STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Despina Vasileva,
lecturer at the Faculty of Slavic Philologies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" ("PhD")
by: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences
professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in... (Methodology of Bulgarian language teaching)

Author: Stoika Yordanova Chakarova

Topic: "Developing the Communicative Competence of Students through Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian Language"

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tatiana Angelova

1. PhD, dissertation, abstract and publication data

The dissertation of Stoyka Chakurova is 327 pages long, with 213 pages of main text and 114 pages of appendices. The appendices are directly related to the realization of the objectives set in the dissertation. The bibliography is exhaustive, covering 81 sources in Bulgarian and other languages, including the academic documentation used. The set of materials presented by Stoyka Chakurova is in accordance with the legal framework. The doctoral candidate has attached a dissertation text, an abstract, a list of 5 publications on the topic of the doctoral study, data on participation in a project related to the topic of the dissertation. The abstract comprehensively presents the main achievements of the dissertation and significant parts of the dissertation text. No procedural violations or incompleteness in the preparation of the documents required for the procedure have been identified. The structure of the dissertation text complies with the requirements, consisting of an introduction, four chapters, inference, conclusion, appendix, bibliography and contributions. No unregulated borrowings from foreign sources have been identified and the references used are duly presented in the bibliography.

The development of a methodological system for the development of communicative competence through project-oriented learning is a completely own and contributory point in the dissertation. In the dissertation, the doctoral candidate highlights that the choice of the topic was dictated by her own teaching experience, during which she identified certain deficits in the knowledge and skills of students. The dissertation research starts from practice and moves to theory. Here, the analytical and heuristic skills of the doctoral student are evident, as she provides a serious overview of the students' difficulties, and then constructs a model of work and ways to overcome these difficulties. She places emphasis on developing communicative competence through authentic situations.

In this context, the subject of the methodological research, the research groups and the hypotheses of the research are correctly formulated. The proposed research toolkit fully meets one of the tasks of the dissertation text - to develop and approbate the methodological system for working with project-oriented learning in order to develop students' communicative competence. The chosen methods: theoretical, empirical, statistical - correspond to the set tasks.

2. Scientific contributions

The presented dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, conclusion, appendix, bibliography and contributions. The introduction argues for the relevance of the problem under consideration - the development of communicative competence of students of the first and second high school stage through project-oriented learning. It traces the activities that students perform in the course of working with the project method, presenting this approach as an opportunity (and the thesis proves this) to develop students' skills of communication in a real communicative environment.

In the second chapter of the dissertation "Theoretical formulations and conceptions on the problem of the research" are traced: the notion of communicative competence, outlined are different theoretical views on the nature and components of communicative competence, competence approach, constructivism, all of which are interpreted in view of the main objective of the dissertation - testing the possibilities of project-based learning to increase the communicative competence of students.

The paper presents a cross-section of Bulgarian language teaching over time, summarizing that the mastery of the literary Bulgarian language is most often achieved through the systematic-structural principle of teaching, which in modern conditions has been replaced by the communicative-speech approach. It is the communicative approach that the doctoral student sets as the main direction of her work, because she sees in it the possibility through various speech activities (...) to activate the personal experience of the learners, to master communicative patterns of linguistic and non-linguistic behavior in different situations of communication, to observe different manifestations of written and oral communication as material for reflection and self-reflection on communicative behavior. The expectation is that participants will naturally self-correct their speech products, discover strategies for successful communication. Discussions, case studies, and the project method are mentioned as appropriate approaches in the training.

Significant attention is paid to strategic competence, which is usually insufficiently interpreted for the purposes of Bulgarian language teaching, which is one of the contributions of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate aptly notes that the curriculum recommends the development of strategic competence, but the concept is not presented comprehensively. The possibilities of strategic competence are found in the application of speech and non-speech strategies in overcoming communication difficulties. In view of the group studied, the PhD student also sees the role of strategic competence in making sense of the garment as a sign and from this position proposes an interdisciplinary link between the teaching of Bulgarian language and the students' profiled training, project-oriented learning implies the type of authentic interactions in which the student communicates in real life conditions and situations and can track the effectiveness of his communication, its outcome (e.g. has he / has he not succeeded in convincing someone to support the project or has he succeeded in

An essential point in the dissertation is the comparison between the concepts of "communicative competence" and "literacy". Such a juxtaposition is significant because the term "literacy" is highly frequently used, but often without clear recognition of its meaningful and functional characteristics, or through its conflation with other terms or its inaccurate synonymous substitution. As the doctoral student notes, "the term literacy is often perceived as synonymous with competence" (p. 39). In comparing the concepts and tracing the differences in their scope, the doctoral student concludes that "the concept of core competencies is more general than that of literacy as it covers a wider range of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It has also been put forward as a basic approach in modern education (competence approach) and the formation of competences is accepted as the ultimate goal of education in all subjects. Literacy focuses more on knowledge of language and the ability to use it appropriately, as well as basic skills to acquire and use knowledge and skills from other scientific domains and to solve real-life cases" (p. 41).

