

OPINION

by prof. Dr Pelagia Mihaylova Terziyska, South-West University "Neofit Rilski" regarding a doctoral thesis on a topic: „**Integration of ICT in Educational Process and the Role of School Management in Primary and Secondary Special Education**”, for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy)

PhD candidate: **Georgios Tegos**

Supervisor: **Prof. Neda Balkanska, PhD**

This opinion was prepared based on order No. RD-38-276/3.06.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as the decision of the scientific jury on the procedure.

General presentation of the procedure and the PhD student

Georgios Tegos is a full-time doctoral student in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) at the "Special Pedagogy" department, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The procedure and the presented documents are following the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University.

Since 2008, Georgios Tegos has a bachelor's degree in IT applied in management and economics. In the period 2012 - 2019, he was a student again and completed a new bachelor's program in business management (Business IT) at the University of Western Macedonia, Greece.

Meanwhile, in the 2014-2015 academic year, as a student at the University of Nicosia, he obtained a Master's degree in "Special Education" and three years later a Master's degree in "Educational Leadership and Management" at the same university.

The education received motivated Georgios Tegos to continue his education in the doctoral program "Special Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and to carry out research on the role of school

leadership in primary and secondary special educational institutions for the integration of information and communication technologies in education.

Actuality of the topic

Integrating ICT in education management is critical as it increases efficiency and improves data-driven decision-making. Improves access to information, facilitates resource allocation and monitoring of student performance. Revealing the role and place of information and communication technologies in special education, the study of the challenges facing the integration of these technologies and the specifics of their application in special schools at the primary and secondary educational levels is a current and important task. Therefore, the dissertation work of Georgios Tegos deserves special attention.

Presentation of work and assessment of content

The dissertation submitted for review includes *195 pages of main text*, 24 pages of literature, 11 pages of appendices and 2 pages of formulated contributions. The dissertation work is structured in an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, references and three appendices. It is illustrated with 66 tables and diagrams presenting the results of the empirical study. There are 242 literary sources in Latin, including those by Greek authors.

The relevance of the chosen topic is argued in the introduction. The need for an in-depth study of the problem of the application of ICT to increase the school performance of students with special educational needs, for various types of barriers preventing the implementation of the integration of the mentioned technologies, is emphasized.

The literature review on the researched issues is done in *the first two chapters*. Research is presented highlighting the positive relationship between principal behaviour, staff engagement, and school performance, as well as various parameters, including teacher quality, program performance, and school climate, affecting school development. It examines the role of teachers and school leadership in promoting school integration by creating attitudes of acceptance of diversity and facilitating learning for all students, including those with disabilities. Various perspectives and resources for improving

learning outcomes for all students within an inclusive classroom, and the role of school leadership in creating a favourable climate for integration through effective communication and joint decision-making by professionals, students and parents are skilfully analyzed. Emphasis is placed on identifying perceptions of benefits and barriers to special and inclusive education.

Research on the use of ICT in education and the integration of people with special educational needs is presented in chapter two, their crucial importance in providing an inclusive and accessible learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all students. It addresses the need for skills and knowledge that teachers must possess to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices, enabling personalized learning experiences for students with special educational needs, improving classroom effectiveness, and better realizing their different learning styles. Perceptions of effective school management strategies are analyzed.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 present the research methodology, the analysis and the summary of the obtained results. The purpose, questions of the research, tasks, hypothesis, contingent and methods of the research - structured questionnaire and experimental activity, as well as descriptive and inductive statistical methods implemented by the statistical program SPSS23.0 - are correctly specified. The experimental activity is aimed at checking how far students with special educational needs who use computers and ICT (Experimental Group) can solve their exercises with fewer errors than those who use the traditional worksheet (Control Group). This practice has been successfully tested before (pilot group).

The participants are 10 students with SEN, fifth-grade students of the "Workshop for Special Vocational Training in Piraeus" and the experimental activity takes place during the computer class. The application 'Kahoot' is used to offer personalized, interactive, and multi-sensory learning, engagement, motivation mechanics, inclusion, instant insight, and instant feedback.

The structured questionnaire (to investigate the level of ICT integration was presented to 244 teachers, principals and vice-principals of primary and secondary Greek

special schools) and the experimental activity were the two tools used to achieve a reliable and valid result.

Based on the analysis of the survey results, PhD student Tegos summarizes that teachers are generally positive towards the use of ICT, but almost half of them show some hesitation. The hesitation is closely related to the lack of training.

Participants who are trained in issues related to the implementation of ICT in teaching practice show less resistance to its integration into their daily teaching than those who are not. The management of the Greek special primary and secondary schools strengthens and greatly supports teachers' efforts to integrate ICT into their teaching practice, encouraging them to participate in activities and competitions in which ICT is used. The lack of the necessary logistics equipment is one of the biggest obstacles to the integration of ICT.

The experimental activity carried out confirms the hypothesis that the school performance of students with SEN is better when computers and ICT are used - they make fewer mistakes than those who work with a traditional worksheet on the same exercises. It is summarized that the integration of ICT in the school reality brings significant benefits for both teachers and students, and it is necessary for the school management to strive and work to remove the integration barriers by providing the necessary hardware equipment and promoting learning opportunities for teachers.

Evaluation of publications:

The publications are 4 in number and are on the subject of the dissertation research.

Abstract

The abstract presents the dissertation work in a summarized way. The content of the individual chapters is sufficiently informative. The author's summary conclusions, recommendations and contributions are highlighted.

Contributions:

I accept the contributions indicated by the doctoral student Georgios Tegos.

A question:

What recommendations can you give to teachers for the successful integration of information and communication technologies in education?

CONCLUSION:

The presented dissertation work, developed by doctoral student Georgios Tegos, meets the requirements that are put forward to developments for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

Based on the outlined merits of the work, the demonstrated skill for scientific research and the contributions of the author, I give a positive assessment and propose to the honourable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Georgios Tegos in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Special Pedagogy".

Member of the Scientific Jury:

25/08/2024

Prof. Dr Pelagia Terziyska