

OPINION

from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gencho Vassilev Valchev

about a dissertation on a topic

**"Attitudes towards nutrition and supplementation of children
with special educational needs"**

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy(Special pedagogy)

Doctoral student: Bianca Ivanova Stankova

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Emilia Hinkova Evgenieva

Compliance of the procedure with the current regulatory framework

By order No. RD 38-619/30.10.2024 of the rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury and the preparation of an opinion on the procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Attitudes towards nutrition and supplementation of children with special educational needs", developed by Bianca Stankova, a full-time doctoral student in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy), with a scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Emilia Hinkova Evgenieva, for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

The set of materials submitted for evaluation and preparation of an opinion is in a format and with content that comply with the ZRASRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In addition to the dissertation work, 4 publications on the topic of the dissertation research, an abstract, a report on the implementation of scientometric indicators, and other materials have been attached.

Relevance of the dissertation work's issues

Providing optimal conditions for social and educational integration of children with special educational needs is fundamental not only for the children with SEN themselves, but also for the entire complex of professional and personal relationships in the education system. The polyvalence of the needs of children with special educational needs, determined by the specificity and volume of their personal resources, sets requirements for the complexity of the approaches and coordination of the strategies for inclusion and adaptation of this group of children, not only as part of the education system, but also as part of the resource of society in general. In this context, the culture of healthy eating and the formation of healthy eating habits are a basic condition for building healthy behavior of children with special educational needs, as a significant part of the overall therapeutic and educational strategy of the inclusive process.

In this context, the relevance of the topic and its dissertatability are beyond doubt (for me).

Knowledge of the issues

Doctoral student Bianca Stankova demonstrates good awareness and knowledge of the basic and current scientific issues already in the First Chapter of the dissertation. Here the three main directions on which the concept of the research is built are structured:

- 1) Peculiarities in the development of children with special educational needs;
- 2) Regulatory framework for healthy nutrition on a national and global scale.

3) Modern strategies for nutrition and the formation of a food culture.

Good knowledge of the European and national regulatory framework and the administrative and organizational parameters of strategies and policies for healthy nutrition is linked to sufficient competencies in the field of innovations in special education and the specifics of the development of children with SEN.

The approach to selecting, systematizing and analyzing scientific information shows knowledge of the specific issue, as well as developed skills for working with sources of scientific information.

Structure and content of the dissertation

The dissertation has a classical structure and is designed in compliance with the regulatory requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. It consists of an introductory part, three main separate parts with the relevant substructural paragraphs, conclusions and recommendations, contributions, conclusion, bibliography and appendices.

The list of literary sources is impressive (181) and includes author's works and normative documents. 25 sources from the Internet are also declared. 2 appendices have been added to the dissertation work, which include part of the research tools. The main text is 174 pages long, illustrated with 2 schemes, 16 tables, 12 figures and 21 graphs. Structurally, the dissertation is logically constructed and well balanced.

The design of the research program is presented in Chapter Two of the dissertation. The subject-object area of the study is clearly defined. The goal of the study is correctly formulated, being disaggregated into 4 sub-goals, according to the specifics of the topic and the subject-object area. The declared 9 research tasks are determined by the set goal and clearly outline the parameters of the study. The goals and tasks are logically argued, correspond to the presented 3 hypotheses and determine the emphases of the research program.

The research program is presented in detail and is constructively developed in a three-step scheme:

- 1) Preparatory (assessment) stage;
- 2) Main (executive) stage.
- 3) Final (concluding) stage.

The group of subjects studied is correctly selected, in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study.

The toolkit is developed in accordance with the main determinants of the research program (purpose, objectives, hypothesis) and corresponds to the declared research methods.

The analysis of the results of the study is presented in Chapter Three. The differentiation of the emphasis areas of the analysis is in accordance with the hypotheses set. The results of the data analysis are presented in tabular form, illustrated by diagrams, which is an additional plus to the merits of the work. Adequate statistical methods were used to process the data.

The interpretation of the data and the generalizations made prove the hypotheses. In the differentiated analysis of the data in the direction of the hypotheses, generalizations with practical value have been drawn. I recommend that the doctoral student pay more attention to the interpretation and discussion of the results obtained from the research procedures.

Contributions of the dissertation work

The contributions of the dissertation work of Bianca Stankova, formulated by the doctoral student, are of a complex nature:

- 1) to scientific theory (3 contributions);

2) contributions of a practical and applied nature (2 contributions).

I accept the validity of the five contributions formulated by the doctoral student.

I would like to note that when formulating the contributions of the dissertation work, the doctoral student Bianca Stankova was objective and did not exaggerate the merits of the dissertation.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation

4 publications on the topic of the dissertation are presented. The content of the publications is in accordance with the problem areas covered in the work. According to this indicator, the regulatory requirements are met.

Evaluation of the Abstract

The abstract is in a format and with content that meets the requirements of the Bulgarian Law on Academic Affairs and the Regulations of the University of Sofia. Its content accurately reflects the presented dissertation work.

Recommendations

I recommend that the doctoral student pay more attention to the style of expression and the accuracy of the formulations (I attribute the shortcomings to the lack of sufficient experience in this genre).

Conclusion

My assessment of the presented dissertation work is based on the following markers:

1. Compliance with the regulations of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the relevant Regulations of the University of Sofia. – The presented work and publications comply with the regulatory requirements.
2. Contributions. - The scientific results achieved in the dissertation work are significant for special pedagogical theory and practice.
3. Design. - The structuring of the content and layout have been carried out in accordance with the requirements for work of this nature.

The doctoral student Bianca Stankova possesses the necessary theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty of Special Pedagogy and demonstrates qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research. This gives me reason to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to give a positive vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) to Bianca Ivanova Stankova.

12.12.2024

Stara Zagora

.....

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gencho Valchev