the functioning of the media industry. With

particular attention to the analysis of the digital literacy of the growing media audience, the author approaches, emphasizing the need for preschool education to provide a learning environment that guarantees the overall development of the child's personality, so that he/she acquires competencies that will support his/her transition to school education.

CRITICAL THINKING AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN is the focus of the four sections in the essential of the dissertation **Chapter Two**. It thoroughly analyzes concepts of critical thinking and its manifestation in 5-7 year old children. In the context of the taxonomy of educational goals developed by Benjamin Bloom's research team, the content levels of the three fields are considered as an important component of critical media literacy: cognitive (knowledge-based); affective (relationship-based) and psychomotor (skill-based). The author deepens her reflections on the skill of asking questions, which implies analysis, synthesis and evaluation, encourages the development of critical thinking and engages children to justify their answers, thus improving their ability to verbally express their feelings and thoughts. This is how the definition of the concept of "critical media literacy" in the Bulgarian context is detailed.

The approach to the formulation of the goal of **Chapter Three: RESEARCH OF CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN 5-7-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN** is contributory - "to establish the interdependence between critical thinking skills and the level of media literacy, on the basis of which a developmental model can be processed through critical media literacy in the context of media education for 5–7-year-old children" (p. 60). The text of this chapter is developed following the clearly defined object of the research - the process of formation of critical media literacy in these children and focusing on the subject of scientific research - critical thinking through media literacy in the context of media education for them. The main hypothesis is clearly formulated: "The application of the Model developed by the author for the development of

critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children in preschool education creates appropriate attitudes, relations, knowledge and skills necessary for the development of critical media literacy in children ” (p. 60). This main hypothesis is complemented by four sub-hypotheses that help outline the tasks, research methods, stages and selection of participants to prove them. The text is enriched with precisely crafted figures supporting the conceptual framework.

After careful research and in-depth analysis, Katya Stoyanova logically reaches to **Chapter Four: A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN**. In the five sections the conceptual and technological framework of the author's Model for the development of critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children is presented, which was applied in the experimental group. It is visualized by corresponding figures in three sub-models: using thinking language; story-based approaches and dialogue and questioning techniques. The purpose of the model envisages the application of a tool for the development of critical media literacy based on pedagogical situations, including multimodal tasks, games and activities based on children's stories. To achieve the goal, the doctoral student presents approaches and methods for the development of media literacy and critical thinking, as well as tools for evaluating the achieved results. A project for an author's test-training battery as an educational method and diagnostic tool for critical media literacy is proposed. And more: a preliminary study of fragments of the model, which were implemented with teachers and their preschool groups (in a practical-applied plan), as well as in a theoretical aspect - by students, is presented and analyzed on a relevant scale.

Finally, in the three sections of **Chapter Five: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS**, the collected data are tracked statistically. The test-training battery, the surveys and the situation rating scale are analyzed for their reliability. All three stages of the undertaken research are thoroughly analyzed: the pilot study of elements of the model with teachers and

students; the quasi-experiment with the application of the model with 5–7-year-old children and the survey of teachers and parents. The results support the formulated sub-hypotheses.

In the **Conclusion**, the author states that, based on the experiment, if one works purposefully in terms of the development of critical media literacy, better educational results can be achieved, but in order for them to be sustainable, a specific program is needed and applied in all preschool groups. Concluding her work, Katya Stoyanova expertly offers carefully substantiated conclusions and valuable recommendations for the development of critical media literacy among adolescents.

The bibliography presents the directions and overall scientific interests of the candidate. She refers to a number of national and European normative documents, studies and publications, in which the skills that enable users, including adolescents, to use media effectively and safely and acquire the skills to critically thinking.

The scientific and scientific-applied contributions are formulated concisely at three levels: theoretical, research and practical. Three scientific publications are indicated on the subject of the dissertation.

The twelve appendices demonstrate at a glance the scientific instrumentation in the research undertaken.

The resume correctly reflects the content of the dissertation.

My questions for the PhD student are two:

1. How does she specifically perceive the implementation of the formulated recommendations?

2. How does she assess the challenges of artificial intelligence in the formation of critical media literacy among adolescents?

Having in mind the detailed development of the researched topical issues and the merits of the proposed dissertation work, the serious scientific and scientific-applied contributions to the educational sphere, the media sector and

the public, the importance of the conducted empirical studies and the conclusions drawn, as well as the publications on the subject of the dissertation, I highly appreciate the work done by the doctoral student under the expert mentorship of her supervisor - a long-time researcher of the parameters of media literacy among adolescents.

In conclusion, I recommend the respected members of the scientific jury to accept the dissertation **MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING IN 5-7-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN** and to award Katya Dimitrova Stoyanova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Media pedagogy).

12. 01. 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Raycheva", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Prof. Dr. Lilia Raycheva Todorova-Kolarova