

REVIEW

of a dissertation for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

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Scientific field: Pedagogical sciences

Professional field: 1.2 Pedagogy (Comparative education)

University: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

Faculty: Faculty of Science, Education and Arts

Department: Social pedagogy and social work

Dissertation title: *"Comparative Study of History Textbooks for the First Three High School Classes in Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia and Serbia"*

Doctoral student: Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov

The review was written on the basis of an Order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - RD 38-208 / 29.04.22

1. Short biography of the doctoral student

Svetozar Petrov has a bachelor's degree in history (2011) and a master's degree (2012) in ancient and medieval history with a specific title of the master's program "General History. European Civilization: Ancient and Medieval Heritage" from VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". In 2019 he was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative Education) at the Faculty of Science, Education and Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Svetozar Petrov's professional realization includes holding various positions related to both the qualification acquired at the university and skills formed through additional training - associate at the Regional History Museum in Ruse, reporter at Utro newspaper, organizer of database processing, teacher of history and civilizations at SOUEE "St. Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher", Ruse and targeted for the "Together in class" foundation. The doctoral student evaluates his work through the Together in Class Foundation as very useful for his personal development.

Svetozar Petrov, both as a student and later as a teacher at "Together in class", makes good use of the opportunities of the European Union's Erasmus + program by participating in its project activities.

The professional biography of the doctoral student, related to his education and qualification, makes him confident in the selection and development of an interesting and controversial topic for dissertation research.

2. Data on doctoral studies

By order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" RD -20-491 from 15.02.2019 Svetozar Petrov is enrolled in the regular form of doctoral studies at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs of the Faculty of Science, Education and Arts.

Admission to public defense and the composition of the scientific jury are fixed by order of the Rector of the University RD 38-208 / 29.04.22.

No violations or deviations were found during the implementation of the procedure for presentation, discussion and launch of the doctoral dissertation.

3.Data on the dissertation and the abstract

Actuality of the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation "Comparative study of history textbooks for the first three high school classes in Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia and Serbia" is dissertable and important for our educational system and for the development of comparative educational research. Svetozar Petrov very specifically defines his reasons for dedicating himself and conducting such a study. His arguments are convincing that "textbook research is one of the fastest growing scientific fields in pedagogy" (p. 4) and that usually the scientific interest is in the content of textbooks rather than in evaluating their didactic and methodological value. Although the scientific focus of the dissertation research is not the content of history textbooks in the three countries, a problem that is extremely relevant and debatable, the choice to make a didactic analysis has serious challenges, overcoming which would lead to formulating objective conclusions. for Bulgarian history textbooks and for the development of science comparative education.

Compositional unity of the dissertation

The presented dissertation is structured according to the scientific standards required for this type of development. It is 263 pages long and contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and literature. 126 tables are included in the text.

The literature used in the dissertation research is presented precisely and is arranged in six categories - normative documents - 21 pieces; curricula – 11; textbooks - 14; Cyrillic sources - 17; Latin sources - 45; Internet resources - 20. The presented bibliography is a proof of information and serious research work.

The detailed conceptual framework of the research described in the introduction is impressive. PhD student Svetozar Petrov has absolute clarity regarding what kind of comparative research he will do, what he wants to do and why he should do it, what are the steps he has to go through and what are the most appropriate methods to achieve the goal. Very convincingly and with various arguments, he defends the possibility and the scientific significance of the comparative research, which he will do, to focus not on its content, but on its didactic value. According to him, it is too one-sided and completely insufficient if the subject of research is only the study material. Assessments are also needed on how it will be absorbed. Or, as the study summarizes very accurately in the study, the question "What?" Is replaced by the question "How?" (P. 12).

In determining the goals and objectives of the dissertation research, the doctoral student chooses the option to formulate a main goal, which should be operationalized in three sub-goals and respectively tasks. In the course of the research Svetozar Petrov strictly adheres to them, which ensures the structure of the research process and allows for monitoring and evaluation of the results obtained by him. For the conduct of the comparative research and the realization of the set sub-goals and tasks, appropriate methods have been selected, whose role and possibilities are specifically and

correctly described and argued. The chosen research methodology corresponds to the modern comparative educational research and enables the dissertation research to achieve authenticity, depth and opportunity to understand the essence of the problem.

The structure of the research is logical and is determined by the formulated research goal.

The first chapter, "Structural models of school education, programs and goals in Bulgaria, the Republic of Northern Macedonia and Serbia" is 79 pages long. It includes 4 logically related paragraphs, which describe, compare and analyze the structures of school education in the three countries, textbooks as part of the structural models, existing curricula and history curricula.

