

OPINION

by

Assoc. Prof. Polina Mihova-Pavlova, PhD,
Department of Health Care and Social Work, New Bulgarian University
professional field 7.4 Public Health,

on

the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 7.4 Public Health,
scientific specialty Speech and Language Therapy,
to candidate **Elisavet Leonidas Tsimplidou, F104056**,
a doctoral candidate pursuing independent (self-funded) preparation,
supervised by Assoc. Prof. Katya Dionissieva, PhD,
on the dissertation entitled **“Investigating Relations of Communication Skills and School Performance of Children with Hearing Disorders with Teacher Competencies in Implementing Differentiated Teaching in Inclusive Learning Environments”**.

The problem under investigation — communicative access and school performance of children with hearing disorders within the context of inclusive education and teacher preparedness for differentiated instruction — is of undoubted relevance, both scientifically and in terms of applied significance. Inclusive education is becoming an established model across numerous educational systems, while mainstream teachers' readiness to apply differentiated strategies remains a comparatively under-researched empirical field, particularly with respect to students with hearing impairment. The choice of topic is well grounded in the doctoral candidate's professional experience as a teacher and in her involvement in the large-scale national training programme of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) under the Greek Ministry of Education, which lends the study a concrete practical context.

The dissertation's main aim — a comparison of the extent to which the principles of differentiated instruction are applied by teachers before and after undergoing IEP training — is clearly formulated and follows logically from the theoretical review conducted. The specific tasks (examining the extent of differentiated teaching in daily classroom practice, the role of teachers' personal and professional characteristics, the effect of training, and the assessment of student performance through the SIFTER instrument) are well aligned with the main aim and are pursued consistently throughout the dissertation.

The study is structured around seven clearly formulated hypotheses, each of which receives a concrete empirical answer. The consistent verification of all seven hypotheses is a strong indicator of a carefully considered and logically executed research design.

The methodology adopted — a teacher questionnaire adapted from Siam and Al-Natour (2016) and the standardised SIFTER screening instrument, complemented by a semi-structured teacher interview — corresponds adequately to the stated aims and to the mixed (quantitative–qualitative) character of the study. The statistical processing carried out through SPSS (descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, chi-square tests, correlation analysis) is appropriately chosen for the type of hypotheses tested. The sample of 14 teachers (10 trained and 4 control) and 27 students is relatively compact for the Thessaly region of Greece, a factor which the doctoral candidate correctly and openly identifies as a limitation on stronger statistical generalisation — a transparency that speaks well of the author's research culture and points to a clear direction for expanding the sample in future work.

The contributions of the dissertation have both a theoretical and an applied dimension. On the theoretical side, the dissertation redefines hearing loss not so much as a medical condition but as a communicative and educational construct, and builds an integrative model that combines Tomlinson's differentiation framework, Universal Design for Learning, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory into

a single conceptual framework for the inclusive education of children with hearing impairment. On the applied side, the dissertation provides empirically grounded evidence of the effect of a specific national teacher-qualification programme and introduces the systematic application of the SIFTER instrument as a means of early educational diagnosis — with direct applicability to teaching practice and to education policy, further objectified in the author's concrete recommendations to the Greek Ministry of Education.

The theoretical part of the dissertation (Chapters 1–3) presents a systematic and well-structured review of the literature on hearing loss, differentiated teaching, and the role of assistive technologies and artificial intelligence in the education of children with hearing impairment, and may also serve as a stand-alone reference resource for practising educators and specialists.

The dissertation is supported by two independent publications on its subject, meeting the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. The first — Tsimplidou, E. (2026). The academic performance of students with hearing impairment using the S.I.F.T.E.R. test in relation to teachers trained in differentiated teaching and those who are not. *Ezikov Svyat (Orbis Linguarum)*, 24(2), 46–60, <https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v24i2.3> — is published in a peer-reviewed journal indexed in Scopus, EBSCO, DOAJ, Index Copernicus, and ERIH PLUS, and presents directly the dissertation's central empirical findings. The second — Tsimplidou, E. (2025). Investigating differentiated practices during the educational process with hearing impaired students before and after their training in differentiating teaching from IEP. *International Journal of Educational Innovation*, 7(4), 92–102, <https://doi.org/10.69685/TRLR7912> — presents the findings on the effect of training in differentiated teaching.

Both publications faithfully and consistently reflect the study's main findings and attest to its validation before the scholarly community; given their very recent appearance, an independent citation record has not yet formed, which is a normal circumstance for newly published results.

In conclusion, the dissertation of Elisavet Tsimplidou constitutes an independent, well-grounded, and practically oriented study of a significant and insufficiently researched problem. It demonstrates a solid command of the theoretical literature, the correct application of a methodology commensurate with the stated hypotheses, and the capacity to formulate applicable conclusions and recommendations, supported by the results obtained for all seven hypotheses.

On the basis of the above, I give a POSITIVE assessment of the dissertation and propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury award the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**” in professional field **7.4 Public Health**, scientific specialty **Speech and Language Therapy**, to **Elisavet Leonidas Tsimplidou, F104056**.

Date: 14.09.2026

Signature:

Assoc. Prof. Polina Mihova, PhD