

OPINION

by Prof. Nataliya Ivanova Vitanova, member of the scientific jury from Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", on a dissertation work for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy), developed by Desislava Ivanova Stoeva on the topic: "Development of social competence in 5-6-year-old children in Montessori and mass kindergartens in Bulgaria", with scientific supervisor Prof. Danail Danov

CANDIDATE DATA

Desislava Ivanova Stoeva is a PhD student at the Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Arts, Department "Preschool and Media Pedagogy". The high level of preparation, including foreign language, was achieved by successively passing through the degrees of the educational system: Escuela Primaria Angelita Morales, Managua, Nicaragua; "Prince Alexander I" humanitarian high school with enhanced study of foreign languages, Plovdiv; Sofia University of National and World Economy; Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; Montessori Center International, London, United Kingdom; Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain.

He purposefully expands his professional ambitions in the field of teaching and research activities. He successfully combines his practical commitments as a university lecturer and participant in various scientific forums and projects.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

A well-organized package of materials is presented for opinion: dissertation (with appendix), abstract, publications. The dissertation has successfully defined parameters: total volume – 243 pages (without the appendix), of which the main content is 225 pages; used literature (176 sources) in Bulgarian, English, Spanish, incl. and electronic resources. The dissertation is structured according to the canons of academic architectonics: introduction, four chapters, conclusion, literature, appendix.

Dissertation work in terms of style and language is precise, it has precise scientific stylistics. The technical execution is correct, the information is supported by visual images (tables and diagrams) mounted in the appropriate places.

DISSERTATION CONTENT PROFILE

The dissertation is located in a complex research field, because the work problem has multidirectional characteristics and corresponds to serious prospects for the search for alternative approaches, methods and techniques leading to a positive change in the learning process in preschool (and school) education, and in particular in the field of early childhood education and care and early childhood development. In this context, the main storylines of the research can be commented on, which also mark the strengths of the dissertation.

First, the topic is relevant and relevant. Moreover, to this day, it causes serious discussions. It takes scientific courage to defend those that raise many questions, that have no clear answers, and that can provoke polar assessments. The fact is that, as one of the prominent reformer educators and as a representative of individual pedagogy, Maria Montessori still has many followers and supporters from all over the world. Today, the Montessori system is one of the most popular and widely used alternative education systems in Europe, the United States and other countries. There are studies worldwide that prove that the system works effectively in both preschool and school settings. There has been interest in it in Bulgaria since the beginning of the 20th century until today. And that's because it puts the individual child, the individual student, at the center of attention. Education must come from the child, be consistent with his aptitudes, rate of development, needs and interests, and aim at the formation of the person. The family, educational institutions, teachers are seen as a means of development and improvement of the individual, who should direct their efforts to create the most favorable environment for the development of his potential strengths and opportunities. These are values and goals that modern education also pursues. In the conditions of various crises that modern society is going through, including an educational crisis, it is necessary to look for new systems for the organization of training and alternative methods, techniques and approaches that will satisfy the needs of children born digital.

Second, the doctoral student knows the work problem in detail, the topic is presented very analytically, current policies, priorities and approaches to increase the quality of education by supporting the development of children from birth to entry into first grade are tracked; the development of social competence in Montessori and mass kindergartens in children of preschool age; the social

competence of 5-6 year old children in mainstream and Montessori kindergartens was investigated.

Third, the research design is distinguished by a rigorous semantic organization: the conceptual framework and methodological parameters of the study are expedient. All components (goal, hypothesis, tasks, object, subject, contingent, stages) are available, precisely formulated, subordinated to the topic, consistent with each other, forming the idea and location of the research procedure. The specificity of the problem necessitated combining the research sample as a symbiosis of children, teachers and parents. It is noteworthy that the methods are well chosen and selected, and the research toolkit is successfully constructed: theoretical analysis, Dortmund screening test for child development DESK 3-6R and Picture test with a task for challenging situations - Challenging situations task (CST 3-6). Statistical processing was performed using the SPSS program.

Fourth, a Model Framework was developed for creating a supportive educational environment for the development of social competence of preschool children. In fact, the model is an open, dynamic matrix that can be supplemented and refined. After adaptation, it can also be successfully used in school education.

Fifth, there is an in-depth knowledge of the Montessori system and the issue of children's social competence as a basis for building the research procedure and the subsequent correct punctual analysis.

Sixth, the analysis was implemented across multiple dementias. The empirical results, which impress with scope and internal coherence, are presented objectively with consideration of contrasts, probabilities, cautions and contradictions in the responses.

What benefits does the conducted research bring:

- for preschool practice - specified target, content-conceptual and procedural components for diagnosing the social competence of 5-6-year-old children; an opportunity to change the approach to children in the processes of education and training is presented;
- for socio-pedagogical practice - offers a form (model framework) adequate to societal needs, which supports the development of children's social competence and builds towards the modernization of education and bringing it closer to the modern interests of "digital natives" (according to Marc Prensky).

DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTIONS

- The research and its results as reliable empirical material largely compensate for deficits on the working topic in educational practice;
- theoretical analysis as a scope combined with the research procedure is a benchmark for systematic scientific research;
- a quality text is presented with the possibility of practical application both in Montessori and in mass kindergartens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In connection with the popularization and dissemination of the results, it is recommended that they be published in the form of an independent monograph.

ABSTRACT AND PUBLICATIONS

The abstract projects the content of the dissertation work and follows its logic, objectively reflects the theoretical, research and practical aspects of the problem. Deposited publications are subordinate to the topic and are a definite contribution to the popularization of the empirical results and conclusions of the study.

NOTES

- The clarification of the concepts used in the dissertation research makes a very good impression. In this way, terminological contradictions that may arise are avoided.
- The object and subject of the overall research are not precisely defined, they need clarification.
- Although research methods are not explicitly stated, they are present in the introduction.
- The established Bulgarian translation of "Casa dei bambini" is Home of the child/Homes of the child, not "house of the children" (this is a literal translation).
- The Bulgarian education system and the Finnish education system are in many contexts incomparable, not least because one operates under conditions of decentralization and the other under conditions of moderate centralization.

- In the conclusion, the conclusions and recommendations are not differentiated, but implemented and interwoven in the text. Recommendations are defined as change, guidelines are also recommendations.
- The text would greatly improve its quality if the parasitic words (however, of course, as if) and word combinations such as "here is the moment" and the like were avoided. The dissertation would win if it was written in only one verb tense - present historical and 1 person, plural.
- Contributions are presented in the abstract.

The notes made aim to support the further intention of Desislava Stoeva's work. They do not reduce the overall high evaluation of the text of the dissertation work.


QUESTIONS

- 1) How do Maria Montessori's views more closely correspond to the digital environment?
- 2) Is it possible in the conditions of the mass kindergarten (which is dominant in the current conditions) in Bulgaria to personalize the training?
- 3) Educational impact or educational interaction? Why if one or the other?

CONCLUSION

The doctoral student fulfills the minimum national requirements for the ONS "doctor". I have no doubt about plagiarism in scientific work and publications. Based on the demonstrated qualities and skills for independent scientific research, proven scientific contributions and original achievements, I give my positive assessment of the conducted research presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and offer to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Desislava Ivanova Stoeva in the Department of Higher Education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy).

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Shumen


Signature:
(Prof. N. Vitanova, DSc)