

## REVIEW

About the dissertation of **Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov**

Doctoral student at the Department of Social Work, the Faculty of Pedagogy, Sofia University  
“St. Kliment Ohridski”

on the topic

**“Comparative study of history textbooks for the first three high school classes in  
Bulgaria, Republic of Northern Macedonia and Serbia”**

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor of Philosophy” in:

Scientific field: 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative education)

by **Assoc. Prof. Gergana Yordanova Georgieva, PhD**, at St. Cyril and St. Methodius  
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### **Data on doctoral studies, dissertation, author's abstract and publications**

Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov obtained a bachelor degree in history and a master degree in ancient and medieval history (full title “General History. European Civilization: Ancient and Medieval Heritage”) at the St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo. His career development includes experience as a teacher. That is why his doctorate in comparative education is a logical step in his professional development.

The attached documentation shows that there are no violations of the doctoral procedure.

The presented dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion and list of used literature. The text is also accompanied by scientific contributions and a list of scientific publications on the subject. The total volume of the dissertation is 251 pages.

The structure of the text methodically follows the analysis of the educational systems, curricula and textbooks in the selected three Balkan countries.

The **Introduction** presents the relevance of the chosen topic, the subject and object of the research, goals, sub-goals and tasks. The used methodology is described in detail, which creates clarity and structure in the subsequent text of the dissertation. Good knowledge of methods of work guarantees the achievement of the set goals and gives justification and clear direction of the research.

The **First chapter** presents the educational system of Bulgaria, Serbia and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The main educational normative documents of the three countries are presented in a comparative plan. The normative base related to the textbooks is also presented – the mechanisms of publishing and the standards that are followed. The curricula and their specifics in the individual countries are also presented in a comparative plan. I agree with Svetozar Petrov's thesis that it is not always appropriate to compare the Bulgarian educational

system with Western European models. Indeed, comparisons with neighboring countries are more logical and effective due to similar economic, political and social characteristics.

The **Second chapter** presents the history textbook as an element of the educational system. The most common topics in the selected textbooks are revealed. The different methods and approaches for research of textbooks are presented and the three main criteria for their evaluation are formulated. The focus of the research is on the questions and tasks, which provide essential information about the purposes of the textbooks and the level of their complexity.

The **Third chapter** is an emphasis in the dissertation, as it presents the practical part of the research. It examines the nine textbooks that are the focus of the study. Reviews of each of them are made and they are analyzed according to the three defined criteria. Comparisons between textbooks from different countries are made, a large number of detailed tables are made, illustrating the comparisons and summarizing the collected data. The analysis is systematic and organized in tables, which makes the conclusions very clear and visible. I believe that the detailed comparative approach is appropriate and brings forward the similarities and differences in education systems. The used Taxonomy clearly distinguishes the levels of complexity in the skills set in the different textbooks.

The **Abstract** (50 pages) meets the requirements for this type of scientific text. Five publications of Svetozar Petrov fully correspond to the topic of the dissertation and have a contributing character.

From a linguistic point of view, the dissertation is characterized by clear and precise language and relatively good technical layout.

### **Scientific contributions**

Undoubtedly, the detailed and systematic following of the comparative approach and the derivation of the similarities and differences in the models of school education, the curricula and the history textbooks are the basis of the contribution moments of the dissertation.

A comparative analysis of the structural models of school education in Bulgaria, the Republic of Northern Macedonia and Serbia has been performed. In the same detailed way, the structural elements and the different types of goals are presented and compared in nine curricula on the history of the three Balkan countries.

A detailed methodology has been developed – step by step, for content, structural and didactic analysis of history textbooks. The overall study and the achieved results prove that this approach is very productive in terms of assessing the quality of the textbooks. The doctoral student made his own selection of criteria for comparing the textbooks, which makes the analysis in-depth and the comparison extremely clear.

The demonstrated methodology, based on the Anderson and Crathwall Taxonomy, is very suitable for further comparative research not only in the field of history, but also in other humanities. Also, it is possible to apply the analysis to textbooks from different countries and in different languages.

An important point in researching history textbooks published in different countries is to avoid focusing on content analysis, which confronts the different national paradigms underlying the great narrative of history and makes it impossible to find intersections. From a methodological point of view, the analysis of the didactic and structural characteristics of textbooks and units is much more useful.

### **Notes**

Along with the contributions, I would like to make a few remarks on the text, which in no way detract from its quality.

I would not agree with the wording of the hypothesis set by the doctoral student – "Bulgarian textbooks are better than Serbian and Macedonian" (p. 10). First, betting as a hypothesis in the introduction makes it seem presupposed. Second, the statement could be clarified by specifying that Bulgarian textbooks are methodologically more robust, use more modern methods of work, etc., but not to bring forward such definite qualifications.

Secondly, the comparison of textbooks and education programs leads to the formulation of findings that are often repeated in different parts of the dissertation. I would like to have more comprehensive presentation of the picture of history education, with a developed context and author's assessment of the situation. The topic needs a text that deepens and develops details, rather than schematically presented conclusions.

In terms of terminology, I would recommend the doctoral student to replace the use of the word "challenge" with the more appropriate in Bulgarian "complexity" or "difficulty".

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe that the doctoral student has met all the requirements and conditions laid down in the regulations. This gives me reason to propose to the esteemed scientific jury the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" in the field of higher education 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative Education) by Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov.

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