

OPINION

**by Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, Ph.D. ,
Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", Faculty of Pedagogy,
Department of "Pedagogy and Education Management**

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree '**doctor**'
in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences
professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) with training in English,

Author : Catherine Pericles Anagnostu

**Topic: "Attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs
in the general education school "**

Research supervisor : Prof. Dr. Tsvetanka Lukanova Tsenova

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By order No. RD -38-348 / 02.07.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic " Attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education school" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree " doctor" in field of higher education:
1. Pedagogical sciences , professional direction **1.2. Pedagogy** , doctoral program **Special pedagogy** with English language training .

He is the author of the dissertation **Catherine Pericles Anagnostu** – regular form of teaching in English at the department " **Special pedagogy**", with scientific supervisor **Prof. Tsvetanka Lukanova Tsenova, Ph.D** , S U "St. Kliment Ohridski" .

Presented by Catherine Pericles Anagnostu a set of materials on paper is in accordance with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the SU.

Catherine Anagnostu completed his bachelor's degree in 2012 at the faculty by humanities and social sciences at The University of Patras . In 2015 ends postgraduate qualification " Educational technology and development on the human ones resources "

. In 2017, he graduated from University of Nicosia postgraduate qualification " Special pedagogy ". He was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in 2019 in the Department of "Special Pedagogy", Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts. From 2018 to the present, he works as a special education teacher in the Republic of Greece.

2. Relevance of the topic

The research problem on which the doctoral student is working is relevant , both in special pedagogy and in the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education school

The investigated issues are oriented towards the attitudes of teachers and parents in the inclusion of students with special educational needs in school education.

3. Knowing the problem

The PhD student is well aware of issues related to inclusion, training and the attitudes of pedagogical specialists towards students with special educational needs in school education in the Republic of Greece.

In this aspect, 307 literary sources were analyzed , which are correctly used in the theoretical analysis, and the differences in the viewpoints of the authors are also outlined.

4. Research methodology

The chosen research methodology implies the objective achievement of the intended goals and the confirmation or rejection of the six hypotheses.

A structured questionnaire consisting of five parts was developed for the purpose of the study. The first part includes demographic data of the study participants. In the second part it is attached the rock " My Thinking About Inclusion Scale " MTAI – consisting of 28 statements. The third part is the scale used on Likert about barriers. The fourth part and attached the scale of Likert scale for inclusion. In the fifth part of the questionnaire, the respondents assess the readiness of their schools regarding the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

To process the results of the research, the PhD student uses the SPSS statistical package for social sciences .

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The dissertation is developed in a volume of 211 pages of main text with 47 tables and 12 figures. The study is structured in an introduction, five chapters, a bibliography and an appendix.

In *the introduction*, the doctoral student points out the relevance of the subject of inclusion of students with special educational needs in educational institutions. The focus of the study is on the attitudes of pedagogical specialists regarding the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the educational environment of school education and their support in the Republic of Greece.

The *first chapter* presents the historical development of special education and its definition, as well as the Greek legal framework. In paragraph 1.3. the groups of children and students with special educational needs and their characteristic features in development are indicated.

The second chapter titled "The Inclusion" PhD student describes the basic principles of inclusive education, definition and collaborative learning. In paragraph 2.3. the benefits of inclusion are considered - development of social relationships between students with and without special educational needs, tolerance between students in classes and tolerant attitude of parents of children with and without special educational needs, access of children and students to educational institutions,

In *the third chapter* , attitudes towards students with special educational needs are presented. In paragraph 3.1. PhD student points out what is with the social situation of students with special educational needs, the social self-perception of students with special educational needs, the social interaction of students with special educational needs and the inclusive teacher. In paragraph 3.3. scientific results regarding the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education from school education and special education teachers are interpreted. The doctoral student also tries to present the attitudes of parents towards children with special educational needs and their inclusion in school

education, as well as the attitudes of students towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

Chapter *four* presents the research design – the purpose, tasks, hypotheses, methodological framework, participants and research tools.

In *the fifth chapter*, the results of the research are analyzed . The results of statistical processing are presented in tables and illustrated with figures. The results of the study are discussed. At the end of the development, a conclusion, limitation and recommendations to the pedagogical practice were formed.

The contributions of the dissertation research can be reduced to:

- **Contributions to theory:**

- A comprehensive theoretical analysis of children with special educational needs, their inclusion and the attitudes towards inclusive education of school teachers, special education teachers, parents of children with and without special educational needs and students was carried out;

- An attempt was made to investigate the level of knowledge of school teachers about children and students with special educational needs in the Republic of Greece

- **Contributions to practice:**

- MTAI scale can be used in school education in Greece regarding inclusive education;

- An evaluation of the teachers was carried out regarding the groups of special needs and their handling in the process of their training and the support they can receive;

- Teachers need to increase their qualifications regarding inclusive education and the training and support of students with special educational needs.

6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

The publications on the topic of the dissertation work are three from scientific conferences and meet the requirements of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" .

Catherine Pericles Anagnostu was a doctoral student in full-time study with English. She personally carried out the entire dissertation research with the competent assistance of her supervisor. I acknowledge that the text, results obtained and contributions are his own work.

7. Abstract

The abstract contains the main statements in the dissertation work, the results and their analysis. It meets the requirements and presents the consistency and realization of the research objectives and hypotheses.

8. Questions and recommendations to the doctoral student

1. What do you understand by integrated learning, including learning and inclusive education for children and students with special educational needs ?

Recommendations are aimed at:

1. Combining the first and second chapters into one in the dissertation work.
2. A third contribution from the theoretical aspect can be attributed to the practical contributions.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results, which represent a contribution to science and meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The dissertation shows that the Ph.D **Catherine Pericles Anagnostu** possesses theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Special pedagogy, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Given the above, I confidently give my *affirmative o price* for the conducted research and to propose to the scientific jury to award the scientific degree "**doctor**" to **Ekaterini Pericles Anagnosty** in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program Special pedagogy with training in English.

17. 09. 2024

Prepared the opinion :

Prof. Dr.of science Zhana Atanasova Yankova