

## REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Angel Marinov Petrov -

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

### Description of the procedure

By Order No. RD 38-612 of 20.11.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work *"Developing the Communicative Competence of Students through Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian Language"* for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. (Methodology of Bulgarian language teaching). The author of the dissertation is Stoyka Yordanova Chakarova - a PhD student in the part-time form of study at the Department of Methodology at the Faculty of Slavic Philologies of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Tatyana Angelova.

### Biographical data about the PhD student

Stoyka Yordanova Chakarova was born on 09.05.1976 in the town of Gotse Delchev. In the period 1990 -1995 she studied at the Science and mathematics high school "Vasil Levski" in the town of Smolyan, profile Biology with enhanced study of German. In 2000 she received a Master degree in Philosophy and a professional qualification of Teacher of Philosophy at the Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". In the period 2009 - 2011 she studied Master degree in Bulgarian Philology - "Bulgarian Language and Literature Education in Secondary School", and later obtained a professional qualification as a Teacher of Bulgarian Language and Literature in Secondary School at the Faculty of Slavic Philologies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Stoyka Chakarova's entire professional career is related to the field of secondary education. She has taught in the following schools over the years: teacher of Bulgarian language and literature and philosophical cycle at the Vocational high school for textile and leather products, Sofia (2001

- 2013), teacher of Bulgarian language and literature and philosophy cycle at the First Private Mathematical High School (2011 - 2017), teacher of Bulgarian language and literature, philosophy and civic education at Vocational High School of Clothing and Design "Princess Maria Louisa" (2017 - present).

Stoyka Chakarova's scientific interests are in the fields of teaching Bulgarian language and literature, methodology of teaching Bulgarian language, modern approaches and methods of teaching philological disciplines, philosophy, civic education.

### **General characteristics of the dissertation**

The dissertation research on the topic "*Developing the Communicative Competence of Students through Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian Language*" by PhD student Stoyka Yordanova Chakarova is a legitimate proof that a "regular" teacher in a secondary Bulgarian school (Vocational High School of Clothing and Design) possesses high pedagogical qualities, methodical sense, broad awareness, research skills and a strong dose of diligence, which are necessary and obligatory in order to create a scientific work with grounded innovative ideas, having a contributory value. The research draws attention to a familiar to the pedagogical community, but insufficiently explored so far educational problem - *working with the help of project-oriented teaching*, by searching and discovering the heuristic impulses of the method in order to develop and improve the communicative competence of students from the secondary school educational stages. The doctoral student's prolonged in-depth research activity (several academic years), her increased interest in contemporary aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, her ability to work in a team, and (dare I say!) the author's scientific curiosity are important prerequisites for the successful final results - a work of undisputed both scientific-theoretical and practical-applied merits has been produced on an actual problem for the methodology of Bulgarian language teaching. The theoretical conceptualizations in this dissertation provide a reliable basis for reflection in the preparation of students of education and philology specialties, who are preparing to become teachers. The findings of the study can serve as a basis for developing similar training procedures in the work of teachers in different educational institutions.

The dissertation is 213 pages long, contains four chapters, findings, conclusion, contributions, publications on the topic, bibliography and appendices.

*The first chapter* of the text is introductory and contains information about the research design - subject, main hypothesis, aims and objectives, research procedures. What is written at the beginning of the thesis is evidence that qualitative research needs a clear and conceptually "clean" introductory part, which highlights the importance of the problem, but also points out the possible difficulties that would accompany the research. An important condition for future theoretical clarification of aspects of the topic is the delineation in the first chapter of the dividing lines between the concepts of *project-oriented learning*, *project-based learning* and *problem-based learning*. Conceptual "clarity" at the outset becomes a prerequisite for a convincing presentation of the choice of the problem that is the focus of the dissertation, as well as an impetus for the construction of a system of learning activities that make up the methodological project at the end of the text.

In the second chapter - "*Theoretical formulations and conceptions on the problem of the research*" - the doctoral student's abilities to systematize scientific information extracted from the works of Bulgarian and foreign scholars who have published their monographs, studies and articles on issues close to the topic of the dissertation are manifested. It is noteworthy that the traditional for such parts of dissertations referential approach is here skillfully combined with heuristic analysis and justification of own positions on some of the considered aspects of the topic - for example, on the important role of strategic competence (pp. 26-27), on the functional links between language and vocational teaching (p. 30), on the correlation between literacy and competence (p. 39), etc. The text of the second chapter "betrays" the author's deep research interests, it is a testimony to her ability to summarize ideas and conceptions existing in the scientific space and to use them as a reliable basis for justifying her own innovative ideas.

