

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Magdalena Stoyanova, PhD, FNOI, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences

professional field 1.2. Pedagogy

doctoral program "Preschool Pedagogy", Department of "Preschool and Primary Education"

at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", city of

Shumen

Author: Asst. Valentina Velichkova Georgieva

Topic: THE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COGNITIVE
ACTIVITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE CONDITIONS OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Yordanka Stoyanova Peycheva, PhD

"Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky" University of Education

1. Evaluation of the competition procedure.

By order No. RD-16-163/30.09.2025 of the Rector of the Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" (ShU), I am appointed as a member of the scientific jury for ensuring a procedure with an opinion (Minutes of the meeting of the scientific jury on 09.10.2025) for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Role of constructive activities for the development of cognitive activity of preschool children in the conditions of project-based learning", developed by Asst. V. Georgieva for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy., doctoral program "Preschool Pedagogy", Department "Preschool and Primary Education" (PNE) at the Faculty of Pedagogy (PF), Shumen University.

The author of the dissertation is Valentina Velichkova Georgieva - a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Preschool and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Sofia University.

The set of materials presented by Asst. Valentina Georgieva is in accordance with Art. 25 para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Sofia. By order of the Rector of the University of Shumen RD -16-123/17.07. 2025, a one-time expansion of the Department of "PNE" expansion was carried out. The

doctoral student has fulfilled all the requirements under Art. 24 para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Shumen. She was enrolled with the right to defend from 01.02.2023 by order of the Rector RD-IO.144/24.02.2023 and has correctly responded to all preliminary procedures. She meets the minimum requirements under Art. 26 para. 2 and para. 3 of the "Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria" and Art. 1a para.1 of the "Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The attached dissertation and abstract comply in form and content with the requirements of Art.27 of the PPZRASRB.

The doctoral student has submitted 3 articles on the topic of the dissertation, two of which were published in the yearbooks of the Shumen University (2021; 2022) and in the Collection of Materials published by the Shumen University (2025). I assess that the submitted documentation is complete and reliable.

2. Brief information about the doctoral student.

After completing the Bachelor's degree (2009-2013), Asst. V. Georgieva continued her education in the master's program "Innovations in Preschool and Primary Education" (2013-2014). Since 2020, she has been a full-time doctoral student in the doctoral program "Preschool Pedagogy", Department of "TOPO and PUNP" at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", city of Shumen. From 09.09.2020 to the present, she is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Preschool and Primary Education, Bishop Konstantin Preslavski University of Education - Shumen.

I would like to add my good impressions of the doctoral student's pedagogical culture, acquired during her teaching career and in leading kindergartens in the city, as well as during her participation in dozens of national and international projects in the field of innovative technologies in preschool education.

3. Relevance of the topic.

The dissertation, developed in four chapters, is in a volume of 303 standard pages – 200 main text and 83 pages for 17 applications of tabular concretizations of the experimental model, illustrative results of its application with children and parents. The study is illustrated with 21 tables, 40 figures. The numbering of the figures and tables in the abstract follows the dissertation work. The literature used includes 112 information sources in Bulgarian, 6 - in a foreign language. 16 normative documents are presented.

This structure is logically subordinate to the relevance of the formulated topic, which Asst. V. Georgieva argues with her interest as a challenge for the improvement of cognitive activity through applied-practical activity in construction, influencing in unity the emotional, cognitive and productive-creative manifestations in childhood.

The focus is on the specifics of interactive pedagogical interaction as an innovative approach in preschool education. Thus, in addition to scientific relevance, relevance is also linked to systematized information on development and research activities, a classification of projects by type and structure is derived, presented in detail through the stages of project work and the role of participants in the process, as well as the forms of assessment.

I can share with conviction that there is a good hierarchy of the research goal and the related tasks of the study, based on a competency-oriented educational environment and the provision of an innovative model for the application of the acquired knowledge and skills in the conditions of practical and applied activity.

Its concretization in the results, presented in the third and fourth chapters, covered in depth in a volume of 90 pages, represents a structure that transforms the theoretical analysis into a model and project-oriented practice, implemented in an innovative vision. In addition, the stages of creating, testing and proving the significance of an author's pedagogical model establish forms, criteria, tools for competencies in all educational areas (Fig. 6; p.101).

4. Knowledge of the problem.

The knowledge of the state of the problem by Asst. V. Georgieva is proven by the balanced volume of 10/1 for Bulgarian versus foreign author presence of the 118 literary sources, among which 11 are foreign, printed in Cyrillic, 6 - in Latin, and the presented our researchers are leading in our academic communities.

The doctoral student uses a solid theoretical and research basis for the construction of her experimental and applied model in her doctoral dissertation.

