

## DISSERTATION OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Stefanova Petrova, PhD**  
**St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo**

member of a scientific jury, confirmed by order RD-38-213/10.05.2024  
of the Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia

**Subject:** awarding of the educational and scientific degree Ph.D.

**Field of higher education:** 1. Pedagogical sciences

**Professional direction:** 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy – Intercultural education)

**Scientific specialty:** 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)

**University:** St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia

**Faculty:** „Educational Sciences and Arts“

**Department:** „Preschool and media pedagogy“

**Topic:** **INCLUSION OF CHILDREN OF MIGRANT ORIGIN IN GREEK  
KINDERGARTEN THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

**PhD student:** **Vaia Dimitrios Douska**

**Research supervisor:** **Prof. Dr. Rosalina Plamenova Engels – Kritidis**

### **1. DATA ON THE DOCTORAL THESIS, DISSERTATION, AUTHOR REFERENCE AND PUBLICATIONS**

#### **1.1. Data for the Ph.D.**

By Order No. RD 20 – 459 of 16.02.2021 of the Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Vaia Dimitrios Duska is enrolled in full-time doctoral studies, with studies in English, in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program „Preschool pedagogy“ – Intercultural education at the department „Preschool and media pedagogy“ with the topic of the dissertation work „Inclusion of children of migrant origin in Greek kindergartens through physical education and outdoor activities“, with supervisor prof. Rosalina Plamenova Engels – Kritidis.

The doctoral student has fulfilled her obligations according to the individual study plan. The text has also successfully passed the mandatory check for absence of plagiarism in the Strike Plagiarism system of Sofia University.

According to Art. 74, para. 1 of the Law on Higher Education, Art. 24, para. 6 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 63, para. 3 and para. 6 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU „St. Kliment Ohridski“ all administrative procedures have been followed.

#### **1.2. Dissertation and abstract data**

The dissertation is structured in an introduction, five chapters, conclusion, conclusions, recommendations, bibliography and contributions. The text of the dissertation research is 235

pages, of which 39 pages are a bibliography. The appendices are 10 pages long and contain detailed and correctly presented material that has been tested in the process of scientific research. The text includes 91 tables and 11 figures. The bibliography includes 461 titles in English.

It is noteworthy that the research has an extremely rich empirical provability.

There are no violations regarding the compliance of the dissertation and the originality of the work.

The abstract has a total volume of 53 pages, meets the requirements and objectively reflects the content of the dissertation work.

### **1.3. Relevance and importance of the problem**

The doctoral student has chosen to develop an interesting, current and dissertable topic. It corresponds to the need, expectations and demands of society towards educational institutions and preschool education related to the preparation of young people in accordance with social needs. In recent years, there has been an increased pressure of migrants in Greece, and cases of difficult adjustment of children from these groups have become a serious problem. In this sense, Vaia Duska's dissertation submitted for review reveals a research focus on a real problem for the Greek reality.

Through education and in an accessible form through physical education, opportunities are provided for assimilation of the necessary experience (knowledge, skills, competences, values, etc.) by children of migrant origin, which guarantees their successful inclusion in society.

A model of inclusive education is provided through general and additional support through physical education and outdoor activities, with a focus on personal development support for children from vulnerable groups such as migrants.

### **1.4. Knowing the problem**

Vaia Duska demonstrates a deep awareness of the researched problem area. Proof of this is the volume of researched literature and documents. Based on their excellent knowledge, the doctoral student analyzes and summarizes various opinions and positions regarding the chosen research field, subordinating them creatively to the topic of her dissertation work.

### **1.5. Dissertation Research Methodology**

The methodology presented in the dissertation is based on a competence-oriented educational policy and its implementation for the inclusion of children of migrant origin in Greek kindergartens.

The purpose and tasks of the dissertation research are formulated correctly from a scientific point of view. Here I should note the role of the scientific supervisor - Prof. Dr. Rosalina Engels - Kritidis. A profound researcher in the preschool education system, distinguished by his visionary solutions and socio-cultural competence.

The parameters of the research are of scientific significance, relevance and pedagogical innovation. The skills of the doctoral student to handle the scientific literature, to systematize and specify the main concepts are very well evident, which gives her the opportunity to construct the experimental model and conduct her research.

The organization, methodology and phasing of the research are presented in detail and very well oriented in the conducted research process.

The presented methodology is reliable, ensures the collection, processing and systematization of the necessary information, solving the tasks and proving the determined hypotheses.

