

OPINION

by Prof. DSc. Galia Hristozova
regarding the dissertation work on the topic:

"LITERARY TEXTS IN TEACHING BULGARIAN TO MEDICAL STUDENTS"

for the awarding of the scientific degree

"DOCTOR OF SCIENCES"

in the field of higher education

Field of Higher Education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Direction 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching... (Methodology of Teaching Bulgarian Language)

by Teodora Dimitrova Valova

1. Information regarding the PhD candidacy, dissertation, abstract, and publications

As a member of the academic jury appointed by Order RD-38-443/18.07.2024 (the proposal for the academic jury was registered in the SU [Sofia University] register for members of academic juries under No. 106/12.07.2024), I present my opinion on the dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Teodora Dimitrova Valova, PhD.

The presented professional biography reveals that the candidate's entire educational, scientific, and pedagogical career is directly connected to teaching and research activities.

I trust the colleagues from the Department for Information and In-Service Training of Teachers, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for ensuring the academic integrity of the procedure up to this point – including discussions in the "Humanitarian Education" department, initiation of the defense process, and plagiarism check.

Teodora Dimitrova Valova has strictly met the minimum national requirements under Article 2b, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), and accordingly under Article 24, Paragraph 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB (for the educational and scientific degree "*Doctor*"), and Article

40, Paragraph 3 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB (for the scientific degree "*Doctor of Sciences*"). According to the minimum required points under the indicator groups for the Doctor of Sciences degree, it is clear that the publications of Teodora Dimitrova Valova exceed these requirements and are sufficient in both number and subject matter.

- For **Indicator A**, there is a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" – 50 points.
- For **Indicator B**, a dissertation has been developed for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" – 100 points.
- For **Indicator G**, there are 14 articles in non-referred but peer-reviewed publications, 6 of which are co-authored. There is no division protocol with the co-authors – 110 points.
- For **Indicator D**, the citations contribute 120 points.

The total number of points, **380**, exceeds the minimum of **350** required by the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB).

I do not recognize the three listed articles (worth 30 points) related to the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", as the indicator in the Regulations for the Application of the LDAS specifies: "*Published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor' or for the award of the scientific degree 'Doctor of Sciences'*". In contrast, the candidate has listed individual articles. However, this is irrelevant as the required minimum has been met.

The abstract fully meets the requirements for this scientific genre.

The dissertation is 484 pages long and consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices (22). The main text is 418 pages long and illustrated with 85 tables, 75 figures, 27 graphs, and 27 line diagrams. The references used are 223, of which 122 are in Cyrillic, 64 are in Latin, 4 are Internet sources, and 17 are normative documents.

The list of author's publications on the dissertation topic includes 14 (fourteen) articles.

In the introduction, the reasons for the choice of the topic, the aims and objectives, the object and subject, and the hypothesis are very precisely and accurately argued. The outlined

goal is very ambitious: to define, create, scientifically justify, and practically test an experimental pedagogical model facilitating the formation and development of communicative competence for professional communication in medical students, which would be applicable in teaching Bulgarian language to health professionals from other countries (p. 18). However, this aim is misaligned with the title, which is about literary texts and lacks the most important thing - model building. The tasks are precisely differentiated into those of a theoretical-research nature and an experimental-practical nature.

The experimental pedagogical research is implemented in a real learning environment and includes four main stages. It covers a part of Teodora Valova's teaching and research activity. The author's approach is logical and grounded - she consistently, argumentatively, and accurately examines theoretical developments, conducts a survey, differentiates groups, and analyses data.

The main strengths of the dissertation can be distinguished in the following directions:

1. The dissertation works on an unexplored topic, which is difficult, but can be very useful in teaching Bulgarian to large groups of international students studying medicine in Bulgaria.

2. It is the result of several years of work by Teodora Valova and the sequence and development are from the generation of interest in the topic to the final realization through a research model, testing, and practical application.

3. Correct clarification of the basic terms - competence, communicative competence, differentiation of the terms "competence" and "competency", and analysis of the key competencies.

4. In the theoretical first chapter, the theories of communicative competence are very well clarified about the functions of text in foreign language learning, which is a solid basis for forming and proving the hypothesis.

5. The nature of teaching Bulgarian as a second language and specialized language teaching for medical students in Bulgaria is well clarified.

6. Based on the overall theoretical analysis in the first and second chapters, a theoretical model for the formation and development of communicative competence is built.

7. Useful are the examples of work with specific literary texts by Bulgarian authors - Yordan Yovkov, Elin Pelin, Pencho Slaveykov, Yordan Radichkov, Milen Ruskov, Zdravka Evtimova, etc. Especially valuable are the ideas for vocabulary work.

8. The inclusion of Milen Ruskov, Zdravka Evtimova, Georgi Gospodinov, and others is indicative of the fact that the author relies not only on the traditionally established names in Bulgarian literature, but also on contemporary talents. It is useful from the point of view of diversity in vocabulary, syntactic constructions, discourse originality.

9. The survey conducted with 297 foreign students is reliable and valid, at the same time it is important because it tracks the students' self-assessment of the level of language and communicative skills they have reached, their opinion about language learning, problems and difficulties encountered during this learning.

10. Patients' opinion about the communicative competence of foreign medical students was also studied.

11. The results are analyzed in detail across all criteria selected by the author. Analysis of the experimental results from both stages of the study in a comparative context is especially useful.

12. The dissertation is well-structured, logically accurate, and organized. The text is scientific, precise, and supported by detailed tables and diagrams. The results are processed using SPSS.

13. The author has a deep understanding of the challenges in teaching Bulgarian as a second language to foreign students and proposes logical and useful solutions.

Notes:

1. The dissertation is 'broader' than the title, which is not an issue.
2. The useful conclusions of chapter four are much more than the three mentioned.

Questions:

1. On what basis did you select the authors and texts to include in the work with the students?

2. Could this model for developing communicative competence also be applied to foreign students studying Bulgarian in other fields?

Conclusion

The dissertation presented by Teodora Valova, "*Literary texts in teaching Bulgarian to medical students*" is thoroughly researched and approached with personal commitment. The minimum national requirements for the scientific degree "*Doctor of Sciences*" have been met. I have no doubts regarding plagiarism in the research or related publications. Based on the demonstrated qualities and skills for independent scientific research, proven scientific contributions, and original achievements, I give a positive assessment of the research conducted, as presented in the reviewed dissertation, abstract, results, and contributions. I recommend that the esteemed academic jury award the scientific degree "*Doctor of Sciences*" to Teodora Dimitrova Valova in the field of higher education **1. Pedagogical Sciences, 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching (Methodology of Bulgarian Language Teaching).**

Date: 18.09.2024

Prepared by:

(Prof. DSc. Galia Hristozova)