

STATEMENT

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Ivanova Dionissieva,
SWU "N. Rilski" - FPHHCS, Blagoevgrad,
Habilitation in Professional Direction 1.2. Pedagogy/Special Pedagogy

On a Dissertation for the Award of Educational and Scientific
Degree "Doctor" in the Field of Higher Education in
Professional Direction 7.4. Public Health – Speech Therapy

On the topic: VERIFICATION AND DIGITALIZATION OF THE PTESS PLAY-BASED LEARNING
SKILLS ASSESSMENT SCALE FOR AGES 0 TO 4

Doctoral student: Nina Yordanova

Academic supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Polina Mihova
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Deyan Palejev

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

This statement was conducted in implementation of Order No. 3-PK-25 of 17.10.2024 of the Rector of NBU on approving the composition of the scientific jury for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 7.4. Public Health, scientific specialty Speech Therapy.

The doctoral student's main training is in the field of Speech Therapy and Special Education with many years of professional experience as a clinical speech therapist and nutritional therapist, researcher and creator of numerous therapeutic techniques and clinical models applied in therapeutic work with children, founder of the Pumpelina Clinical Center for Working with Children.

The documents submitted by the doctoral student in electronic format are in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act and sufficient for conducting the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor".

2. Significance of the research problem.

The problem of early childhood development diagnostics in partnership with parents to assist them in raising and educating children is increasingly being brought to the attention of institutions, early childhood researchers and practitioners. The Standards for Early Childhood Development and Learning (2015) approved in Bulgaria and the systematic studies in this specific and significant area unite the efforts of various specialists and the public. In this aspect, the longitudinal study conducted as a basis for developing models for diagnosis and therapy of children aged 0-4 years in the researcher-parent interaction is significant and engaging for the doctoral student. The ongoing in-depth study of the needs in early childhood practice is a current and strong motive for upgrading through the results of the reviewed research work.

3. Justification of the goals and objectives of the dissertation. Correspondence between the chosen methodology and research methods and the set goals and objectives of the dissertation.

The topic of the dissertation is in the field of N. Yordanova's professional training and is closely related to her many years of experience as a clinical speech therapist, researcher and creator of numerous therapeutic techniques and clinical models applied in working with children. The researcher sets goals and objectives relevant to the needs of practice, related to the validation of an already approved author's diagnostic scale. The presentation of early childhood diagnostic tools is focused more on foreign and author's original developments without sufficient attention to the attempts to create and to already available diagnostic and therapeutic tools by Bulgarian researchers, even in a wider time range.

The chosen methodology and selected methods are appropriate and support the research process. The main parameters of the study are presented accurately and consistently - goals, research questions, hypotheses and tasks, design and work procedures. The tools used are duly described in detail and appropriately visualized in the appendices. The statistical methods for data processing are successfully selected and contribute to proving the hypotheses raised and seeking answers to the research questions.

4. Scientific and applied scientific contributions and publications on the dissertation.

The contributions of the scientific research formulated by the author are a result of many years of purposeful and in-depth work. Most of the noted contributions are a prerequisite for or a result of the research work on the topic of the dissertation and are significant for practice with the application of the now validated assessment scale for the development of children from 0-4 years and the digital platform PTESS.

On the topic of the dissertation, 5 publications have been presented for the period 2022 - 2023 (3 in SCOPUS), one of which is independent and four - in co-authorship with the scientific supervisor and other Bulgarian and/or foreign researchers. All publications have content related to the discussed dissertation and are sufficient for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The literary sources used are 251, among them publications by Bulgarian authors.

The attached 60-page abstract has been developed in accordance with the accepted normative requirements and fully complies with the content of the dissertation.

Questions on the dissertation:

1. Do you know of any other Bulgarian or imported and standardized in our country diagnostic instruments designed to assess the development of children at an early age? If your answer is yes, how comparable are they to the diagnostic scale you developed?
2. Does the process of comparing and validating the translations of the diagnostic scales into English and Greek also include back-translation to support their reliability?

Conclusion


I highly appreciate the scientific work and publication activity of Nina Yordanova. I find the results of the dissertation and the contributions made by the doctoral student significant. The dissertation contains scientific and practical results that are important for the establishment

of modern diagnostic and therapeutic tools in speech therapy with children at an early age and their families. The successful validation and digitalization of the already working model for assessing the development of children from 0-4 years (PTESS) are a significant emphasis of the work, which covers the requirements of the ZRASRB and the regulations for its implementation.

Based on the above, I give a positive assessment to the dissertation presented by Nina Yordanova on the topic "*Verification and digitalization of the PTESS Play-Based Learning Skills Assessment Scale for Ages 0 to 4*".

I propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Nina Yordanova in the professional field *7.4. Public Health*, scientific specialty - *Speech Therapy*.

11.12.2024
City of Sofia

Statement by: 
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Dionissieva)