

STATEMENT

for the dissertation on: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HISTORY
TEXTBOOKS FOR THE FIRST THREE GRADES IN BULGARIA,
NORTHERN MACEDONIA AND SERBIA

for the acquisition of the PhD

in the professional field 1.2 Pedagogy (Comparative Education)

Doctoral student: Svetozar Vihrenov Petrov

Scientific supervisor: Prof. DSc. Nikolay Popov

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Marina Georgieva Pironkova, PhD

The dissertation submitted by Svetozar Petrov showcases the successful combination of knowledge from two scientific fields - history and pedagogy. The topic is timely and "challenging" to the pedagogical community as it offers a common toolbox for the analysis and comparison of textbooks in one of the most sensitive areas of school education - history. The study of the didactic value of textbooks in development - for the first three years of high school - allows for greater validity of the results.

The dissertation has a classic layout: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, references. A list of publications on the topic of the dissertation is included, and the scientific contributions are formulated. The volume is 263 pages, the literature is structured by types: normative documents, curricula, textbooks, Cyrillic sources, Latin sources, Internet sources, 128 titles in total.

In the introduction, the choice of the topic is supported with arguments and its relevance is justified, the methodology is also explained. The subject and

object of the study are correctly formulated, since the aim coincides with the topic of the study and should be refined. The division of the objective into sub-objectives and the definition of criteria for their achievement clearly sets the structure of the study. The tasks of the study outline the stages through which the process of researching the scientific documentation, applying the toolbox, comparing and analysing the results and drawing the conclusions and inferences were carried out. The methods are appropriate for the type of research and have been applied in the dissertation accordingly. The instrumentation is detailed, justified, and the author is convincing in his choice and reasoning.

The first chapter is: **STRUCTURAL MODELS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION, PROGRAMMES AND GOALS IN BULGARIA, THE REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN MACEDONIA AND SERBIA.** The paper consistently analyses and compares the education systems in the three countries, outlining similarities and differences in the upper secondary/secondary education, and a school profile. The laws regarding textbooks, their control and approval procedures in the three countries are examined. The curricula in the profiles are presented respectively, and the common elements and differences that affect history education in the three countries are analyzed. Insofar as curricula are not so much the object of content analysis as of didactic analysis, the focus of the study is the analysis of educational objectives in terms of number and formulation as well as in terms of complexity (carried out on the basis of Anderson and Kratwall's taxonomy). In the dissertation, Anderson and Kratwall's taxonomy is presented with its two levels of classification - of knowledge and of cognitive processes.

The second chapter is: **THE TEXTBOOK AS PART OF EDUCATION. THE HISTORY TEXTBOOK. METHODS AND CRITERIA OF TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS.** In it, the author analyzes the scientific publications whose topic is textbooks, their quality and evaluation. History textbooks reflect not only the

level of scholarship but also the political environment and are a tool for identity formation. In presenting the criteria for textbook analysis, the author has chosen extensive citation. Large quotations (e.g. Musteata) are better relegated to an appendix, while a more focused analysis should remain in the text. In 2.5., Petrov specifies the criteria for textbook analysis he applies in his dissertation research. The first criterion includes three types of didactic elements - conventional graphic images, images and additional texts outside the main author's text. The second criterion is the questions and tasks for the new lessons in the textbooks, whose complexity was determined using Anderson and Kratwall's taxonomy. As a third criterion, the most challenging questions in the textbooks on native or general history were adopted.

In the third chapter, which is also the the largest in volume, an ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTBOOKS was carried out. The selected textbooks, three for each country, are analysed in turn according to the three criteria. Each of the textbooks was analysed in relation to the 14 didactic elements of the first criterion, after which the comparison was made. The second criterion, the objectives that are set out in the curricula and textbooks, were analysed using Anderson and Kratwall's taxonomy. Separately, a comparison was made between the objectives set in the curricula and their relation to those in the textbooks. The comparison is made according to year and by country, taking into account the complexity of the content and the corresponding development of cognitive processes from 'remember' and 'understand' to 'analyse', 'evaluate' and 'create'. A comparison is also drawn using the third criterion, which is the most difficult to apply due to the specificity of the curricula in each of the three countries.

The conclusion follows naturally from the research carried out and summarises the conclusions drawn by the author. The partial conclusions that

follow each chapter and after the main sections of the chapters facilitate the structure of the main conclusions as well.

The contributions mentioned by the doctoral student are substantial, they concern not only comparative education but also other fields, such as didactics and methodology. The comparison of history textbooks in terms of their didactic value is a contribution on its own, and in this thesis it is complemented by a study and comparison of their qualities for stimulating cognitive processes in students. The applicability of the proposed toolkit should be approbated in other fields, but this is a task for future research.

I also have the following question: to what extent do the results from the study of history textbooks form a clear picture of the state of history education in the respective countries?

The publications on the dissertation, all by S. Petrov, are 5 in number and have been published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals - 4 and in edited scientific proceedings - 1. The mentioned journals are university presses; S. Petrov also participated in the FNOI conference in 2021 with a paper on the dissertation topic. The publications reflect parts of all three chapters of the dissertation, e.g. 1.1, 1.4.3; 2.4.2; 3.1.

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation in terms of structure and content.

Scientifically, the doctoral thesis meets the minimum national requirements of the ZPASRB - with the required 80 pts. Petrov has 100 points.

In conclusion, on the basis of the high research and practical value of the dissertation "A Comparative Study of History Textbooks for the First Three High School Grades in Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia and Serbia", I confidently give my positive vote and propose to the esteemed scientific board that Svetozar

Vihrenov Petrov be awarded the PhD degree in 1.2. Pedagogy (Comparative Education).

22.06.2022 г.

Assoc. Prof. Marina Pironkova