

## OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Dobrinka Stancheva Peycheva, d.n

for Katja Dimitrova Stoyanova's dissertation on:

"Media literacy and critical thinking in 5-7-year-old children"

for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor in the professional field of Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy) in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Arts, Department of Preschool and Media Pedagogy, SU "Kl. Ohridski"

This opinion was written and presented based on Order No. RD-38-666/19.12.2023 of the Rector of SU "Cl. Ohridski" Prof. Dr. Georgi Valchev, for approval of the composition of the Scientific Jury

*1. Applicant data.* Ph.D. student Katja Dimitrova Stoyanova graduated from FJMK with a master's degree in journalism. He has been a full-time Ph.D. student in the Department of "Preschool and Media Pedagogy" since 2020. He has 4 publications on the subject of his dissertation work and 8 participations in research projects

### *2. General characteristics of the dissertation work*

The concepts of media literacy and critical thinking are particularly closely related because the effects of high media literacy are mostly associated with critical thinking, or in other words with the presence of high skills for making sense of what is seen, heard, and read, since the spreading misinformation and outright lies in the public space are already spreading at the highest levels in many countries, including ours. Populism in the face of unrealistic assessments and false findings - also. They manifest themselves in representations of representatives from the highest to the lowest levels in the media. That is why the emphasis and theme of critical media literacy are extremely relevant in our time. The application of techniques and approaches for critical media literacy from the preschool period, in this sense, is, in turn, a critically important moment for adolescents.

The relevance and significance of the dissertation are therefore more than obvious.

The introduction and definition of the concept of "critical media literacy" introduced by the doctoral student in the Bulgarian scientific literature in this sense is of critical importance for the period in which we live, but also for the search and finding of approaches and practices for its application. In fact, in the concept of "media literacy "" critical thinking" is always brought out as the most important element in his identification framework. Therefore, the combination raises neither questions nor the need for arguments. I fully accept the author's definition of "critical-media literacy" as 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 us; asking relevant questions and searching for answer options; an interest in understanding otherness in its various aspects.'

The purpose of the dissertation, as stated in the dissertation, namely "to establish the interdependence between critical thinking skills and the level of media literacy, based on which to develop a model for the development of critical media literacy in the context of media education for 5-7-year-old children" is extremely relevant to attempts to conceptualize the introduced concept and to the scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation

Both the object and the subject of the dissertation work are consistent with the topic and purpose of the dissertation work and with its pursuits.

The dissertation includes all other required elements structurally: it is organized into five chapters, introduction, conclusion, and appendices.

Chapter One provides an in-depth review of media literacy in the context of preschool education and its place in competency-based and multimodal approaches, including the trajectory of educational streams in preschool education. Extremely relevantly, in chapter two, the concepts of critical thinking and its manifestation in 5-7-year-old children in the context of Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy, and the different questioning skills, define the concept of "critical media literacy", linking it to research carried out abroad - in the case of Great Britain, where this issue has been raised for years at the necessary height. In chapter three, Katia Stoianova move to the applied side of the search for critical thinking in the dissertation work, where, in addition to goals and tasks, the selected criteria for the measurement of critical media literacy, the methods used, the stages and the selected respondents Based on a very good conceptual framework, in the fourth chapter, the parameters of the author's Model for the development of critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children, created by the Ph.D. student, applied in the experimental

group, it is applied and relevant, as the author calls it a procedural "test-training battery" according to Bizkov & Kraevski, 1999) in the development of critical media literacy; Here is a valuable analysis of the attached written surveys examining the competencies of teachers and parents in the area of media literacy; Here it is positioned according to a relevant scale and 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.

Chapter five presents a valuable analysis of the data obtained, of the test-training battery, of the surveys, of the scales for assessing the levels of media literacy and critical thinking; by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and the reliability of the test-training battery was calculated.

### *3. General characteristics of the achieved results*

Based on the overall dissertation work and the analysis of the obtained data, it was revealed that media literacy with a critical orientation is a guarantee for increasing the possibility of creating "healthy" habits in children when interacting with media products and social networks. It is also argued that in the process of building critical media literacy, an understanding of interest-based learning is provided by interweaving various components such as game forms to contribute to relevant pedagogical interaction in preschool age. The resulting recommendations for practice in this direction and for the use of fairy tales for the development of critical media literacy, which limit possible conflicts with the child's family or community values, facilitate the construction of media literacy, since they, in their various forms, are the only relevant ones for now media literacy tools, being specially designed for them.

Critical media literacy has been found to create positive habits in children for safe media use, interacting with them in a controlled environment, and importantly, it provides opportunities for children to learn to communicate in different media environments and provides opportunities for more successful creative expression.

A particularly valuable result for the doctoral student is the master and work with the SPSS program, which allows her to validate the model she created, reveal statistically significant results and differences, prove essential dimensions, and ensure the reliability of the results - things that even not a few teachers have not mastered.

### *4. Contributions*

I agree with the presented contributions of the dissertation student especially with the first two:

Defining the concept of "critical media literacy" I define it as a contribution not only in the context of the theory of media pedagogy in Bulgaria, to which it is addressed, but also in the other professional areas of studying media literacy.

The developed, tested, and validated Model for the development of critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children is also a particularly important contribution of the Ph.D. student, achieved in the development of the dissertation

The proof of the relationship between media literacy and critical thinking in different sections - among teachers, among parents, etc. was done at a high professional level and deserves an extremely high assessment of the achievements in the dissertation work

As an additional contribution, I offer the very conceptualization of the concept of critical thinking, which is done extremely professionally and as comprehensively as possible.

Although the dissertation is aimed at a certain age group and its success is referenced to it, it can successfully be extrapolated as successful in principle.

The high efficiency of the dissertation work can also be judged by the successful collaboration between the supervisor (in this case Prof. Dr. Danail Danov, d.n.) and the doctoral student.

*5. The recommendation* I have is related to the future publication of the dissertation I am recommending. It is - to supplement it with existing but unmentioned literary sources, and above all to supplement it with those that are in the Bulgarian language and thus further contribute to its evaluation as a valuable work that goes beyond the studied group.

In conclusion, bearing in mind everything positive that I have said, including the relevant publication activity of the PhD student Katja Dimitrova Stoyanova, I declare that I will vote **Yes** for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Professional Direction 1.2 Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy)

Wrote the opinion:

Prof. Dr. Dobrina Peycheva, D.Sc.

Sofia

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