

OPINION

on the Dissertation of

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Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts – Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,

Professional field: 1.2. Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy),

for acquisition of educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

Title of Dissertation:

**“MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING
IN 5-7-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN”**

Scientific supervisor:

Prof. Danail Danov, PhD

The dissertation authored by Assist. Katya Stoyanova represents **a valuable work of scientific research with a high degree of practical applicability**, which is formally comprised of an introduction, five chapters, conclusions, recommendations, contributions, bibliography, and 12 appendices. The dissertation extends over 171 pages, which includes 10 pages of bibliography and 32 pages of appendices. The text is supported by use of a balanced number of appropriate tables, graphs and other figures. The bibliography includes 136 titles, approximately half of which are in English.

The research presented sets the aim of establishing the interdependency between the skills for critical thinking and the level of media literacy, based on which to create a model for development of critical media literacy in the context of media education for 5–7-year-old children.

The first two theoretical chapters gradually uncover the essence of media literacy and critical thinking in the context of preschool education. Media literacy is defined on the basis of adequately-selected and discussed contemporary viewpoints - Buckingham (2007); Cortoni, LoPresti, & Cervelli; Katherine Fry; Baran; Potter; Silverblatt et al.; Celot & Tornero (2009); Mihaylova (2011; 2016); Aufderheide (1993); Potter (2004); Hobbs (2021); Martens (2010); Livingstone (2004); Schaefer (2005); Considine, Horton, & Moorman; Enochsson; Livingston;

Kuiper, Volman, & Terwel; Covington (2004); Danov (2023) etc. Critical thinking is presented in the context of the viewpoints of John Dunn (1910); Vakleva (2021); Levy (2010); Paul & Elder (2021); Klooster (2001); Danov (2020a); Shiraev & Levy (2019); Kostova (2017); Malikakhon (2022) etc.

After an in-depth examination of the essence of media literacy and critical thinking, **Assist. Stoyanova successfully arguments for the necessity of defining the concept of *critical media literacy in the Bulgarian context***, which is defined by the author as “development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for critical reading and competent participation in the various media communication environments; the application of moderate skepticism about information provided by, and to, us; the process of posing relevant questions and seeking options of answers; and the expression of interest in understanding otherness in its various aspects” (p. 8). In a more technological aspect that concerns interactions especially with children of the age under research, there is value in the following author’s claim: “For children, critical media literacy is the emergence of the appropriate question at the appropriate time and the appropriate place...” (p. 54).

There is **balanced and constructive development of the leading hypothesis, connected to proving the effectiveness of the author’s own developed model in four directions**, adequately integrated into the sub-hypotheses:

- The intra-immanent **correlations** in the essence of the author’s newly-established concept of “**critical media literacy**”;
- The role of **media education products** on the critical media literacy;
- The search for the correlation between the degree of **media literacy of preschool pedagogues** and the critical media literacy of the children;
- The search for the correlation between the degree of **media literacy in the family** and the critical media literacy of the children.

With regard to the author’s developed and successfully applied research toolset, it is essential to highlight **the originality and excellent reference to the peculiarities of preschool children in the construction of the author's *test-training battery*** - an indisputable contribution of the dissertation.

Another substantial and significant point is **the author's model for the development of critical media literacy in 5-7-year-old children through the implementation of pedagogical**

situations involving multimodal tasks, games and activities **based on specially selected audio-visualized fairy tales for children by a contemporary Bulgarian author.** Here again, the adequacy of the proposed educational technologies is shown in the direction of the typical characteristics of children of the specific age under research.

I am also in full agreement with all the other **contributions** as defined by Assist. Stoyanova.

The style of writing of the dissertation also makes an excellent impression – while remaining scientific, **the style also manages to have a popular-science tone,** making it easy to understand.

The author has **a series of publications** on the topic developed in the dissertation. The relevant **Abstract** presents the dissertation accurately.

Question: It would be of interest to have your comments on how the term “**moderate skepticism**”, used by you in defining critical-media literacy, could be expanded upon and achieved in practice as an expected result of targeted pedagogical interaction with preschool children?

In conclusion: The dissertation authored by Assist. Katya Stoyanova possesses the qualities of a doctoral dissertation and **represents a contribution to the field of media pedagogy.** Moreover, taking into account the age of the children under research and the author’s demonstrated deep understanding of it, the dissertation manages to **present constructive interconnections between the fields of media pedagogy and preschool pedagogy,** displaying a strong and natural symbiosis.

Acknowledging the high research and practical value of the dissertation under discussion, **I strongly recommend Assist. Katya Dimitrova Stoyanova to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor",** stating my categorical **positive vote.**

The author of the Opinion:

19 January 2024

Prof. Rozalina Engels-Kritidis, PhD