The scope of the research field is remarkable. The methods are selected appropriately, in accordance with the goals and objectives of the experimental research, the type and volume of the data obtained. The analysis is cogent and well-argued, very well supported with tables, charts and graphs, enabling trends in implementation effectiveness to be tracked.

Research work, to one degree or another, is oriented towards building certain life skills. It is commendable that the doctoral student skillfully combined the formation of public and civic competence in the vulnerable group of Dacians, who are at the center of the research field. On the one hand, it has taken into account the satisfaction of the age-specific need for motor activity in a healthy environment in which children can develop and communicate in accordance with the norms of behavior accepted in the given group. On the other hand, it implies the formation of understandings, values, attitudes for social equality, for the absence of discrimination and understanding the interaction of the national cultural identity with that of the host European country. This is a very elegant way to modernize the socialization process of the child's personality, increase the quality of its achievements, increase interest in education and achieve educational integration of children from vulnerable social groups, turning the kindergarten into a place for positive intercultural dialogue and tolerance.

#### **1.6. Assessment of the PhD student's publications and personal contributions**

Vaia Dimitrios Duska presents a total of 5 scientific publications. They were realized during her studies in the doctoral program and were applied in defense of the necessary scientometric indicators. The developments testify to her skills in popularizing the results of her scientific research. All publications are on the topic of the dissertation work. They meet the requirements for scientific articles and reflect the staged results of the conducted research within the framework of the work on the dissertation project. They are dedicated to current issues. They reflect the author's personal contribution to the issues she researches, related to the topic of the dissertation work.

The above proves that Vaia Duska has complied with the quantitative requirements of the Regulations for the acquisition of scientific degrees at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia for the number of publications and participation in scientific forums.

## **2. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

I correctly accept the contributions indicated by doctoral student Vaia Duska. They can be supplemented because the investigated problem is wide-ranging, from real practice and poses many questions to specialists. The achieved results and the main contributions of the performed theoretical-experimental research can be summarized as follows:

### **2.1. Contributions of a scientific and theoretical nature**

- The results of the theoretical studies were studied, analyzed and systematized.

- On the basis of a deep theoretical analysis, the relationship between outdoor sports and recreational activities and the inclusion of children of migrant origin has been proven.
- Valuable trends characterizing the substantive parameters of the inclusion of children of migrant origin through physical education game activity have been derived.
- A more complete coverage of migrant children in pre-school educational institutions and improvement of the quality of pre-school education has been carried out.
- The attractiveness, accessibility, quality and applicability of physical education in relation to the specific regional characteristics has been increased.
- The coverage is a vulnerable group of children who need inclusive education and semi-educational integration.
- The proposed good practices imply and achieve the building of sustainable partnerships between kindergartens and parents, achieving full coverage and prevention of children dropping out of education.
- The proposed sustainable partnerships also have a positive attitude among the parents of the migrant children for orientation in the global and regional processes in the dynamically changing world, inclusion in the national values of the host country. Responsible behavior for participation in public life is created through active interaction with others, showing care and compassion.

## **2.2. Contributions of an experimental-applied nature**

- An author's competence model of activities with a wide presence of accessible motor activity was developed, tested and applied, with the aim of developing personal qualities and manifestations of children's abilities in preschool education with a specific focus on the inclusion of migrant children.
- The scientifically argued and proven hypotheses in the dissertation meet the requirement for applicability of the research. In concrete and practical terms, this also determines the real contribution of the created empirical research model.
- An accessible and effective model is proposed through accessible physical education to promote equal access of disadvantaged children to quality and inclusive education and training, and to their completion, with the aim of inclusion, integration and professional realization in society.
- Empirically proven the effectiveness and applicability of the extended scope in preschool, and from there also in school education of children of migrant origin.
- The proposed model supports the development of children and young citizens to find their place in a new environment and grow as active future members of society. Through physical education, they get to know themselves, learn the basic rules for living together in society, and this leads to the development of habits that are the basis of civil life. Migrant children develop a certain pattern of behavior based on empathy and belonging to social communities larger than the family.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the

Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Vaia Dimitrios Duska has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the field of preschool pedagogy, demonstrating competences for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, the achieved results and contributions, **and offer to the respected members of the Scientific Jury my positive vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Vaia Dimitrios Duska, in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction: 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy - Intercultural education).**

12.06.2024.  
Veliko Tarnovo

Prepared the opinion: .....  
Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Petrova, PhD