A no less underestimated problem is the development of communicative competence with regard to civic competence, which also finds a place in the proposed dissertation. A thorough dissection of the presence of civic competence in the State Education Standards is made. After a skillful analysis, it is aptly noted that their formal presence in the documents is not enough to make their mastery possible. Significant attention should be paid to the development of civic competence in the context of digital communication, which remains neglected in educational practice. The thesis skillfully and without exaggeration or too much admiration specifies those characteristics of project-oriented learning that are applied in the proposed approach. The framework for the development and understanding of digital competence in Europe: DIGCOMP is analytically and measuredly analysed. It borrows from it only what is useful and actually applicable in the teaching of Bulgarian in the two secondary school stages - managing digital communication, selecting appropriate ways and means of communicating in a digital environment, adapting communication methods and strategies to the relevant audience, participating in society through online engagements, seeking opportunities for self-development, working in a team, observing netiquette, creating content through different digital media. Behind all the other concepts and phenomena that have been traced in detail, somehow unnoticed in the dissertation, another significant contribution is inserted, which the dissertation does not even mention as such, but it is - the subtle de-semantization in the interpretation of civic education in educational terms (normative documents and manifestations in practice) in three aspects - as a presence in the State Educational Standard, as contributing to the development of key competences and as a separate subject in the second stage of secondary education.

The importance of observations overcomes the usual divergent and undefining talk about the nature of citizenship education. In presenting these three aspects, the doctoral student reasonably concludes that "project work is an appropriate model of pedagogical interaction in which knowledge and skills acquired in different subjects can be integrated, the student is guided to actively interact with the real and virtual environment, solve problems, critically evaluate information from different sources. Digital civic competence, as a type of civic competence, has an essential relation to the teaching of Bulgarian language, since we are talking about communication in the civic, public and institutional spheres, about working

with different types of texts, about analysing them and critically reflecting on them, about creating texts according to the goals and situation of communication" (p.55).

The third chapter of the dissertation research "Experiential Project-Oriented Learning in Authentic Communication" focuses on the core of the issues at hand, presenting the essence of project-oriented learning. The doctoral student traces in detail the ontology of the method, its content and functional characteristics, the skills developed by students in project-based activities. Project work is increasingly present in Bulgarian language classes, which does not guarantee the understanding of the essence of project activity in an educational context. Therefore, a contributing point of the dissertation is the presentation of project activity as oriented to real life situations. For the doctoral student, project-oriented learning is useful and applicable when it refers to activities that are applicable in real life experiences, remedying students' deficits and encouraging them towards real communicative practice. The characteristics of project-oriented, project-based, and problem-based learning are distinguished in detail, the distinction of which contributes significantly to the construction of methodological options for working through the project method. Despite the hindering factors of the analysis observed in the literature reviewed by the PhD student - terminological ambiguities, synonymous substitutions, multiple typologies, the PhD student manages to analytically systematize the information, but also to go beyond it, creating her own typology and presenting possible methodological models for work.

In the fourth chapter "Content and Functional Features of Experiential Project-Based Learning in Bulgarian Language" the experimental part of the dissertation is presented. The positive aspects of the PhD student's work are the well-planned experimental part, the well-developed analytical skills in analyzing the experimental data. The data was properly collected, the analysis highlighted the reasons for the students' initial negative reaction to teamwork and the subsequent positive change in their attitudes (identified through an attitudinal survey). The results of the entry and exit tests also clearly indicate the effectiveness of the doctoral student's proposed model of working through the project method.

The contributions in the thesis are correctly stated.

3. Conclusion

The scientific activity of Stoyka Yordanova Chakirova is undoubted. After reading the submitted materials and the proposed dissertation text, after analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific and applied contributions contained therein, I give my positive assessment and recommend the Scientific Jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Stoyka Chakurova in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in ... (Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language).

31.01.2024 г.   Assoc. Prof. Dr. Despina Vasileva
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