

# **STATEMENT**

**by Assoc. Prof. Anna Konstantinova Trosheva – Assenova, PhD**

on the dissertation on:

## **EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES IN SPORTS FOR MAINSTREAMED STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

For awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1.  
Doctor of Education, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy,  
Doctoral Program "Special Education" (in English)

**Doctoral student: Spyridon Panorgias**

**Scientific supervisor: prof. Tsanka Popzlateva, PhD**

### **1. Compliance of the procedure with the current regulations.**

By order of the Rector of the Sofia University "St. No. RD 38-660 of 15.12.2023, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in the procedure for awarding the PhD degree to Spiridon Petros Panorgias, full-time PhD student in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) with training in English. At the first meeting of the scientific jury, held on 05.01.2024, on the basis of Art. 12 of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I have been appointed to draw up an opinion.

The dissertation has successfully passed an anti-plagiarism check and has been discussed at a meeting of the Department of Special Pedagogy in compliance with the legal requirements for opening a public defense procedure.

Doctoral candidate Panorgias has submitted the documents necessary for the defence of his dissertation according to the requirements of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Doctoral Students and the Regulations for its Application and according to the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. I will study at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski.

I have no found procedural violations.

### **2. General biographical presentation of the candidate**

According to the curriculum vitae submitted, Spiridon Panorgias studied at a sports school and a nursing university. He has completed two Master's programs in Thessaloniki, Greece - one is a Master in Management and Organization of Educational Units at the International Hellenic University and a Master in Physical Activity for Specific Populations at Aristotle, Democritus, Thessaly University.

He has specialized in Sign Language, Braille in Greek, TEACCH program, Special Education and Adult Educator.

His professional career is related to the chosen topic of this dissertation, namely working as a sports instructor since 1999 and as a special educator in a special school in Greece since 2002.

Since 1999 he has a total of 15 publications from scientific conferences on the topics of sport and physical activity in individuals with problems.

### **3. Relevance of the dissertation problems.**

Students with special educational needs have various primary or secondary disorders in gross and fine motor skills that require stimulation in their development. The effect of sports activities on general psycho-physical state, thinking activities, development of personality qualities and teamwork is known. This makes the topic particularly topical and with a focus on inclusive education. Pedagogical developments on the topic of sport activity of students with SEN in inclusive settings are rare, which underlines the importance of this thesis.

### **4. Structure and content of the dissertation.**

Spiridon Panorgias' dissertation consists of 196 pages, contributions and appendices. It follows a classical structure of 4 chapters, of which the first two are the theoretical analysis, the third is the research methodology and the fourth is the results. This is followed by the Discussion paragraphs, including the Conclusions, and a Bibliography of 189 sources in English.

Chapter One is entitled "Sport and Physical Education of Students with SEN". It presents the categories and characteristics of different students with special needs, pedagogical strategies for their physical education, and historical perspectives. The Salamanca Declaration and the UN Convention are presented in separate paragraphs with their relevance that can be included in the paragraph presenting the historical development of the issue.

The second chapter is on "Sport and Physical Education for Students with SEN in Greece" and presents the normative framework for this education in Greece against the background of global trends and historically, the advantages of inclusive education, as well as strategies for its implementation. The Greek normative documents are presented in detail. Significant space is devoted to physical education curricula in Greece, as well as to European Union practices and policies on the subject. Different strategies in physical education that support the inclusion of students with SEN are very well presented.

The methodology of the study is correctly described by describing the research questions, statistical hypotheses, purpose of the study, contingent, instrument and procedure of the study. The aim, research questions and hypotheses are formulated precisely, but the research objectives are missing.

A research study was conducted using an original questionnaire distributed on the Internet among 100 physical education teachers with experience in inclusion of students with SEN, and the results were quantitatively processed using SPSS v.25 and Microsoft Excel.

The results are illustrated in 39 graphs and 54 tables, which not only present the responses of the participants, but also look for correlations between different variables.

A qualitative assessment of the results is made in the Discussion section, without comparison with other similar research, as is the expectation for a section with this title.

Most of the conclusions formulated in the conclusion are directly related to the results of the theoretical and experimental study. In my opinion, conclusions 1 and 2 are more general and not supported by experimental evidence. The conclusions drawn provide a basis for improving the training and development of PE staff for students with SEN in inclusive settings.

### **5. Scientific-theoretical and practical-applied contributions.**

The formulated contributions to theory and practice have the sound of generalizations rather than contributions of the scientific dissertation itself. Theoretical contributions could be formulated, highlighting the summarization of documentary, experimental and methodological data on the topic under consideration, as well as stating the current state of preparation and attitudes of physical education and sport teachers for working with students with SEN in an inclusive environment. These data form the basis of the practical and applied contributions of the dissertation, relating to guidelines for improving the preparation of personnel, and hence sport activities for students in inclusive environments.

### **6. Abstract.**

The presented abstract has a length of 67 pages and includes as content the presentation of 3 chapters with theoretical propositions, the presentation of the chapter "Methodology" by describing the participants, the research instrument and procedures, chapter 5 dedicated to the results and chapter 6 of the conclusions. The abstract includes a bibliography of publications on the topic of the thesis, the literature sources used and an appendix with the research instrument, a questionnaire. In terms of structure, the abstract in Bulgarian differs from the dissertation presented in English. In terms of content, important elements such as the research hypotheses and contributions are also missing.

### **7. Publications on the dissertation topic**

The abstract contains a bibliographic reference of three independent publications of the PhD student in conference proceedings. Two of them are from 2020 and the third from 2022. Thematically, all three publications correspond to the dissertation topic.

The requirement for the number and content of publications has been met.

### **8. Personal impressions.** None

### **9. Comments, recommendations and questions.**

My main recommendation relates to the abstract, which should correspond precisely to the structure and content of the thesis.

The theoretical part of the study is rich in content and based on reliable literature sources. My recommendation is for better logical coherence.

There is a sense of poor order in the exposition, as paragraphs 2.1. and then 2.7. present the legal basis of inclusive education and special education in Greece; paragraphs 2.1.2., 2.1.3. and then 2.4. present European policies. A deductive approach could be followed, from the general to the particular.

I recommend that in chapter three the research aim precedes the research questions and hypotheses.

It would be good to refine the conclusions and make the discussion comparative with other studies. It would also be helpful for the practical-applied nature of the findings to make recommendations for practice. In this connection is my question:

What recommendations can you make based on your experimental data to improve the practice of teaching physical education and sport to students with SEN in inclusive education?

## **10. CONCLUSION**

This paper has presented a well-conducted and scientifically sound study of the theoretical framework of physical education and sport education for students with SEN in inclusive settings, as well as an experimental observational study of the current state of personnel, their attitudes, preparation and practice in this education.

The doctoral dissertation submitted for peer review, developed by doctoral student Panorgias, is in line with the requirements for writing such a scientific work.

On the basis of the proven qualities for independent scientific research and the value of the research carried out, I give my positive assessment and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Spyridon Petros Panorgias in the field of higher education. 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy).

4.03.2024

Reviewer:  
Assoc.Prof. Anna Trosheva - Assenova