

OPINION

**from professor DSc Zhana Atanasova Yankova,
University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" Faculty of Education,
Department "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 : Tomai -Maria Georgios Andreopoulou

Topic : "Reading disorders in students with mild mental retardation"

Scientific supervisor : prof. Dr. Neli Tsvetanova Vasileva

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By order No. RD 38-57 of 29.01.2024 of the Rector of the 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 "**Reading disorders in students with mild mental retardation**" 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 **Tomai -Maria Andreopoulou** – regular form of teaching in English at the department "**Special pedagogy**", with supervisor **prof. Dr. Neli Tsvetanova Vasileva** , S. U "St. Kliment Ohridski" .

Presented by Tomai -Maria Andreopoulou a set of materials on paper is in accordance with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the SU.

2. Relevance of the topic

The research problem on which the doctoral student works is relevant both in special pedagogy and in the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in school education.

The problem studied is oriented on reading skills and in particular in terms of decoding, fluency, morphology-syntax and comprehension in students with mild intellectual disabilities compared to students without intellectual disabilities in second-third grade.

3. Knowing the problem

The doctoral student knows very well the issues related to the education of students with intellectual disabilities in the initial stage of school education in the Republic of Greece, regarding their reading skills and specifically decoding, fluency, morphology-syntax and comprehension. The theoretical statements on the researched problem are presented in a comprehensive and multifaceted manner

In this aspect, 180 literary sources have been 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 objectives, the four research questions and the confirmation or rejection of the three hypotheses.

A standardized assessment test was used as a means of collecting data in the conduct of a research study, as well as a standardized "Reading Test - Test A to assess the reading skills of students up to third grade in school education in the Republic of Greece.

To process the obtained results of the study, the doctor uses IBM statistical software package SPSS Statistic , version 20.

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The dissertation is developed in a volume of 152 pages of main text with 18 tables and 20 figures. The study is structured in an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and an appendix.

In *the introduction*, the PhD student points out the relevance of the topic of personal development in the social and educational environment with equal opportunities for self-expression, self-realization and social participation of the intellectually challenged. The focus of the study is aimed at the timely assessment of students with intellectual disabilities with the possibility of providing appropriate support in the educational process.

In *chapter one* literary sources on the causes, diagnosis and classification of intellectual disabilities are interpreted. The factors influencing the language development of the intellectually challenged are also presented, as well as the peculiarities of language functioning at the semantic, syntactic, phonological and pragmatic level of the language. In paragraph 5, the evaluation of the intellectually disabled and the adaptive behavior scale are presented.

In *the second chapter*, the research design is presented - the objectives, hypotheses, research questions, methodological framework, participants and research tools.

In *the third chapter*, the results of the research are analyzed. The results of statistical processing are presented in tables and illustrated with figures.

Chapter *four* discusses the results of the study. At the end of the development, a conclusion was formed with nine conclusions drawn.

Inferred contributions in a theoretical aspect sound more like conclusions from the research than contributions. The contributions of the dissertation research can be reduced to:

- Early assessment of reading difficulties in students with mild intellectual disabilities using a reading skills assessment test.
- Special educators should focus their efforts on the leading difficulties of students with mild intellectual disabilities in reading, focusing on the relationship between decoding skills and comprehension.

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

There are eight publications on the subject of the dissertation work and they meet the requirements of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski". Tomai -Maria Andreopoulou 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 and contributions are her 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. Define the tasks on which the scientific research was carried out?
2. Derive the contributions in a theoretical aspect?

A recommendation is aimed at combining the third and fourth chapters into one in the dissertation work.

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 **Tomai -Maria Andreopoulou** 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 **Tomai -Maria Andreopoulou** in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program Special pedagogy with training in English.

17. 04. 2024

Prepared the opinion :

prof . dpn Zhana Atanasova Yankova