The third chapter of the work "*Experiential Project-Oriented Learning in the Conditions of Authentic Communication*" and the fourth chapter "*Content and Functional Features of Experiential Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian*" are central to the overall study. What is impressive is that the two chapters are formally identified as separate parts of the text. It would be more logical for them to be two components of a common meaning and structural unit of the dissertation, since they are oriented towards justifying and constructing the same methodological construct - a system for developing and improving students' communicative competence through the means of project-oriented learning. The methodological foundations of the project are convincingly justified, and its technological implementation in authentic conditions is carried out at a high professional level.

### **Contributory moments in the dissertation work**

The scientific thesis "*Developing the Communicative Competence of Students through Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian Language*" authored by doctoral student Stoyka Chakarova has a series of undeniable both scientific-theoretical and practical-applied qualities, which give me reason to state that the author has coped with the development of the problems of the dissertation at an extremely high professional level. The grounds for such a finding are too many facts related to the research, among which I will mention only the most significant in my personal judgment:

- after a thorough theoretical analysis, a clear and methodologically justified distinction is made between the differential features of the educational phenomena *project-based learning, project-based learning and problem-based learning*; both the differences and the intersections of the three methods are explored and the research perspective chosen by the author to direct the focus of the work towards *project-oriented learning* is convincingly outlined;
- with the professional skill of a practicing teacher-researcher, the doctoral student proves the importance of project work in secondary school as a leading one among the system of communicative activities in the Bulgarian language classes in the first and second stages of secondary school;
- in many places in the text the author's broad theoretical awareness of the problems of the development is evident; this is particularly evident when considering signs of concepts

important for the dissertation and for contemporary education such as *communicative competence, literacy, constructivism in education, etc.*;

- with the research skills of a professionally trained teacher Stoyka Chakarova reaches scientifically grounded conclusions about the unfairly underestimated in the pedagogical literature role of *strategic competence* (a component of communicative competence) and justifies its methodologically significant reflections in the Bulgarian language educational process; the author's approach is pragmatic - the starting point is always the communicative manifestations of the students, and the effectiveness of the manifestations is defined as a function of teaching practice with tasks in which spontaneous, authentic human expression prevails;
- the text reveals serious interests of the doctoral student in problems of philosophy, semiotics, pedagogy, psychology, the specifics of various professional fields; relations between language and vocational training are justified, relations between language as a semiotic system, fashion as a semiotic system, clothing as a specific semiosis are analyzed; the author's reflections in the outlined direction enrich the theoretical foundations of the dissertation and draw attention to the research paradigm of the work, the focus of which is the socio-pragmatic aspects for the communication carried out by students;
- in many places in the text, the author's personal position is clearly evident, both in terms of attributes of popular concepts used in science, and in interpreting their functions with regard to various scientific and non-scientific purposes; this is clearly evident when discussing issues related to the notions of *literacy and competence*, when comparing the different components of communicative competence, when outlining the three approaches used for the formation of communicative competence - through Bulgarian language teaching, through other subjects, through cross-curricular links;
- all the activities of the methodological project carried out by students and teachers are conceived, planned, implemented and analyzed with precision and by means of modern research techniques and procedures; the data from the analysis indicate unequivocally that the working hypothesis of the research is verified, i.e. the results of the project-oriented learning show higher levels of communicative competence of the students, stronger motivation of the trainees when working on a project, i.e. when learning through action;
- the dissertation is written in a clear and precise Bulgarian literary language and style; the ability to create a scientific text is evident.

The bibliography of the dissertation is rich and is formatted according to the standard required for this genre.

Five publications in scientific journals have been made on the text of the dissertation.

With her texts on the topic of the dissertation the PhD student has participated in three scientific conferences and one scientific project.

The abstract accurately presents the information from the text.

I accept the contributions formulated by the author of the text.

## Recommendation

In several places at the beginning of this dissertation, the synonymous use of the terms *approach* (p. 11) and *method* (p. 12., p. 16, etc.) is noted when defining the nature and functions of the phenomenon of *project-based learning*. It would be good to introduce uniformity in the use of the term *method*, as the author prefers to define *project-based learning*.

## Conclusion

The dissertation work on "*Developing the Communicative Competence of Students through Project-Oriented Learning in Bulgarian Language*" contains scientific and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of this law and the relevant Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The dissertation work shows that the doctoral candidate Stoyka Yordanova Chakarova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Methodology of Bulgarian Language Teaching", demonstrating qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

Because of the above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the research presented by the above reviewed dissertation, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Stoika Yordanova Chakarova in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in ... (Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language).

08.01.2024

Reviewer: .....

(Prof. Dr. Angel Petrov)