

## **REVIEW**

**by Assoc. Prof. Anna Konstantinova Trosheva - Assenova**

**on dissertation on:**

**Attitude towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education school**

**for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 1.2. 1.2.1  
Pedagogy, Special Education**

**Doctoral candidate: Aikaterini Anagnostou**

**Scientific advisor: Prof. Tsvetanka Tsenova**

### **1. Conformity of the procedure with the current legislation.**

By order of the Rector of the Sofia University "St. No. RD-38-348/ 02.07.2024, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in the procedure for awarding the PhD degree to Ekaterini Periklis Anagnostou, full-time PhD student in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) with training in English. At the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 10.07.2024, on the basis of Art. 12 of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I have been appointed to compile a review.

The dissertation has successfully passed an anti-plagiarism check and has been discussed at a meeting of the Department of Special Pedagogy in compliance with all legal requirements for opening a public defense procedure.

Doctoral student Anagnostou has submitted the necessary documents in electronic and paper format for the defense of her dissertation, according to the requirements of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Doctoral Students and the Regulations for its Application and according to the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". I will study at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski.

No procedural violations were found.

### **2. General biographical presentation of the candidate**

Ekaterini Anagnostou graduated from the Bachelor's degree programme at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Patras, Department of Psychology. After that, she has postgraduate qualifications in Educational Technology and Human Resource Development from the Faculty of Education of the University of Athens and in Special Education from the University of Nicosia. He is a full-time PhD student with English language training in Special Education at the

Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Sofia University. Prof. Tsvetanka Cenova, PhD.

### 3. Relevance of the dissertation problems.

An essential element and basis for inclusive education are the attitudes of stakeholders towards its implementation and in particular the attitudes of teachers in general education institutions. This makes the topic relevant, also in view of the change of these attitudes under the influence of societal ones and the duration of the inclusion period.

### 4. Structure and content of the dissertation.

Ekaterini Anagnostou's dissertation is 201 pages long and includes an abstract, introduction, theoretical and empirical parts, discussion, conclusions, limitations and recommendations, contributions, references and an appendix with the research instrument.

The theoretical part of the statement is an analysis of the literature and a presentation of definitions and research related to special education and disability, inclusion and its main parameters. The group of special educational needs is presented by describing the main disorders - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech and language disorders, autism spectrum disorders, motor disorders, mental retardation, sensory disorders, students with learning disabilities. All of these groups do not fall within the definition of special educational needs, but represent the major groups of developmental disabilities and disorders. There is no detailed representation of children with hearing impairments and visual impairments, as only those with sensory processing disorders are represented as sensory disorders. The presentation traces the transition from special to inclusive education with a focus on the educational regulations and system of the Hellenic Republic. The distinction between integrated and inclusive education is not clarified, as the author writes in the introduction that she will use the terms interchangeably.

In the last paragraph of the theoretical part, the attitudes of different actors in inclusive education of children with SEN towards it are presented, based on data from research by other scholars. Some trends as well as divergent data in the attitudes of teachers, parents and students are outlined. The studies presented date over a time period from 1991 to 2019 and have been conducted in different countries.

The experimental part of the dissertation presents the methodology of the study, precisely formulating its aims, objectives, hypotheses, contingent and instruments, as well as the research procedure. A questionnaire survey was conducted with a representative sample of 120 Greek teachers with the main purpose of investigating their attitudes towards inclusion of students with SEN, but also about the readiness of teaching staff and schools to implement the philosophy of inclusion. The questionnaire is based on an experimental study by Stoiber et al. in 1998 and the MTAI Scale applied in it, as well as extracted examples of barriers to inclusion and methods that support it, drawn from the same study. The last part of the questionnaire, which collects information according to the type of violation, is modified but borrowed from the same study, and a precise demographic section is added at the beginning.

The data were processed quantitatively using the statistical tools of the SPSS system, without specifying the version of the program.

The quantitative data from the statistical analysis are presented in 47 tables and 12 charts.

In the Discussion paragraph, the author summarizes the obtained data and compares them with similar studies by other authors from Greece and other countries, which show significant differences in the preparation and attitudes of Greek teachers.

Significant limitations of the study are noted, especially the presence of only quantitative research methods and the absence of qualitative ones. Recommendations for practice are formulated, not all of which are based on the research conducted and the parameters included in the questionnaire.

#### 5. Scientific-theoretical and practical-applied contributions.

The contributions of the research are divided into those of theoretical and practical nature. I accept the formulated contributions, except for contribution number 3 of practical nature, which, by the way it is formulated, does not provide information either about the results of the research and their application, or about their contributory nature.

#### 6. Abstract.

The abstract is presented in Bulgarian and English. The English version correctly reflects the content of the dissertation, while in the Bulgarian version there are significant discrepancies in terms of even the number of hypotheses.

#### 7. Publications on the topic of the dissertation (content and fulfillment of the scientific requirements).

The Ph.D. candidate has 3 independent publications in conference proceedings of FNOI, SU, which have undergone a double blind peer review process. In terms of subject matter, the publications reflect the research process and work on the dissertation. The publications meet the scientific metric requirements for the PhD degree.

#### 8. Personal impressions.

I have no personal impressions of the doctoral candidate. The changes made on the recommendation of Assoc. Danka Shchereva and colleagues from the Department of Special Pedagogy during the internal defense and the improvements made to the submitted dissertation in its English version show diligence to meet the requirements and to finalize the process qualitatively.

#### 9. Comments, recommendations and questions.

The doctoral candidate shows skills in conducting a scientific study as well as analyzing the results. The limitations of the study highlighted show criticality and awareness of weaknesses.

My main recommendations are 3:

1. Distinguish the concepts of "integration" and "inclusion" and the processes involved. Teachers' attitudes are evolving and I think it is important to take this evolution into account, to give importance to the period and duration in which inclusive education is implemented in the country analysed as an educational preparation (in this case Greece) in comparison to other countries where similar studies have been conducted.
2. To clarify the term sensory impairment and the results that have been obtained in relation to the study of teachers' attitudes towards this group of impairments to be used with caution. The rationale for this recommendation is the more widely accepted definition of sensory impairments as hearing and vision impairments. In this regard, it is not clear as to exactly which understanding of sensory impairments teachers have given their opinion.
3. To formulate specific conclusions based on the research conducted that will remain as a contribution point of the research.
4. To present an abstract in English adequate to the content of the dissertation.

#### 10. Conclusion.

The presented dissertation of Ekaterini Anagnostu impresses with excellent argumentation of the research methodology and the obtained results. My opinion is that it meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation. My assessment is positive and I support the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) to Ekaterini Anagnostou, but only in case of submission of an adequate abstract in Bulgarian.

18.09.2024

Reviewer

Assoc. Prof. Anna Trosheva-Asenova