The rich teaching experience of Asst. V. Georgieva is the reason for the successful structure of the thematic content of the educational direction "Environment" and its project systematization into four global areas - Nature, Safety, Health and Society, which serve as the basis for the development of projects (Fig. 7; p. 103). In my opinion, this has influenced the interesting assumption of a relationship between the experimental model in the conditions of PBE and the increase in the level of cognitive activity of children.

5. Research methodology.

I can qualify the doctoral student as having the ability to competently develop, justify and present her research program, using the experiment appropriately in its main stages.

This allows her to achieve the set goal and obtain adequate answers to the tasks solved in the dissertation. Here I consider the pedagogical experiment, implemented precisely in its stages with other empirical methods, to be the most significant: observational methods with the leading role of pedagogical observation and through self-observation as an indicator of reflection and self-reflection, to be the most appropriate. I define mathematical and statistical methods for comparative proof of differences in the experimental group as appropriate.

I can generally assess the methodology as analytical and effective for processing the results in the direction of proving the advantages of the applied author's model for improving cognitive activity and proving the significance of project-based learning for confirming the hypothesis.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions.

In terms of content, the work is structured in a good ratio (0.6) between theoretical and research-empirical parts (82/126), and I particularly admire the organization and stages of the experimental research and the conceptual-applied developed model.

I welcome the good implementation of the developed experimental pedagogical model in the centre of the work, including the differentiation of PBE into an integrative educational option for pedagogical interaction in PBE conditions, which places the child at the centre of the interaction and a holistic option for monitoring and tracking the achievements and progress in the development of 6–7-year-old children in PBE conditions with an adaptive monitoring structure.

The research in this dissertation is conducted with 50 children aged 6–7. The control group includes 25 children from the preschool educational institution "Konche-Vyhrogonche" in the city of Shumen, and the experimental group includes 25 children from the preschool educational institution "Shturche" in the city of Shumen. I confirm the contributions formulated by the doctoral student. I would like to emphasize my assessment on several of them, namely:

- ✓ In a theoretical and research plan, the role of constructive activities has been analysed and the approaches and strategies in interaction for developing cognitive activity in children in conditions of PBO have been summarized.
- ✓ In an experimental and research plan, a toolkit has been developed and implemented, appropriate for studying the achievements of children aged 6-7 with practical significance for various constructive activities and active participation in thematic projects.
- ✓ In an experimental-conceptual plan, a methodologically characterized model for testing has been created, in accordance with the strategy of preschool education, specified through the goals of the four global educational areas, and through the OS direction - implemented as a project in the construction towards the overall development of children's competencies.
- ✓ In an empirical-applied plan, a systematization of thematic content for the development of the cognitive activity of 6–7-year-old children in global educational areas, which serve for planning thematic projects, within which competencies from all educational areas are integrated, has been carried out, appropriate for the research tasks in the dissertation work.
- ✓ In a diagnostic-comparative plan, positive dynamics have been proven in constructive activities integrated into a project organization for increasing the values of the application of knowledge and skills, cognitive development, motivation and socio-emotional interaction, which is an important result for pedagogical practice and the possibility of being multiplied in a wider contingent of children.

7. Assessment of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

Asst. Valentina Georgieva has three publications in the period 2021-2025. The first (2021) is dedicated to the complex development of key competencies in 6–7-year-old children, the second – to the importance of the STEM approach in project-based learning (2022), and the third follows a third line, important for the dissertation work and the model applied in it, namely the organization of constructive activities through an integrated approach in kindergarten. Thus, in my opinion, the publications on the dissertation work are milestone achievements of the doctoral student in the research and present specific results for the popularization of its contributions.

8. Abstract

The abstract presents the essence of the doctoral work in a synthesized form and reflects its contributions in terms of content, quantitative and qualitative analysis according to the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Sofia and contains the main results achieved in the dissertation.

9. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

I recommend that the doctoral student:

- when publishing the dissertation work, she should specify the use of key concepts according to the regulations (ZPUO, 2016) in the context of the model and the results of its application in the direction of "educational process", "learning content", "learning process" in their peculiar characterization in a preparatory group;
- the tracking of the results in the technology of the applied model should be carried out in a larger contingent, both in quantitative terms and in terms of age.


CONCLUSION

I substantiate an unambiguous position as a member of the National Council by preparing a statement containing my clear positive assessment of the dissertation work, i.e. I support procedurally the acquisition of the scientific degree "doctor" by the candidate.

The dissertation work contains theoretical research, experimental research and experimental applied results, which represent an original contribution to the scientific field and meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" Shumen University.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by my statement on the dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions. Therefore, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Asst. Valentina Georgieva in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program "Preschool Pedagogy".

01.11. 2025.

Prepared the opinion: 

(Assoc. Prof. Magdalena Stoyanova,

PhD)