

STATEMENT

By Prof. Dr. Adrian Georgiev

On the dissertation entitled: "TYPOLOGY OF ACTIVITIES IN MUSIC THERAPY IN CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS" for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the professional field 1.2. Special Pedagogy

PhD student: Vaya Tsoka with scientific supervisor Prof. Emilia Evgenieva

Vaya Tsoka holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Pedagogy from the University of Ioannina, Greece. In 2006 she completed her first Master's degree in England and in 2013 she defended her Master's degree in Pedagogy and Teaching and Integration of Students with Disabilities in Italy.

In terms of professional skills she has completed numerous courses, seminars, internships, all with relevant certificates, which is evident from the submitted CV. It is also evident from the submitted reference on the fulfilment of the scientific metrics and data that there are publications on the topic of the dissertation, with the minimum threshold of points. In this sense, Vaia Harilaos Tzoka fulfils the conditions for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the professional field 1.2. Special Education.

The dissertation is over 140 pages in length, including a bibliography and appendices from the research toolkit.

Chapter One (in my judgment, as the distinct parts are set out with headings rather than sequential numbering) provides a theoretical overview which considers the influence of music on child development, musical hearing, and phonological awareness in reading. I would also note here my first remark - in music practice, and music theory the term is "musical hearing" and not musical audibility as given in the text. I attribute this inaccuracy to the process of translation first from Greek into English, where the term "musical audibility" is introduced, also in my opinion wrongly. It should have been commented "musical hearing", which would correspond to musical audibility, which, regardless of its language, is a concept accepted in music-theoretical literature everywhere.

The next chapter provides a description of the research approach, defines the aims and objectives of the study, and outlines the design and methodology.

In (probably) chapter three, the results of the research are analyzed, and I commend the differentiated approach in defining the different types of research - qualitative and quantitative.

The last part of the dissertation ends with a conclusion that raises controversial questions about the two studies conducted, and the author gives some of his own reflections and guidelines about the central role of music in education, especially for children with special needs. Music therapy emerges as a powerful tool capable of improving various aspects of these children's lives, from communication and socialization to emotional well-being and cognitive development. In the author's words, the findings highlight not only the potential benefits but also the willingness of educators to support the integration of music therapy into the educational process. Here, too, the Bulgarian translation abounds with inaccurate terms - e.g. 'music therapy' rather than music therapy as it is commonly referred to in this country. Again, I stress that this is not a criticism, but a note of some inaccuracies that occur in combined translations from several languages.

I am extremely impressed by the fact that Vaya Tzoka makes recommendations for future research on the subject, e.g. even recommendations to the Greek Government for legislative initiatives and action. In this sense, the analytical approach of the PhD student, locates the difficulties and obstacles for the music therapist :

- In order to increase the understanding of the positive impact of music therapy, various initiatives such as workshops, academic articles and educational programs have been implemented in Greece.
- There is a need to address individual requirements, recognizing that different people have different needs.
- In order to ensure successful implementation, obstacles need to be addressed- such as improving infrastructure and training competent music therapists. The Greek government needs to provide the necessary resources to support these efforts.
- Effective collaboration between government bodies, academic institutions and local communities is essential to foster meaningful discussions and shared knowledge on this issue.
- In addition, formal recognition through legislative bodies, availability of training materials, and advocacy efforts of educators play a key role in this endeavor.

Certainly a correlation could be sought with the situation in Bulgaria, I am convinced that these studies would give an identical result in the Bulgarian educational environment.

I also appreciate the clearly defined needs for a clear awareness of the role and place of music therapy , especially for children with disorders. Vaya Tsoka expresses the opinion that the effectiveness of music as a means of education for children with special needs lies in its rich creative interaction and multisensory experience. Through music, children engage tactile, auditory and visual systems, providing a holistic bodily experience that enhances learning. Nonverbal communication, through the means of musical expression, becomes crucial when expressing emotions or processing words. Moreover, music acts as a powerful motivator, pushing children beyond their comfort zones

and positively influencing behavior and skill development. The difference between music therapy and music education is emphasized, with music therapy focusing on the acquisition of non-musical skills and promoting emotional and personal development. Music therapy, defined as a systematic process of intervention, aims to achieve individualized goals through the use of musical elements that contribute to physical, emotional, mental, social, and cognitive needs. The inclusive nature of music therapy is emphasized, affirming its potential to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities in both educational and community contexts.

Considering all that has been said so far, I give my appreciation for the work of the supervisor Prof. Evgenieva, and I recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award Vaya Tsoka the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy - Special Pedagogy.

12.06.2024



prof.PhD Adrian Georgiev