The development of this chapter uses the major education databases maintained by the European Commission (Eurydice) and the International Bureau of Education (World Data on Education), the main normative documents governing school education and history teaching in the first three high school classes. the three countries studied. The logic of the presentation in each paragraph is very clear - an introduction to the paragraph, which emphasizes the main aspects of research in it, a description of the aspect for each country and subsequent qualitative and quantitative comparison with analysis. The research is based on a huge amount of factual information, which in order to be perceived, understood, compared and analyzed needs to be arranged, differentiated and summarized and the doctoral student achieves this by presenting it in 126 author's thematic tables.

I would like to pay special attention to the qualitative analysis of the educational goals in the history curricula. Measuring the complexity of goals by applying the taxonomy of Anderson and Crawthol is a reliable choice, giving many opportunities for research, and PhD student Svetozar Petrov has dealt with the subsequent analysis at a very high level.

In Chapter Two, based on a very good literary awareness, the doctoral student examines the history textbook in the context of the textbook as part of education. Two main highlights of the exhibition could be distinguished. The first is related to the presentation of research on textbook quality standards, the functions and place of the textbook in education. The second emphasis is on describing different methodologies for textbook analysis. The content and didactic analysis of the textbooks are distinguished, indicating the advantages and difficulties in applying the latter. At the end of the second chapter are defined and explained the criteria for evaluation of textbooks, which will be applied by the doctoral student in the didactic analysis of history textbooks in Bulgaria, Serbia and Northern Macedonia. This chapter makes a significant contribution to clarity, certainty and specificity regarding the forthcoming comparison in the last chapter.

The third chapter is the most extensive. In three paragraphs the doctoral student describes the analytical application of the three criteria derived from his analysis of textbooks: 1. Didactic elements; 2. Questions and tasks for the lessons for new knowledge; 3. Thematic review. Three textbooks from each country, selected after a preliminary study, were analyzed. The structure of the exposition for each criterion is the same and includes the following sequence - first the textbooks by countries are considered, then a comparative presentation is made by classes and finally complete conclusions are formulated. In this chapter the doctoral student skillfully uses the tabular format to summarize the quantitative data, which helps to interpret them and formulate convincing conclusions and summaries, arguing both the need for further improvement of Bulgarian history textbooks and good prospects for Bulgarian historical education.

In the conclusion of the dissertation research conclusions are formulated, which once again prove the in-depth understanding and detailed knowledge of the research problem by the doctoral student.

The dissertation paper submitted for review has significant theoretical value. It is a completed theoretical study with achieved results that lead to the implementation of goals and objectives.

The dissertation research is accompanied by a declaration of originality, which confirms that it belongs only to its author.

The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation and meets the requirements.

4. Scientific contributions

The context of achievements substantiated by the author and the separate contributions correspond to the content of the work and objectively reflect the achievements of him as a doctoral student.

The main achievements and contributions of the dissertation research can be summarized as follows:

Theoretical and scientific contributions:

1. An up-to-date comparative study of the structural models of school education in three neighboring Balkan countries - Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

2. Literature related to the study of the functions and place of textbooks in education, and in particular history textbooks, has been researched, bibliographically described and subjected to scientific analysis and commentary.

3. An own methodology based on the Anderson and Crawlol Taxonomy has been developed and its applicability for comparative study of curricula and textbooks has been proven.

4. As a result of well-selected and applied research tools, with clearly defined criteria, for the first time in a comparative perspective, a detailed quantitative and qualitative didactic analysis of current history textbooks in Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

5. On the basis of the comparative study are derived by the achievements and weaknesses in the analyzed history textbooks in the three countries and the respective perspectives for historical education are outlined.

Scientific and applied contributions

1. The well-argued and very detailed design of the whole research, as well as the applied model for ternary comparative research on history textbooks, can be applied by other researchers on similar topics.

2. The knowledge contained in this dissertation, the result of a detailed comparison of history textbooks in the three countries, and the outlined perspectives would support educational policy towards improving history textbooks and more general history education.

3. The compiled 126 author's tables can be used both as a matrix for other research on related topics and for secondary analysis.

5. Publications on the topic and scientometric indicators

The doctoral student presents 5 scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation research. They adequately present individual problems from the dissertation research and are accepted for publication in both specialized pedagogical and historical publications.

The certificate provided by the doctoral student for the implementation of the scientometric indicators in accordance with the minimum national requirements in connection with the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Comparative Education" shows coverage of the necessary indicators.

6. Conclusion

The dissertation presented for discussion and defense is the result of a very well conducted research, the results of which have theoretical and applied significance. The work is well structured, the presentation is consistent and logically consistent and demonstrates the emphasized interest, competence and commitment of the doctoral student to the research issues.

Evaluating positively the dissertation and the contributions of the author, I propose to the esteemed jury to award the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in professional field 1.2 Pedagogy (Comparative Education) of PhD student Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov.

10.06.2022

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Prof. M. Mihova